

Sexuality, parenthood, and identity:
Relationships among female and male youth
living on the streets of Durban CBD.

By

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore sexuality, parenthood, identity, and relationships among female and male youth living on the streets of Durban CBD. It sprung from my previous engagement on the street, which suggested the striking impact of gender on the lives of the youth. Much literature on children and youth living on the street ignore the gendered nature of street life, and this study filled the knowledge gap about gender constructions and gendered relationships on the street. Framed by critical theory, this study explored how constructions of masculinities and femininities are played out on the street and impact the youth's relationships. It specifically focused on intersectionalities with socio-economic and other structures in understanding gender. Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with 37 youth on the street, of which 17 were female. Approximately 50 focus group sessions and individual interviews were conducted. Due to drug use and lack of sleep, the concentration levels of the youth would vary a great deal, and the analysis is mainly based on approximately 25 of the focus groups sessions and interviews, which provided satisfactory depth. My extensive involvement on the street and the study's embeddedness in practical, therapeutic, and conscientising social work ensured rich material. With the participants' permission, the sessions were tape-recorded. The material was analysed according to critical discourse analysis. Four themes emerged during the analysis: Men as providers, violence, sex, and sexuality on the street; Girls' violence and contestations of femininity and masculinity; Gang culture and constructions of masculinity; and Constructions of motherhood and fatherhood.

Male provision was a major construction of masculinity among the youth on the street, greatly compromised by their socio-economic marginalisation. Consistent with international literature, poverty's assault on masculinity was evident, and violence was a means to compensate for a wounded sense of masculinity and to establish male superiority. Girls' sex work was a major gender role transgression, contesting hegemonic femininity, males' control over women, and the provider role of boyfriends, and was violently opposed by the males living on the street. Girls worked hard to present themselves according to acceptable constructions of femininity, and framed their sex work according to the mandate of male provision, as caring relationships with wealthier men. Young mothers on the street struggled with the contradiction between constructions of motherhood and sex work. There was a demand for them to not give up custody of their children, yet the conditions of homelessness and the street made adequate caring impossible, and the mothers were almost inevitably doomed to condemnation and failure as 'good' women. Though male provision was a dominant construction of masculinity, it was not reflected in the actual lives of the youth on the street, and violence was by far the most important means to establish and confirm manliness. The significance given to violence was, in addition to the significant impact of poverty and consequent male vulnerability, framed by rules of the 26 gang.

Conscientising work among the youth to reveal the real sources of their oppressions is called for, as well as practical and therapeutic work. Their lives reflect dominant structure in the larger society, and work towards egalitarian relations among genders in society overall as well as measures to transform the profound socio-economic inequality nationally and globally are called for.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where the work of others has been cited, it has been duly acknowledged and referenced.

Durban, November 2011

Ingrid S. Osthus

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the aim of the study, which was to gain an understanding of how gendered identity constructions are played out in the lives of youth living on the streets of Durban CBD, in terms of relations among female and male youths and with a specific focus on the intersectionality between gender, class, and race. The rationale for the study, the research problems, the main aim and objectives, and the value of the study are outlined. Critical theory is introduced as the theoretical framework, and I provide a brief presentation of the contents of the study.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Homeless children and youth live on the streets all over the world, and there is much literature about the issue both globally, nationally, and situated locally in Durban. Literature tends to assume gender neutrality and speaks about ‘street children’, while it actually describes the realities of boys and is in fact gender-blind. The experiences of girls are to a large extent ignored.

This research study follows from my engagement with youth living on the streets of Durban, which started out at the beginning of 2008 as a practice placement during my Bachelor of Social Work studies, and carried on to a research project exploring the survival strategies of girls living on the street (Osthus, 2009). One of my intentions at the onset of that study was to contest the dominant perceptions of street children as delinquent or helpless, and instead look into their strengths and capacities. After all, they do survive, and must necessarily be creative and resilient. During the study, I was overwhelmed by the omnipresence of sexual violence and sexual exploitation in the lives of those girls. The girls were definitely creative and resilient, but what stood out was the massive challenges and injustices they faced, and how essentially gendered those challenges and injustices were. It became glaringly obvious that girls’ experiences of street life are different from boys’. Furthermore, it became disturbingly

clear that the dominant discourses on street children and homeless youth are silent about girls' realities.

Having gained an initial comprehension of the fundamental gendered nature of street life, I wanted to understand the gender dynamics better. I had realised their existence and acute influence, but had many questions about how they worked and functioned. The main aim of this study was therefore to gain an in-depth understanding of how gender constructions were played out among youth on the street, in their relations and identity constructions. I have included both female and male youth in this study. It was in particular girls' widespread experiences of sexual violence and sexual exploitation that prompted the study, so it was important to include males. Critical feminist theory emphasises the importance of placing the problem where it belongs: with the perpetrators, that is, the men (Kleinman, 2007). The aim of the study called for both female and male participants, as the focus was on constructions of masculinities and femininities and how they influenced behaviours and identities among the youth living on the street. Dominant discourses on street children and homeless youth are not only silent about girls' realities, but about gendered experiences in general. While describing boys' street life, there is a lack of literature exploring its gendered meanings, and this study is intended to contribute to closing that gap.

Many studies have dealt with practical issues at a rather superficial level, while the complexities of street life and their deeper meanings and underlying structures, both gendered and otherwise, are not sufficiently analysed. Gender is intricately linked to other structures and is lived out in specific contexts. For youth living on the streets, poverty and socio-economic factors are particularly salient. Poverty is dire in South Africa, and almost half of the population live below the poverty datum line (Triegaardt, 2006). Poverty and inequality are closely interrelated with HIV and AIDS (Tladi, 2006). South Africa has very high rates of HIV infection, and more than 1000 people die from AIDS every day (Treatment Action Campaign, 2008). 8,7% of the population lives in informal urban settlements, but 29,1% of new HIV infections occur there (Rehle, Shisana, Pillay, Zuma, Puren & Parker, 2007), highlighting the impact of poverty. Severe poverty, as evident in informal settlements, is also closely linked to lack of education, health problems, and child abuse (Simpson, 2001).

South Africa is a middle-income country, and the experiences of poverty speak to the fact that the country has one of the world's most unequal economies (Triegaardt, 2006). With apartheid, South Africa has a history of institutionalised inequality based on racial segregation, and inequality still follows racial divides to a large extent. For example, the Department of Labour 2010-2011 annual report reported that 73.1% of top management positions were held by whites and that 81% of top management positions were held by men, which illustrates the continued intersectional privilege of white men (Sewpaul, in press). Black women are at the bottom of the social ladder, and are, as a result of their social status, more vulnerable to both poverty and HIV (Tladi, 2006). But also a majority of black men are oppressed and struggle, for example, with reconciling male expectations (such as being breadwinners) with the socio-economic realities of their lives. Unemployment is widespread, with an unemployment rate of above 40% when 'discouraged job seekers' are included. People who engage in informal activities to make a living, for example people who beg, are not included in this definition, so the actual number is even higher (Triegaardt, 2006).

Homeless children and youth living on the streets of Durban are thus embedded in a context of national, socio-economic inequality. The ways they live out gendered relations and identities are inseparably linked with other structural influences, in particular poverty. The aim of this study was to explore and understand in depth structural influences, especially related to gender, on the lives of female and male youth living on the streets of Durban. I have aimed to look at how constructions of masculinities, femininities, and parenthood influenced the youth's identities, behaviours, and relations with each other, and how the youth negotiated contradictions in the spheres of intersections of different structural influences, such as class, gender, and race. The study is a response to knowledge gaps concerning girls' experiences, in-depth and gendered understandings of both boys' and girls' experiences, and intersectional analysis of meaning-making in and structural influences on street life.

1.3 Research problems

The gendered nature of street life was evident in my previous research study, and one of the issues that emerged was how gender was infused in the power dynamics among the youth living on the street. Sex in various forms appeared as an especially significant expression and construction of gendered power relations, together with violence. The sheer extent of sexual violence was a potent expression of its potential power in constructing identities and relations among the youth, and indicated the links between sex and violence.

Other issues that emerged in the previous research study were the ways the girls negotiated their gendered identities in relation to their engagement in sex work, and the complex meanings of motherhood. Many of the dominant socio-cultural expectations of females were challenged by street life, and the girls contested dominant constructions of femininity, for example being dependent, obedient, and decent, and staying at home (Connell, 2009). Similarly, street life challenged dominant constructions of masculinity, and boys living on the street contested socio-cultural expectations of males, for example being a provider, and being respectable and responsible (Morrell, 2007). Socio-economic realities of street life constrained their negotiations of gendered identities and behaviours, and prompted the intersectional focus of this study.

1.4 Research aim and objectives

The main aim of the study was to investigate sexuality, parenthood, and identity, and explore the relationships among female and male youth living on the street.

The objectives of this study were:

- to understand how constructions of masculinities and femininities influence the lives of females and males on the street
- to explore how their relations with each other are influenced by their gendered identities
- to investigate the relationship between sex, violence, and gendered expressions of power

- to explore the meanings of motherhood and fatherhood
- to examine how the youth negotiate dominant socio-cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity

In all of this, gender has been understood as one part of a complex intersectionality with other structural factors, such as class and race (Shields, 2008; Mullaly, 2010).

1.5 Value of the study

A focus on personal meaning-making and structural influences, and on the interplay between the two, in this study fills the current knowledge gap about gender constructions and gendered relationships on the street. By focusing on the construction and influence of gender, this study has contributed to in-depth understanding of males on the street. The emphasis on girls' experiences and a gendered understanding of their experiences has added knowledge about this largely silenced population. This knowledge is hoped to constructively inform policy makers at different levels, such as organizations working with children and youth, the police, and government departments.

This research study evolved from work with youth on the street where therapeutic, practical, and conscientising social work were integral to the research process. As engrained in critical theory, it was my wish that the research process facilitated critical consciousness in research participants and contributed to positive change for some of them and in some of the factors that influence their lives.

1.6 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is critical theory. Critical theory contends that social realities are historically created and that social issues are not 'naturally' occurring, but socially constructed and influenced by power asymmetries. One of its main objectives is to enhance our understanding of the political nature of social phenomena (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Critical theory is thus not satisfied with merely describing or understanding power relationships or the social realities of the researched, but wants to address social issues and shift the balance of power

(Henning, 2004) and to “root out a particular kind of delusion” (Wodak & Meyer, 2007, p. 7).

The last quote indicates a ‘false consciousness’ among people, which supports the status quo of social inequalities, and the need for critical interrogation in order to reveal power structures and instigate change towards a more just society, as per the emancipatory pedagogies of Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, and Henry Giroux (see Sewpaul, 2003). This is essential to critical theory, which aims to serve “the emancipatory project” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 144). Critical consciousness is a pronounced goal, both for the researcher, the research participants, and the readers of the research findings. Research within a critical theory framework intends to produce and convey critical knowledge, to create awareness, and to enable people to emancipate themselves (Wodak & Meyer, 2007, p. 7).

The idea is to “go beyond surface meanings” to unravel underlying power structures (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 166). Critical theory is essentially about power, and examines “the processes of gaining, maintaining and circulating existing power relationships” (Henning, 2004, p. 23). The word “existing” is important, because, although critical theory assumes that social phenomena are socially constructed, it critiques the interpretive approach to research and upholds that power issues, oppression and privilege are real, regardless of people’s understanding or meaning-making (Humphries, 2008). Although oppression is ‘real’, it is not given, and fundamental to working towards change is the ability to imagine change or different possible futures. A task for critical theory, therefore, is “opening up lines of thinking bearing new potentialities in mind” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 166).

Critical theory takes a multi-systemic approach to understanding privilege and oppression, including both structural macro levels and micro-interpersonal levels (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). However, it especially emphasises the structural macro level and how it relates to and influences action (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). It is thus said to be a critical-dialectical perspective, “It is ‘critical’ because it draws attention to the relations of power that shape social reality. It is ‘dialectic’ because it attempts to analyse subjective and objective realities as intertwined and mutually implicating one another” (Humphries, 2008, p. 107). The attention given to power

relations and structural factors, and the dialectical focus on structures and individual meanings were the reasons why I chose critical theory as the theoretical framework of this study. The political agenda and the explicit intention of contributing to social change also inspired the study.

Critical theory is said to be less interested in empirical research. Even though it is possible to conduct empirical research within a critical theory framework, the focus is not on the empirical material itself, but primarily on “the interpretation and reasoned appraisal of the empirical material, which is further complimented by observations and interpretations of the surrounding societal context” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 165). It is especially relevant to this study, since it is a continuation of my previous research and otherwise engagement on the street. Like I described above, the fact that street life was gendered was already evident at the onset of this study through the empirical material provided by my previous study. The aim of this study was therefore first and foremost a critical analysis to reveal and understand underlying structures and their being embedded in the historical, cultural, and social context. The literature review chapters therefore form part of the analysis, as they conceptualise fundamental ideas that form the basis for the analysis, and include “observations and interpretations of the surrounding societal context” integral to the analysis of the empirical material in chapter 6.

1.7 Presentation of contents

In this first chapter, I have introduced the topic of gendered experiences of street life and of how gendered identity constructions are played out in the lives of female and male youth living on the streets of Durban. I have explained the rationale and main aim, research problems, and outlined the research problems, the objectives, and the value of the study. Lastly, I have introduced critical theory as the theoretical framework.

Chapter 2 is a literature review conceptualising ideas and concepts essential to this study, including gender as socially constructed, identities and social hierarchies, intersectionality, and structures and agency.

Chapter 3 is a literature review looking at descriptions of different experiences for boys and girls who live on the street in studies of children and youth from different parts of the world, but with a focus on local studies.

Chapter 4 is a literature review on constructions of masculinities and femininities, and of intersections of class, gender and race, mainly in the South African context.

Chapter 5 details the methodology of this study, and includes information on the research method, research design, sampling strategies, methods of data collection, method of analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 6 is the presentation and analysis of data, according to four broad themes: Men as providers, violence, sex, and sexuality on the street; Girls' violence and contestations of femininity and masculinity; Gang culture and constructions of masculinity; and Constructions of motherhood and fatherhood.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter and includes the major conclusions of this study and recommendations.

Chapter 2: GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the concepts of gender and intersectionality, and clarify the meanings I ascribe to them in this study. Gender is a practice, socially constructed, through an intricate interrelation between personal agency and structural constraints. Gender cannot be understood without looking at its intersections with other social identities such as race and socio-economic status.

2.2 Gender

2.2.1 Gender understood as biologically determined

Gender is often perceived as the social expression of biological sex differences, with two separate and dichotomous categories: man and woman. In commonsense thinking, these two categories are opposites, with men and women thinking, feeling and acting essentially differently from each other, and these differences are understood to be rooted in biological differences and to be advantageous in an evolutionary perspective (Connell, 2009). For example, men's genes cause them to be violent and dominant and women's genes cause them to be nurturing and caring, and dominant men and caring women serve the progress of society and of humanity.

This perception is problematic for several reasons. The obvious physical differences between women and men are thought to relate directly to differences in character or traits, and these character differences are assumed to be substantial and dichotomous. However, a huge load of gender difference research, including meta-analysis, has found that gender differences are none or insignificant in most traits, including mental ability, social ability, self-esteem, and cognitive processing (Connell, 2009). When research findings do show differences, meta-analysis has revealed how these differences are specific and situational, not general. Aggression is one example where men are thought to score higher than women, and indeed often do, but where meta-analysis has shown that this applies in physical violence more than verbal violence, and unprovoked rather than provoked (Connell, 2009, p. 65). Confuting the assumption of generalised differences, research findings thus challenge the

assumption of character differences being *directly* related to sex differences. Another example is about the commonsense explanation for male domination: that higher levels of testosterone give men a hormonal ‘aggression advantage’ in competition with women for top-level jobs or other positions in society. However, research has found that higher testosterone levels *follow from* social domination as much as they precede it (Connell, 2009). Despite the hegemonic ideology of biology as destiny or “bio-logic” (Oyewumi, 2005, p. 11) in this perception of gender, scientific research provides evidence for differences *not* being biologically determined. It instead indicates that gender differences are mediated and that gender itself is socially constructed.

2.2.2 Gender as socially constructed

Gender as political and as socially constructed is well illustrated in the processes of identity formation. Lena Dominelli (2002a) discussed how identity construction is closely linked to physical attributes and, more precisely, *differences* in physical attributes, such as for example female or male genitals or different shades of skin colour. More than simply stating or describing difference, there is an *evaluation* of difference, usually following a commonsense perception of dichotomy. A binary opposition or superior-inferior polarity is consequently created, and people are ascribed a certain position and corresponding value according to where in the polarity they are assumed to belong. This process of evaluating difference is similar to Oyeronke Oyewumi’s (2005) argument about difference being expressed as degeneration, and this discourse’s impact on social stratification. She claimed that this discourse was specifically Western, but while I dismiss her allegation of non-applicability in other cultures and societies, her general argument makes much sense. Oyewumi explained how degeneration is linked to an idea of deviation, ultimately constructing an original type set up against a deviant one (or ones):

Initially, degeneration brought together two notions of difference, one scientific – a deviation from an original type – and the other moral, a deviation from a norm of behaviour. But they were essentially the same notion, of a fall from grace, *a deviation from the original type*. (Chamberlain & Gilman, as cited in Oyewumi, 2005, p. 3, italics original)

It is this evaluation of difference along the logic of a superior-inferior polarity, or the construction of an original vs. deviations, that is the foundation of social hierarchies and that provides the building-blocks with which privilege and oppression are created and maintained (Dominelli, 2002a; Oyewumi, 2005). A major problem with the understanding of gender as biologically determined is that such a definition assumes that change in the perception or performance of gender is neither desirable nor possible. It thus closes the door on any work against gendered injustice or inequality. As the example of social domination and testosterone levels indicate: not only are *differences* seen as natural and biologically determined but so are *hierarchies* in society following from such differences (Oyewumi, 2005). It reveals the *political* nature of gender and how processes relating differences to privilege and oppression are political. Social hierarchies are not biologically determined, inevitable, or unchangeable, but gender (and other social categories, for example race) is socially constructed for certain purposes and with specific societal consequences.

2.2.3 Biological determinism as a discourse in constructions of social hierarchies

Discourses that link identity with the superior-inferior valuation of differences are constructed to create, maintain, and justify a dominant group's privilege over others (Dominelli, 2002a). The justification-function of a discourse is important, as it is imperative to ensure that also lesser-privileged groups take part in the maintenance of the social hierarchy. Convincing disadvantaged groups to buy into discourses that justify social inequality and thereby their lower position is crucial for the continuation of status quo (Dominelli, 2002a). The understanding of gender as biologically determined, which I discussed above, is an example of such discourse. In fact, "one of the most effective means of oppression has been the reification of social phenomena as 'natural facts'" (Mullaly, 2010, p. 35). Using arguments rooted in biology, it makes the current order seem predestined, unchangeable, and 'for the best'. Oyewumi (2005) explained, "(T)hose in positions of power ... establish their superior biology as a way of affirming their privilege and dominance over 'Others'. Those who are different are seen as genetically inferior, and this, in turn, is used to account for their disadvantaged social positions" (p. 3). This process is related to the Gramscian

concept of hegemony¹: “when most people in a society think alike about certain matters, or even forget that there are alternatives to the status quo” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 8). The hegemonic ideological position of the discourse on biologically determined gender differences catalyses an invisible and seemingly innocent reproduction of gender discrimination, which is so deeply entrenched in all spheres of social interaction that it seems to be “inscribed in our blood” (Sewpaul, in press).

Paulo Freire (1970/1993) observed: “One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness” (p. 33). This submergence of the consciousness is called internalised oppression, and is crucial for the maintenance of social hierarchies. The discourse on biologically determined gender differences and gender discrimination is an example. It also works on privileged groups, convincing them on the legitimacy of their privilege. We can thus equally well speak of internalised privilege, hence Henry Giroux’s emphasis on privileged groups’ deconstruction of own privilege for advancing social justice in his theory of insurgent multiculturalism (as cited in Sewpaul, 2003).

2.2.4 The invisibility of gender inequality

Some claim that a concern about women as oppressed is outdated, that gender equality is already achieved and that we should instead focus on other (more real or important) social issues. Sherryl Kleinman (2007) told about her experience from teaching gender courses in sociology:

... many of the students I teach, including women, claim that “you guys” and “freshmen” are now true generics and thus harmless. I tell them that if “you gals”, “you girls” or “you women” were applied to a group of men, the men would feel insulted. “Man” and “men” are still linguistically superior categories in our society, and “women” are derogatory And the women in my classes aren’t indifferent about “you guys”; they like it so much that they get mad at the possibility of losing it. Being “one of the guys” feels like a raise

¹ Antonio Gramsci used this concept to explain how capitalism functions (Sewpaul, 2003), but it has also been widely used about gender (see for example Connell, 1995).

in status ... [In Douglas Hofstadter's] parody of sexist language; he substitutes "white" for "man" to create such terms as "freshwhite", "whitekind", and "you whiteys", revealing the ubiquitous sexism in standard U.S. English that remains invisible to us. ... he examines the systematic appearance of male-defined terms and the systematic absence of positive female generics. While not denying racism, he shows how sexism is normalized and made invisible in a way that racism is not. (Kleinman, 2007, p. 13-14)

Kleinman here draws attention to words and language, and how oppression and privilege can be hidden, yet powerful, in and through language. This is at the core of critical discourse analysis theories. Yet gender does not operate in a vacuum. It is intrinsically and intricately linked to other structures and social identities, for example class and social-economic status, and race and ethnicity (Connell, 2009). Simply being a "woman" is too broad a label to say much about lived experiences of oppression (Shields, 2008; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Certainly, being a black, working-class woman is different from being a white, middle-class woman. Or, to be more personal, being a white young woman from the social welfare state of Norway is very different from being a black homeless young woman living on the streets in South Africa.

2.3 Intersectionality

2.3.1 Models of multiple oppressions

There are different models of understanding oppression, the simplest being the 'single-strand' model, where one form or source of oppression is believed to be fundamental to all others (Mullaly, 2010). An example could be class exploitation or poverty and the belief that if poverty is dealt with and class-based injustice addressed, everything else will follow. Gender inequality is often worse in poor societies, and women are less oppressed in socio-economically better-off societies (Sen, 1999). However, gender inequality persists even in relatively equal societies, and there is no automatic relation between poverty alleviation and gender equality. For example, business management is largely controlled by men in Scandinavian countries, which are relatively equal societies, both in terms of socio-economics and gender (Connell, 2009). A different model is the parallel model of oppression, which acknowledges

that there are multiple forms and sources of oppression, all of which should be attended to. However, it depicts different oppressions as unrelated, and fails to recognise how they interconnect and mediate each other (Mullaly, 2010). Intersectional models of oppression on the other hand acknowledge that multiple oppressions cannot simply be added together, but that one form of oppression is mediated by others, and that oppressions are dynamic (Mullaly, 2010). Importantly, theories informed by intersectionality do not simply observe that social hierarchies exist, but are concerned with how different social power relations mutually construct each other (Collins, in Bowleg, 2008, p. 313). In summary, intersectionality is “the mutually constitutive relations amongst social identities” (Shields, 2008, p. 302).

2.3.2 Intersectional oppressions

Several authors trace the origins of intersectionality to the writings of black feminists such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins (Few, 2007; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Mullaly, 2010). They uncovered how feminist scholarship was stuck in the experiences of white, middle-class women, and that black women were excluded, silenced and invisible (Connell, 2009). Critiques from women who are not white, Western, and middle-class have prompted attention to socio-economic, racial, and other factors in the experiences of women. Race, class, and gender are most common, but also other factors’ intersections with gender are increasingly highlighted, for example disability and homosexuality (Connell, 2009).

Geographical differences, and their intersections with race and socio-economic statuses, have also been called attention to, especially with regards to relations between the West and the Rest (Ryen, 2007). Western feminist scholars, along their non-feminist colleagues, have been criticised for depicting women of other parts of the world “being ‘third world’ (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc) ... in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions” (Mohanty in Connell, 2009, p. 44, brackets original). Some women express the opinion that the gender agenda is a Western concern and a form of cultural imperialism in other cultures or contexts (see for example Oyewumi, 2005). This partly stems from the

political reality of women in the global periphery, where colonial and neo-colonial domination oppress both women and men, and some women have asserted that a narrow focus on gender fails to take their lived experiences of multiple oppressions based on gender, race, socio-economic disadvantage, and geography into account. The critique is thus parallel to black feminists' critique within America, and calls for more inclusive and empathic analyses that include the experiences of non-white, non-middle-class, non-heterosexual, non-disabled, and non-Western women (Connell, 2009).

2.3.3 Women's experiences of intersectional oppressions

Stemming from their own experiences of multiple oppressions, the pioneering black feminists advanced an intersectional understanding of social disadvantage and exclusion (Shields, 2008). Their experiences as women were "simultaneously embedded and woven into" their experiences as black, and called for intersectional work against multiple sources of oppression (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p. 5), and lived experiences of sexism and racism continue to inform the use and advancement of intersectionality (see for example Sewpaul, in press; Bowleg, 2008). Giroux identified the white male as the marker of superiority (in Sewpaul, 2003), and black feminists have argued that one or the other category is often made invisible. Wing contended that, "Black women are not white women plus color, or Black men, plus gender" (as cited in Few, 2007, p. 456). This speaks to the inadequacy of an additive model, and stresses intersectionality's central tenet of different social categories being mutually constitutive. Bowleg (2008) experienced in her research on black lesbians that the different categories could not be separated without losing the significance of the experienced identity. Being a black lesbian woman was a meaningful whole.

Sewpaul (in press) reflected on her experiences of race and gender discrimination, and found that in some situations the source of discrimination could not be located within either race or gender. The effects were indistinguishable from each other, what Blake (as cited in Sewpaul, in press) called "gendered racism". Lived experiences ascertain that people who are oppressed in relation to several social categories cannot identify a sole or even a primary source of their oppressions (Bowleg, 2008).

2.3.4 Race, gender, and class

Women and men may attach to and experience different meanings of a given racial identity (Shields, 2008). For example, females may escape negative stereotypes ascribed to black men, as Samuels (in Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008) found in a study of transracial adoptees in a white community. Such negative stereotypes typically include criminality, and Oyewumi (2005) criticised how race is made invisible yet at the same time given explanatory power in American research on crime: “because of the history of racism, the underlying research question (even if unstated) is not why certain individuals commit crimes: it is actually why black people have such a propensity to do so” (p. 6). She argued that race is deeply embedded in social constructions of deviant social phenomena like crime, gangs, underclass, or poverty. Supporting the far-reaching intersections of race and social disadvantage, Samuels found that among young, black people in her study from the U.S., an “authentic Black experience” was ultimately about being poor (as cited in Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p. 8).

In South Africa, race and class also intersect profoundly. Through the history of colonialism and apartheid, black disadvantage was institutionalised in unprecedented ways. Today, race is considered all-important in policy-making to redress past injustices (Sewpaul, in press), glossing over the black economic elite that has emerged since democracy, and the complex interrelations between and the transition from a purely race-based segregation (which produced extreme socio-economic differences between racial groups) to an increasingly class-based, cross-racial segregation. It should be noted, though, that the majority of blacks are still poor, and that the majority of poor are still black.

The bulk of South African literature that I have come across focus on class or socio-economic statuses and factors, rather than race, and one could argue that race has been made invisible. However, it could also be a reflection of changes in demographics (poverty and wealth becoming increasingly cross-racial) and, probably more so, changes in policy and political ideology from race-oriented apartheid legislation to economic neo-liberalism. Bond (2004), for example, argued that class is

increasingly replacing race as a means of oppression and exclusion, and that South Africa is experiencing “systematic underdevelopment and segregation of the oppressed majority through structured economic, political, legal, and cultural practices” (p. 3).

2.3.5 Men’s oppression within their privilege

It is perhaps within an intersectional framework that one best can understand claims about men being victims and suffering under the current gender order. Both men and women argue that men suffer under the demands of hegemonic masculinity, for example that real men don’t cry (Kleinman, 2007). It is maintained that masculine ideals of force and violence are increasingly condemned in modern society and labelled anti-social, and that men suffer under a crisis of masculinity and confusion around appropriate gender roles (Gilligan, 2001; Xaba, 2001; Walker, 2005). Also, men are increasingly recognised as victims of violence (Hearn, 2007). Many studies from socio-economically deprived contexts, including South Africa (see for example Shefer, et al., 2007), point to the oppression experienced by men in terms of class and race, and that intersections with gender is fundamental to these experiences of oppression. More than simply suffering from poverty, men’s experience is mediated by gendered, cultural expectations of what it means to be a man and by the constraints poverty sets on men’s ability to live up to those expectations (Xaba, 2001; Hunter, 2005; Salo, 2007). Expectations of being a provider and breadwinner are especially difficult for men living in poverty, and cause much suffering (Ichou, 2008). Many South African studies highlight that not all men share power equally (Salo, 2007).

bell hooks (2004) wrote about the intersections of gender, race, and class in American or Western societies, and argued for the inclusion of race in understanding oppression of men. She contended that white capitalist patriarchal norms emasculate black men, and that poor, black men are at the bottom of the social ladder. (I discuss the issue of emasculated black, poor men as relevant to the South African context in chapter 4.) hooks’ assertion that poor, black men are at the bottom of the social ladder, points to marginalised masculinity. Connell (1995) argued that different masculinities exist side by side in any given society, and not all men fit under the category of hegemonic masculinity. Marginalised masculinity applies to men who are marginalised by for

example race or class. Due to their socio-economic or other oppression, they are unable to live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, yet they strive towards hegemonic masculinity to prove their manliness.

However, Kleinman (2007) argued that even if individual men may suffer due to characteristics of a hegemonic masculinity, they still benefit as a group. To not cry or show emotional vulnerability, for example, means to have the ability to act rationally and maintain composure under pressure, and thus justifies why men deserve more responsibility, respect, and pay than women (p. 42-43). The same goes for the ability to use violence and force, and the expectation to be breadwinner and head of households. Hearn (2007) commented: “Individual men, even millions, may be socially excluded and suffer, but men’s collective structural power may be undiminished, even reinforced” (p 23-24).

Intersections of gender, race, class, and other categories speak to the multiplicity of experiences of oppression and privilege. It is possible to be oppressed and privileged along different social categories at the same time, and people are often members of dominant and subordinate groups simultaneously (Dominelli, 2002a; Bowleg, 2008).

2.4 The dialectics of agency and structure

2.4.1 Critique of social constructionism as socially deterministic

In critical social constructionist theory, historical, geographical and social structures are fundamental in analysis, and gender is understood as mediated and created through these structures and through language and performances (as opposed to following directly from biological sex differences) (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). However, social constructionism has been criticized for assigning all power to structures and construing people as passive and powerless, thus being *socially deterministic*. The body is seen as, in the case of gender, a “canvas on which culture paints images of womanhood and manhood” (Connell, 2009, p. 54). For example, Jäger and Maier (2009) argued that discourses are supra-individual and that they “take on a life on their own” (p. 38) in their discussion of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis. They asserted that it is “not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject.... The subject is of interest not as an actor, but as a

product of discourses” (p. 37). Yet, they acknowledged human agency. While arguing that “[d]iscourses determine reality”, they quickly add: “though of course *always* via intervening *active* subjects in their social contexts as co-producers and co-agents of discourses” (p. 37, my italics).

Jäger and Maier (2009) first and foremost emphasised that no individual or group is *completely in charge* of discourses, and this must be seen in context of discourses’ function of securing dominance in a society. They acknowledged securing dominance in society as a function of discourse, and paid much attention to the power of discourse in constructing social reality (including privilege and inequality). In this, however, they asserted that the “active individual is fully involved, [as he] thinks, plans, constructs, interacts and fabricates, [and] also faces the problem of having to prevail, to assert himself, to find his place in society” (p. 38). So while human agency was acknowledged, Jäger and Maier argued that no individual or group “alone has full control over discourse” (p. 38), and that the “power effects of discourse should therefore not necessarily be interpreted as the conscious and manipulative intent of some individual or group” (p. 39). By this, they avoided turning critical theory into a kind of conspiracy theory where, for example, a few men are depicted as constructing a whole world order through discourse, fully aware of their doings and with the calculated purpose of holding others down to lift themselves up. As Foucault argued, power is exercised with intention, but not individual intention (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

2.4.2 The interconnectedness of agency and structure

Though “we are not passive “recipients” of an identity position, but “practice” ... identity” (Shields, 2008, p. 302), an understanding of the power of discourse as beyond the power of one individual or one group highlights the structural constraints within which human agency functions. As Karp noted: “[A]gency itself can never simply mean the (free) exercise of choice, or the carrying out of intentions. Choice itself is structured” (as cited in Salo, 2007: 164, brackets original).

Agency is not completely free, but structures are also being influenced, contested and resisted by people. Sathiparsad (2007) supported “Foucault’s contention that power

relations are always accompanied by relations of resistance” (p. 189). Morrell (2001) similarly argued that different meanings of masculinity “are socially and historically constructed in a process which involves contestation between rival understandings of what being a man should involve” (p. 7). People thus have and exercise power in a variety of ways. Resistance and contestation are furthermore not the only means of agency. Compliance is also a way of responding to oppression (or privilege) (Dominelli, 2002a). Kleinman (2007) observed: “action include everything from resistance to resignation” (p. 1).

It is important to note that our identity, gendered and otherwise, is not static, but constantly constructed and reconstructed (Dominelli, 2002a). Identities may be experienced as stable, giving a person a sense of continuity across time and location, but are fluid in that they can change and that the social meanings attached to a category (such as gender or class) or a person vary (Shields, 2008). The fluidity and the constant construction and reconstruction affirm (gender) identity (and by that also social orders and hierarchies) as an activity, and highlight the inherent capacity for change. There are always possibilities for deconstructing aspects related to oppression or privilege, and reconstruct alternative identities, discourses and social orders.

While emphasizing both structure and agency may seem like a contradiction, a dichotomous perception of agency and structure must be rejected and replaced by a dialectic understanding. An either-or thinking is too simplistic, and choosing one over the other is reductionist. Both must be included in an analysis, and the relation between the two must be recognised as multifaceted and fluid, and ever-changing (Mullaly, 2010). This is a central tenet of critical theory, and critical feminist theory, where “the basics include a recognition of the *systematic nature* of sexism and other inequalities ... and the *ability of human beings* to reinforce or subvert that system” (Kleinman, 2007, p. 108, my italics). Including both system/structure and person/agency, Kleinman also aptly pointed out that nothing we do is neutral – we either reinforce or subvert any given system. This is another defining principle of critical theory and critical feminism, where any claim to value-neutral research (or knowledge, or actions, etc) is dismissed as false and usually supporting the status quo (Humphries, 2008).

2.4.3 Critique of the limiting effects of postmodernist tendencies

Intersectionality rightfully draws attention to the multiplicity of identity as well as of oppression. The call for including other social identities in the analyses of gender was critical to counter discrimination within feminism with regards to race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and other social categories. So too the insistence on a constitutive mutuality rather than an additive function of different social categories. However, the call to avoid generalising labels and to acknowledge different women's different experience should not be exaggerated to the point where experiences of oppressions are so fragmented and individualised that it is impossible to speak of solidarity or take broader political action against oppression. That is, a postmodern vagueness or relativity may restrict the possibilities of collective action (Dominelli, 2002a). Though not homogenous, women share a common oppression (Kleinman, 2007), and exaggerated priority to labels may divert attention from the real struggles of black women and others (Collins, in Few, 2007).

In keeping with critical theory as the theoretical framework of this study, I acknowledge the intersectionality of oppressions and the importance of avoiding silencing generalisations. For example, I obviously cannot generalise my own experiences as a young woman to the young women in the study. I will also not generalise males' experiences of street life to females, as is the case in much of the literature on the topic. A further possible silencing that is relevant to this study is the dominant emphasis on working-class (as opposed to middle-class) concerns, and the lack of voices from and about people who do not even belong to the working-class, but are further marginalised, for example home-less youth. However, I want to avoid an over-emphasis on specific labels, and to emphasise the urgency of solidarity-based, emphatic, political action against oppressions.

2.4.4 Critique of the gender agenda as cultural imperialism

A different criticism was voiced by Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (2005). She argued that social constructionism in Western thought is still biologically deterministic. "Despite the preeminence of feminist social constructionism, ..., biological foundationalism, if not reductionism, is still at the center of gender discourses" (p. 10). The core problem according to Oyewumi is not the existence of this bio-logic itself, but how this

(according to her) Western discourse has been universalized through imperialism and imposed on other cultures. While I appreciate Oyewumi's critique of cultural imperialism, I reject her claim that gender understood as rooted in biological sex differences is an exclusively Western phenomenon, or that gender is not applicable or appropriate as a category for analysing social relations in other societies. Oyewumi (2005) used an example of age as the determiner of social roles and identities, independent from gender. She based her argument on language, and argued that because of its gender-free language the Yoruba culture in Nigeria did not differentiate or discriminate according to gender before the influence of colonialism, and that in fact colonialism invented gender in their communities. Other scholars disagree, however, and Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (in Connell, 2009) argued that Yoruba proverbs and other cultural evidence point to gendered patterns of power even before colonisation, and that Oyewumi looked too narrowly at the formal properties of language, overlooking how it is inscribed in social practices.

I firmly believe my own choice of a gender perspective on the analysis of homeless youth's lives in a South African city is justifiable and relevant. Whether a young person living on the street is a female or male has a huge impact on their lives. Any analysis ignoring gender relations, and instead looking exclusively at for instance age (to use Oyewumi's example of an alternative way of constructing and understanding identities and social stratifications) would turn a blind eye to a very defining feature of social life on the street. It would most probably silence women's experiences and misunderstand, in shallow or unempathic ways, men's experiences. My assertion is that gender plays a significant role. But an identity as woman or man is related to many different aspects, including for example age or parenthood, work, bodily appearance and sexuality (Connell, 2009), and is constituted through other social identities and intrinsically connected with for example socio-economics. It involves a fluid, never-ending process of negotiation and renegotiation with our contexts (Dominelli, 2002a).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the concepts of gender, intersectionality, and agency and structure, which underscore this study. In the next chapter I review literature about children and youth who live on the street.

Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ON STREET LIFE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review literature on street life. Much of the literature on street life is gender-blind and provides limited insight in terms of an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of street life. But some studies point out different experiences and risks for boys and girls, and this chapter is mainly a review of such literature describing street life. One source in this review is my own previous research study on the survival strategies of girls living on the street in Durban. The study consisted of a survey constructed and conducted within a participatory action research design (N = 89), focus groups with only girls, unstructured observation, and in-depth individual interviews (Osthus, 2009). It is the findings from that study that prompted this current study. Some of the studies I have included are not about street children or street youth, but on topics that are relevant for street life, in particular sex work and gangs.

I begin with a discussion on definitions of street children, then a section on why children come to the street, and then one on gender distribution, briefly exploring reasons for the difference in the number of boys and girls living on the street. Thereafter I go on to topics related to practical aspects of street life, starting with physical violence within the street community, gangs, sexual violence, and violence at the hand of the police. Then I continue with theft/robbery, begging, informal work, and sex work. Sex and love, HIV, and substance use are then discussed, and, lastly, the function of the group. I usually begin the different sections in this chapter with literature from other continents, then move to literature from the African continent, and lastly look at South Africa and Durban, and look for both patterns and contrasts.

3.2 Definitions

The definition of a street child is not straightforward, and several authors emphasise that there is no such thing as a global construct of a ‘street child’ (Ennew, 2003; O’Kane, 2003). In research and policymaking, a common classification is to distinguish between children *on* the streets, as children who work on the street but do not live there, and children *of* the streets, as children who work and live on the street –

often referred to as the UNICEF definition (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; Ennew, 2003; O’Kane, 2003; Cox & Pawar, 2006). Muikila (2006) found that all the children in his sample from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, had family ties and that nobody fit the “*of the street*” definition. A danger with differentiating between children on and of the street is that the former may not seem as ‘deserving’ for help and that the needs of all vulnerable children are compromised (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009). Many find these definitions unsatisfactory, and the distinction between *on* and *of* the street as irrelevant and inapplicable to their contexts. It does not reflect the complexities of the lives and relationships of street children, which do not necessarily fit neatly into one or the other category. An example of a more inclusive term is children *from* the street (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009).

Some authors (see for example Ennew, 2003) emphasised the diversity of ‘street children’ and ‘street life’ and questioned whether a definition is at all feasible and/or desirable. However, research, policymaking, or any other kind of communication and meaning-making is not possible if phenomena become too fragmented. Epstein (1996) discussed homelessness generally, including adults, and argued that in spite of the diversity, homelessness and street life share the following four characteristics: first, a public disclosure of personal destitution; second, the abandonment of a futuristic orientation; third, ceding one’s entitlement to private and personal space; and fourth, the sense of permanence with respect to personal and social relations is thrown into question because one’s ability to gain protection is challenged (p. 290).

An example of a more detailed categorisation is based more specifically on family relationships, distinguishing between children who see their family virtually daily, children who see their families intermittently, children who never see their families but know where they are, and children who have no contact with and no knowledge of their families of origin (Cox & Pawar, 2006). Another example looks at completely different criteria, namely reasons for being on the street: helping parents to earn a living, maltreated by their parents, from broken homes, parents unable to provide for them, just playing on the streets, and having no home whatsoever (Cox & Pawar, 2006). The authors provided a definition of street children that was meant to be vague enough to include the wide variety of children and lifestyles that exists on the street: “Street children are those who spend most of their time on the streets whether

working or not; have tenuous ties, or no ties at all, with their families; and have developed specific survival strategies” (p. 326).

A useful alternative for both practitioners and researchers is to construct a definition based on the local meanings and understandings of street children in the social, spatial, and time context in which they work or research, such as this definition developed in a study from Rwanda: “a homeless, orphaned or aimless child, one without a guardian, without a regular job, and therefore at risk of engaging in antisocial activities” (Veale & Donà, 2003, p. 259). Aptekar (in Lalor, 1999: 762) focused on constructions of childishness and asserted that, “When street children reached puberty, they became street people”. His statement turns the focus to age and the implications of age on the definition of a ‘street child’. Aptekar abandoned the legal definition of a child as any person below 18 years of age, and instead argued according to a ‘functional’ definition.

The studies discussed in this literature review used different definitions of street children and included different age groups. The legal definition of a child was quite common. For example, Kudrati, Plummer and Yousif (2008) used the legal definition of a child, and estimated that almost half the street children in Sudan were between 15 and 18 years old. Their findings supported a trend, reported by Veale and Donà (2003), of older street children in many African countries. In their study from Rwanda, almost half of the children were 15 years or older. Gopaul (2004) found that the majority of children in Durban were between 10 – 17 years old, but that they were generally introduced to street life by the age of seven.

Lalor (1999), however, estimated that approximately half of the street children in Ethiopia were less than 12 years old. He probably used a ‘functional’ definition in his study, excluding children who were under 18 years but who had “reached puberty” and become “street people” (cf. Aptekar in Lalor, 1999).

Trent (2007) also used a ‘functional’ definition in his study from Durban, though differently from Lalor or Aptekar. He studied two groups of street children, one staying in ‘Mayville Street’ and another by ‘Umgeni corner’. In the last group, he reported that the majority were between 18-21 years, and thus not legally defined as

children, although he consistently used the term ‘children’ when discussing his sample. The oldest participant in his study was 25 years. Trent’s study was based on his experiences at an NGO working with street children. Although he did not speak to it, his sample was based on the lived realities on the street. I also included participants above 18 years in my previous research study. Youth lived together in groups and shared challenges and opportunities, and a dividing line at age 18 made little sense in this context (Osthus, 2009).

3.3 Why do they come to the street?

Most studies highlight poverty and child abuse as influences behind the phenomenon of street children, as I elaborate below. Though some studies report an almost linear cause-effect argument, it should be noted that for all street children and street youth, the reasons for being on the street are usually complex and multiple with a web of interwoven factors (Lalor, 1999; Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009), and it often does not make sense to say that a child is on the street for one *or* the other reason (Veale & Doná, 2003).

3.3.1 Poverty

Poverty is reported as a main reason for coming to the streets worldwide. One study from Colombia found that 36% of children on the street came due to extreme poverty, 27% came because of family disintegration, and 20% because of physical abuse (Pineda, et al., cited in Lalor, 1999). Only 10% came to the streets in a search for adventure. Another Colombian study found that 48% of street children came due to financial reasons and 32% because of abuse in the home (Aptekar, cited in Lalor, 1999).

Within the African continent, poverty is usually mentioned as the main cause for living on the street, often combined with some specific features of poverty, such as lack of educational opportunities or HIV and AIDS (Veale & Doná, 2003; Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997). Also in Durban, poverty is reported as an important reason for why children come to the streets (Chetty, 1995; Motala & Smith, 2003; Gopaul, 2004; Trent, 2007). Gopaul (2004) emphasised that poverty in South Africa is a legacy of apartheid and argued that the underlying or real reason is apartheid. Trent

(2007) argued that poverty is the consequence of macro-economic policies, such as GEAR, which create unemployment. He also argued that the HIV epidemic contributes to poverty citing studies from Ivory Coast that have found “that when a family member has AIDS, average income falls by 52% - 67%, expenditures on health care quadruples, savings are depleted, and families go into dept to care for the sick” (Richter, as cited in Trent, 2007, p. 5).

Most authors thus recognised the importance of structural factors at the macro-level of society in understanding the phenomenon of children and youth living on the street (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009).

3.3.2 Child abuse

Consistent with worldwide trends, abuse or emotional factors are also referred to as important reasons for why children come to the streets of Durban (Motala & Smith, 2003; Gopaul, 2004; Trent, 2007). Gopaul (2004) found neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse as contributing factors. She also pointed to the negative effects of unstable families. In her study, she found that the males in the family were either abusing alcohol and/or drugs, and most fathers had been in and out of prison. Most of the children in Motala and Smith’s (2003) study related to physical abuse or neglect by caregivers. Trent (2007) referred to one boy who was severely abused at home and who was so scared when he saw his uncle at an attempt of family reunification that he urinated down his leg (p. 6).

In my earlier research, I found that most of the girls had been sexually abused, many of them by their step-fathers (Osthus, 2009). The girls’ stories of sexual abuse at home were consistent with the findings of a study on child rape in Northern Durban (Collings, Wiles, Bugwandeem & Suliman, 2007). The study found that eight out of ten children were raped by a person known to them, and that seven out of ten were raped indoors, for example in their own home or in the house of a friend. Both these findings challenge the myths that rape usually happens outside and by strangers. Interestingly, Collings et al.’s (2007) study found that the most common known perpetrators were father-figures (fathers, stepfathers, or mother’s boyfriends) and uncles, which is in line with the identification of stepfathers as the main perpetrators

by the girls in my previous study. Some of the girls had been sold to men by their mothers in exchange of money or alcohol (Osthus, 2009), consistent with Simpson's (2001) findings from an impoverished informal settlement in the Durban Metro region. This points to an interrelationship between poverty and child abuse in some cases, confirming the complex and interwoven factors influencing children and youth to come to the streets (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009).

3.3.3 Differences between children *on* and *of* the street

Differentiating between children *on* the street and children *of* the street, Lalor (1999) found that economic reasons were the major factor, at 72.6%, for children *on* the street in Ethiopia. In comparison, 30.5% of the children *of* the street came to the streets for economic reasons. Family disharmony was reported as the reason for 28.1% of them, and 30.1% had come to the street because they were displaced or orphaned. This revealed a significant difference between these categories of street children: "In however limited or restricted a format, children *on* the streets choose to come to the streets in order to make money. Children *of* the streets are more likely to come because there is nowhere else for them to go" (p. 762).

I question whether the push of poverty can be described as a choice. To come to the street to escape poverty may be no more or less a choice than to come in order to escape abuse. Both are actions taken to enhance chances of survival and wellbeing, and they are decisions made within a desperate context with restricted options to choose from (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009). One difference between the groups that Lalor's statement illuminates, though, is that children *on* the streets may go home to a family in the evening. Children *of* the streets have "nowhere else" to go. Whether they have been abused by those who were supposed to love and care for them the most, or they have been orphaned, they have experienced a sort of desertion.

In my previous study, the vast majority of participants slept outside and nobody slept at home or with their family (Osthus, 2009), and they would therefore be defined as children *of* the streets. The study's finding of the girls' widespread experiences of sexual abuse at home followed the pattern of the findings on abuse being a common experience among children *of* the street in Lalor's (1999) study.

3.4 Gender

Globally there are reported more boys than girls living on the streets. It is, for example, estimated that approximately 75% of street children are boys in such different contexts as Colombia and Ethiopia (Lalor, 1999). Street children in Africa are mainly street boys, and Veale and Donà (2003) refer to different studies finding that in Zimbabwe, 95% of 520 street children interviewed were boys, 84% were boys in a study in Angola and nearly 100% in a study from Sudan. In their own study from Rwanda, they found that 91% of the sample were boys and 9% girls, and the validity was checked and found to be in line with the reality on the street (Veale and Donà, 2003). Muikila (2006) commented that female street children were rarely seen, but found a “substantial number” in his study from Dar es Salaam (p. 87).

While studies hardly focus on gendered aspects of the street life itself (that is, once children have already come to the streets), literature on street children does provide some explanations for why so many of the children who come to the streets are boys. Socio-cultural norms are highlighted, such as that boys are socialised into being independent while girls are encouraged to stay at home. A study from Angola found that communities were more protective of girls than of boys and that family members were more likely to place girls than boys in children’s home during the aftermath of the civil conflict (Veale and Donà, 2003) This was also confirmed by Muikila (2006). Rural families’ dependence of girls’ labour is also suggested as a reason (Lalor, 1999). Muslim norms, where it is inappropriate for girls to wander unaccompanied in the streets, could also be an important factor in certain areas, including in Khartoum in Sudan where one study found that nearly 100% of the street child population were boys (Veale and Donà, 2003). Though maybe not to the same extent as in Muslim areas, it is considered less appropriate for girls to be on the street than for boys in most cultures. Gendered norms for acceptable behaviour could therefore be an explanation also in other contexts.

The numbers reported on boys and girls on the streets could be deceiving, though. Lalor (1999) noted that girls on the street often are defined as prostitutes, which hides the true incidence of girls living on the street. In a study from Mozambique, it was

hypothesized that there were fewer girls visible on the streets because they were easily forced into prostitution and child labour: “While the *presence* of homeless boys on the street is a constant reminder of the tragedy of war, the *absence* of girls is another” (Nordstrom as cited in Veale & Donà, 2003, p. 257, italics original). This has also been suggested as an explanation for the large number of boys compared to girls in the local context of Durban (Gopaul, 2004). Boys were in majority in both samples in Trent’s (2007) study from Durban, with 81% of the sample from Mayville street and 76% of the sample from Umgeni corner being males. But he acknowledged the possibility that there might be more girls living on the street, and he reported how service providers commented that it was more difficult to reach girls than boys due to girls’ sex trade activities.

Though my previous study did not specifically deal with understanding why there were fewer girls than boys living on the streets of Durban, some of its findings may help explain why it is so. The study found extreme levels of physical and sexual violence against girls on the street, and the risks and dangers faced by girls who live on the street are so grave that they may explain why fewer girls choose to stay on the street (Osthus, 2009). Though they may suffer just as much as boys in terms of poverty or abuse at home, and though boys are victims of violence on the streets too, coming to the street to escape home conditions may be a less viable option for girls than for boys.

3.5 Violence on the street

3.5.1 Physical violence within the street community

Violence within the street community is widely reported, with younger street children being victims of harassment by the older ones. In Ethiopia, Lalor (1999) found that younger street boys were vulnerable to theft and that older street boys usually robbed them. Street girls in their early teens were the most victimised group, being routinely threatened and robbed by older boys. Both gender and age thus influenced the pattern of violence.

In my previous study from Durban, the levels of violence on the streets were very high. In the survey, the majority of the girls reported witnessing violence several

times a day. I directly observed violence on the street quite often, in addition to observing the results in terms of injuries. Interviews and focus groups confirmed how widespread violence was in their everyday lives (Osthus, 2009).

Few girls in the survey reported committing violence, with the vast majority indicating “never”. Observation, however, indicated that girls were violent, though markedly less often and less severe compared to boys. The girls in the survey reported to be at the receiving end, with “daily” as the most common response to a question on how often they were victims of violence. Daily victimisation was consistent with both observation and focus group discussions. Most of the perpetrators were reported to be boys from the street (Osthus, 2009).

3.5.2 Gangs

Durban street life, and in particular violence in Durban street life, cannot be understood if one overlooks the two gangs “26” and “28”, also called the number gangs:

Most of the city has been divided into territories, with some sections, such as Point and South Beach, belonging to the 26s and other sections, such as Workshop and North Beach, belonging to the 28s. While the territories are further categorised into subgroups, it is the division between 26-areas and 28-areas that decide the movement and activities of these smaller subgroups. When people from the different territories meet, there is high risk of brutal violence. (Osthus, 2009, p. 47)

Since gang membership is mainly a male ritual and activity, I did not discuss or go into further details about the gangs in my previous study (which specifically focused on girls’ experiences of street life). Other studies that I have accessed on street life in Durban do not elaborate or even mention the gangs’ existence.

Even though there is no literature on the gangs on the street, there is literature about them from prisons. The number gangs originated in prisons, and they operate in all prisons across South Africa. The number gangs defy the formal authorities of the

prison system, and though they cannot deny the formal system, they challenge it through violence and through imposing their own rules on prison life (Steinberg, 2004). Number gangs control, among other things, communication in prison, deciding who can talk to who, and setting rules for how to bring up issues with the prison authorities – all done through violence. One of the participants in Christopher Hurst’s (2009) study from Westville Correctional Centre², explained: “Prisoners when he wants to solve his problem, like a gangster. He took a knife and stab other prisoners, when they call him they say, “What is your problem?” “Why did you stab him?” Then he tries to explain his problem” (p. 241).

Stabbing is central to the operation of the number gangs. Stabbing is a way to climb higher up in the gang hierarchy, which is rigidly constructed in a quasi-military fashion with different lines of soldiers and generals and judges. Though there is a strict hierarchy within a number, the main dividing line is between the numbers: 26 and 28. Their relation is highly mythologised, especially their sexual relations (Steinberg, 2004). 26s commonly control money, while 28s control sexual activity. The sexual activity involves only males, yet the inmates are defined as men or women, and achieve manhood or womanness, according to their role in the sex act (Gear, 2005). This is especially associated with 28s, which are infamous, and feared, for raping other inmates, while the 26s reject such sexual behaviour, that is, male to male sex. Their disagreement on acceptable sexual behaviour is at the core of the antagonism between them (Steinberg, 2004). The enmity between the 26s and 28s is fierce, and there have been wars, going on for years, between them in several South African prisons, with high levels of violence and fatalities (Steinberg, 2004; Hurst, 2009).

According to the number gang, an inmate has to stab in order to be a man or a soldier. It is not necessarily the stabbing per se that is the key to manhood. Rather, the stabbing is an opening act to the real test: persevering the punishment. “... one has to be beaten to a pulp without crying out; one has to sit in a dank cell for weeks and eat a

² the main prison in Durban

saltless diet; one has to emerge from *agter die berge*³ strong” (Steinberg, 2004, p. 210, italics original).

Steinberg (2004) described a change in the number gangs from being secret prison gangs to spill over to the outside world and infiltrate the gangs on the Cape Flats. Old number gangsters in prison lamented over the development and argued that it corrupted the number by deserting the strict laws as well as the understanding of underlying symbolism and significance, and paving the way for anarchy. Hurst (2009) similarly found that former prisoners observed that the number gangs spread to township youth, and were sceptical about their lack of knowledge of the traditions of the number. Prisoners in the number gangs thus indicate that the way the number works on the streets is not the real number. Yet, street life in Durban is on an overall level organised around it (Osthus, 2009).

3.5.3 Sexual violence

44% of girls *of the street* in Ethiopia reported being raped, and the perpetrators were usually street boys. The average age of their first experience of rape was 13.8 years (Lalor, 1999). In Sudan, Kudrati et al. (2008) found that, especially for girls, rape was a pervasive threat and experience, to the degree that the girls found it unrealistic to be able to completely avoid it. Gang rapes of girls were common, and the street boys seemed to believe that violence and threats were acceptable and expected introductions to sex. Boys also reported being raped by older boys and threatened with weapons like knives, clubs and rocks to comply with their sexual approaches.

Both boys and girls in Durban reported being raped, and some boys slept in different places every night to avoid gangs and men who attempted to rape them (Motala & Smith, 2003). In my previous research study, sexual violence against girls was common and widespread. As in the case of general violence, boys from the street were the main perpetrators of sexual violence. In the survey, girls reported boys from the street as the most common perpetrators of rape by far, at a weighty 88%. The finding was confirmed in focus groups, where girls’ experiences of rape were

³ “behind the mountain”, the solitary confinement used as punishment in prisons

explored and the use of threats and fear accompanied with rape was highlighted. One girl, aged 15, told about an experience she had had:

A boy was forcing me. ... He wanted to rape me. The first time, when? Long time ago. When I was 13 years old. He wanted to force me to sleep with him. And then, I went to call the police, and then he was locked up. [...] Even other people, when they go to jail, they come back outside, then he's gonna tell the friends, "hey, this girl she was ... telling the police" and then he will kill you. Another girl, she's dead here in town. (Osthus, 2009, p. 48)

Other girls told similar stories of threats and fear of retaliation, including being raped at gunpoint. It has been noted that despite the varieties of how rapes are done and the differences between rapists, one generalisation that could be made about rapists was that "they have a strong desire to assert their power through coercion" (Vogelman, 1990, p. 99).

The girls also told about the difficulties involved in reporting rape to the police. One girl explained:

The police ask you: "When you were crying, who could hear it when you were crying?" You will tell them: "He was forcing me to keep quiet". They say: "You can't just keep quiet when you doing something that you don't like". Now, what can you do? You can't tell the police, because the police are on the rapist's side. They always cover the rapist. They say: "Maybe you liked it", "You liked it what he was doing", "Why didn't you shout", "Why didn't you cry", "Who heard you crying". (Osthus, 2009, p. 54)

3.5.4 Violence at the hands of the police

Police are not only unhelpful when others have committed crimes and acts of violence against the girls living on the street; they are also perpetrators. Abuse by the police seems to be a global reality for street children and street youth. In Latin-America the violence appeared particularly brutal, with killing raids reported in for example Brazil (Lalor, 1999). In India, street children reported numerous cases of police violence,

where the police beat them, bribed them, locked them up and harassed them (O’Kane, 2003).

In Sudan, Kudrati et al. (2008) found that the majority of street children feared the police, and some would choose to sleep in sewage tunnels specifically because adults could not reach them there. When asked about their greatest challenge, 51% of the boys and 31% of the girls named harassment, arrest, or raids by police or public security officers. Most of the girls reported frequent harassment and rape by police, public security officers, drunken men and others, and girls who tried to reject the police were beaten and threatened with jail:

If we say no or reject them, by lying to them that we are menstruating, they beat us and threaten to arrest us and put us in jail. Sometimes, they frighten us with their guns. We believe their threats and get scared. So they take us to any turn or alley and force sex on us. (Kudrati et al., 2008, p. 442)

Street boys in Sudan also reported police harassment, including that the police beat them and took their money before releasing them (Kudrati et al., 2008). This is similar to reports from South Africa. Trent (2007) found that harassment by the police was identified as one of the street youth’s main risks or problems. They reported that the police would come and take their beddings and clothing. The police also put poisonous chemicals in the pans and utensils used for food preparation, and beat some of the street children with sjamboks. Some youth reported that they did not sleep certain nights out of fear for police harassment. Motala and Smith (2003) similarly found that the police was what the street children in Durban feared the most. One girl had a friend who was shot and killed by the police, and many had experienced being beaten.

Harassment of the police was also confirmed in my previous research study, as illustrated by the following extract:

During my involvement with the street children and street youth in Durban, one of the most common complaints has been about the treatment by the metro police. Their experiences with the metro police were further explored in the

survey, with the staggering finding that 100% of the respondents [both boys and girls] had experienced violent and/or abusive treatment by the metro police. Although some indicated positive experiences, for example “they help me” (8% of the girls), the same respondents also indicated negative experiences. (Osthus, 2009, p. 53)

On top of the finding that 100% of the survey respondents (including both boys and girls) had experienced violent and/or abusive treatment by the metro police, a shocking 44% of the girls reported sexual abuse by police officers, with rape and inappropriate touching being the most common forms. Discussions in focus groups revealed that it could typically happen in relation to arrests, when the police officer would offer a girl release in exchange of sex (Osthus, 2009).

3.6 Income generation

3.6.1 Theft/robbery

Globally, it is an observed trend that street boys are increasingly involved in theft as they progress through adolescence and grow older (Lalor, 1999). In Sudan, Kudrati et al. (2008) found that most street boys reported to sometimes engage in theft and 11% reported it as their main source of income. From their description, it seemed that the theft mainly happened non-violently and non-confrontationally. One boy described the process saying that the boy who steals “stands beside the victim in bus or railway stations, or at the library, and starts tearing their pocket [with a razor blade] until he reaches the money” (Kudrati, et.al. 2008, p. 441). Some boys only stole as a last resort, and they explained that doing bad things during hard times “is not taboo” (Kudrati, et al, 2008, p. 441). Muikila (2006) found that in addition to the need for food and the lack of other options, peer pressure was a significant factor for engaging in criminal activities among street children in Dar es Salaam.

In Durban, Trent (2007) found that only two boys reported robbery as their main source of and a daily activity for income in one of the groups. Gopaul (2004) reported that 30% of her sample engaged in theft. They were perhaps gross under-reportings. In my previous research study, there was an unmistakable discrepancy in findings about crime, violence, and other behaviours typically labelled ‘delinquent’ between

the survey on the one hand and observation and focus groups on the other. The research participants wanted to appear ‘good’, and divulged less good sides, consistent with observation, only in focus groups characterised by trust built over time (Osthus, 2009). The stealing activities described by Trent (2007) seemed to be more violent and confrontational than the description from Sudan, and the boys had to stay away from certain streets in fear of retaliation from community members and arrest by the police. Trent consistently used the term “robbery” to describe their activities, which is a much more violent and brutal connotation than “theft”, used by Kudrati et al. (2008).

Trent (2007) reported that the boys who engaged in robbery said they were too old for begging, and they complained that they had no job opportunities. They seemed to *want* to use other survival strategies, in particular to work, and appeared to engage in stealing reluctantly as their (perceived) last resort. Trent therefore argued that our prejudice, fear and condemnation against street youth were unfair; that society did not offer other opportunities and consequently had to take responsibility for its part.

3.6.2 Begging

Begging was reported quite widely in many studies on street children from different contexts. In Ethiopia, girls were found to beg in small groups (Lalor, 1999) and in Sudan, begging was reported as the main source of income for girls (Kudrati, et al, 2008). Very few boys in Sudan reported begging as an important source of income, and those who did were as young as 6 – 8 years of age (Kudrati, et al, 2008). This was consistent with global reports on how street children lose their ‘cuteness’ as they grow older and how this affects their survival strategy options. “Before that time [adolescence], the children were considered cute, which contributed to their success at begging for alms. But as they grew, the image changed; they were then perceived as thugs and treated accordingly” (Aptekar, as cited in Lalor, 1999, p. 762, brackets original).

This corresponds with Trent’s finding that the boys who engaged in robbery were too old for begging. Though no explicit mention of males or females is given in the above quote by Aptekar, it seems like it is related to boys (e.g. the reference to “thugs”). But

girls can also have similar experiences, and some girls in my previous research study said that they had begged when they were younger, but could not do it any longer because of people's negative reactions. Like this 15-year old girl explained: "I can't do that. ... I was doing it [earlier], putting paint in my face, and begging by the robot⁴. Now if I go to beg by the robot, people ask me "Why are you not working" ... Now I never beg by the robot" (Osthus, 2009, p. 63).

Trent (2007) reported that younger boys in particular begged, which is consistent with the above finding on the effect of age. In the Mayville street sample begging was the main source of income for young boys. The boys begged at traffic lights, outside fast food outlets and by a shopping centre. No girls were found begging by Trent (2007), in stark contrast to their Sudanese counterparts. Other studies from Durban, however, indicated that both boys and girls begged. Chetty (1995) reported begging as one of many strategies for income generation. Motala and Smith (2003) found that begging was the most common means of earning money to buy food, and that girls often begged outside clubs and bars, especially on weekends.

3.6.3 Informal work

Street children all over the world engage in many different activities in the informal job sector to generate income. In India, for example, street children were involved in many creative ways of generating income, and a main source of income was collecting rubbish for recycling (O'Kane, 2003). In Sudan, 29% of street boys reported independent work, including collecting coal scraps for resale, as their main source of income (Kudrati, et al., 2008). A similar use of recycling for income was not reported in studies from Durban, but many other forms of independent work was found (Chetty, 1995; Trent, 2007). Car guarding⁵ was identified as the main source of income for the group staying by Umgeni corner (Trent, 2007). Other activities reported in Durban were washing cars, pushing trolleys, carrying shopping bags and selling small commodities (Chetty, 1995; Gopaul, 2004). Kudrati et al. (2008) found that while boys engaged in a wide range of independent jobs in Khartoum, selling of small commodities was among the few activities that both boys and girls undertook

⁴ Traffic lights

⁵ helping drivers to find a parking spot and watching the parked car to guard against break-ins

for income generation. Trent similarly reported instances of both boys and girls selling things like cigarettes or running small tuck shops in Durban.

Working for others was the main source of income for the majority of street boys in Khartoum (42%), and their job tasks included cleaning stalls, hauling supplies and running errands. For girls, working for others mainly included temporary domestic work (Kudrati, et.al., 2008). Working for others was not found much among street children in Durban. Some older guys got temporary jobs at furniture shops loading furniture onto cars and vans, but the general view was that it was difficult to get jobs because most of them lacked identity documents (Trent, 2007).

In my previous study, I found that some boys engaged in different informal work activities, especially car guarding. Girls did not report this type of income generation. Their main source of income was from sex work (Osthus, 2009).

3.6.4 Sex work by boys

Some street boys in Sudan reported having sex with adult men for money and others with older street boys for glue (Kudrati, et al., 2008). In South Africa too, sex work by boys who lived on the street seemed to be quite common. Focus groups with street boys in seven different cities in South Africa all agreed that selling sex was the best way of getting money on the streets (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997). In Durban, Trent (2007) found that the youth reported that boys sold sex and that “this happens often” (p. 78).

3.6.5 Sex work by girls

In Ethiopia, Lalor (1999) reported that 44% of the girls *of* the streets engaged in sex work and none of the girls *on* the streets. In Dar es Salaam, Muikila (2006) found that no one would admit engaging in commercial sex themselves, but children admitted that “others” were doing it. In Sudan, Kudrati et al. (2008) found that 17% of surveyed girls reported sex work as their main source of income. The authors emphasised, however, that qualitative research suggested that sex work was common among street girls and an important source of income for the majority of them. The customers were not always outsiders, as some of the street girls reported to have sex

with street boys for money or glue. Sex work by girls living on the streets has also been found in Durban (Trent, 2007). One of his sample groups did not approve of sex work and although some girls engaged in it, their boyfriends beat them if it became known. The other group was more open about it and admitted that ‘selling of bodies’ occurred.

Leggett (1999) estimated that there were between 500-700 women involved in street sex work in Durban CBD. The women in his sample mainly lived in flats or hotels, and no one reported to live on the street. Only one person in his sample admitted to be under 18 years. Leggett (1999, 2001) found that the women sold sex either independently by walking the streets, or from brothels or escort agencies. Most of the women came from poor backgrounds, and had come to Durban to search for work. Most of them had engaged in sex work in the absence of other job opportunities. This is similar to findings from Johannesburg. Pettifor, Besinska and Rees (2000) estimated that there were 5.000-10.000 female sex workers in central Johannesburg, and that the majority of them came from poor areas and resorted to sex work when no other employment was found.

In Leggett’s (2001) findings from Durban, the women who chose to work from the street upheld their independence as the main advantage. They decided when to work, how often and for how long, and expressed that they were in control and regulated their working schedule according to their need for money. Pettifor et al. (2000) found that some women did not find alternative work at all, while others experienced that other jobs paid too little and chose sex work because of its independence and sense of control, “I worked at a cafe earning a low wage. I was struggling to make ends meet. I became a sex worker when I realised that the self-employed are always having money” (p. 37). To what extent the women actually were in control can be discussed, especially since so many of them expressed dreams of getting out of sex work, yet they did not (Leggett, 2001). Trotter (2008) also found that many of the women who engaged in sex work in his study of dock side prostitution in Durban and Cape Town had dreams of getting rich and getting out. The women in his study earned more money than what the women in Leggett’s (2001) study reported. Their customers were sailors from other countries, and many women dreamt of getting married to a German or Japanese seaman and live happily ever after. It did not happen, however

(Trotter, 2008). Yet, although their control over their work is contestable, the women in Leggett (2001) and Trotter's (2008) studies were able to pay rent and stay in flats or hotels, a key difference from the girls living on the street in Durban. Although sex work was their main income generating strategy, they all slept outside (Osthus, 2009).

Sex work is a hidden activity on the street. Trent (2007) found that service providers targeting street children were aware that many girls on the street were engaged in sex work but that they found it difficult to access these girls. I barely knew of its existence at the onset of my previous study, before the girls started talking about it in focus group discussions, and I was surprised by its extent and the girls' willingness to talk about it. The girls took conscious steps to hide their sex trade activities. One girl explained, "I have never done it next to where I stay. I come here in Durban, and I do it here in Durban" (Osthus, 2009, p. 60). Similarly, working away from home was found to be very common among sex workers in Durban by both Leggett (2001) and Trotter (2008), and it made it possible for the women to return home on visits with some dignity.

3.7 Sex and love

There are many different types of sex for young people on the street. I have already mentioned sexual violence and sex work. Then what about romantic relationships?

In Sudan, most girls reported to have a boyfriend on the street, even the youngest ones (Kudrati et al, 2008). In South Africa, many boys said they had same-aged girlfriends (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997). While the boys' relationships were described as "romance" (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997, p. 961), girls' relationships have been given a much more practical description or explanation, mainly that boyfriends provided girls with financial help and protection against physical and sexual harassment by others (Kudrati et al, 2008). Motala and Smith (2003) found that some girls in Durban received food from boys in exchange of sexual favours. Reddy (2005) referred to a research study among street children in Cape Town, which similarly found that many girls provided sexual favours for the boys, and that they received love, protection, and acceptance on the street in exchange. This illustrates how blurred the distinction between romantic sex and survival sex were, especially for girls.

Kudrati et al. (2008) commented that it was difficult to determine the degree of mutual affection and sexual pleasure in these relationships.

The boys from the focus groups in seven different cities in South Africa, distinguished between prostitution, rape, and survival sex, with survival sex being “sex engaged in for purposes of enlisting or mollifying powerful others, and in exchange for protection, accommodation, food, glue, or other goods and services” (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997, p. 961). It included sex with other (older) boys on the street. This description of survival sex is strikingly similar to the descriptions of girls’ so-called romantic relationships (Motala & Smith, 2003; Reddy, 2005; Kudrati et al, 2008).

In my previous research study from Durban, the findings corresponded largely with those described and discussed above. A few girls denied (currently) engaging in sex work, and explained it by referring to their working boyfriends. Also other girls expected money, food, and clothes from their boyfriends. Apart from providing material support, boyfriends’ crucial role was to protect the girls from physical and sexual violence, and some explained that protection was the main reason for having a boyfriend (Osthus, 2009).

Swart-Kruger & Richter (1997: 962) commented on boys’ sexual activities: “Only sexual intercourse with girlfriends affords street boys any direct personal control over their sexual experiences”. This may be true for boys, but for girls it may be argued that they have minimal personal control even in their sexual relations with boyfriends.

3.8 HIV

An estimated 5.6 million people lived with HIV in South Africa in 2009 (UNAIDS, no date). Data indicate that seroprevalence rates of street children are 10-25 times higher than other groups of adolescents (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997). Trent (2007) referred to a workshop held in a shelter in Durban, where all the girls (100%) who chose to get tested for HIV tested positive. But in one of his samples, HIV was not perceived as a risk or hazard, and although condoms were available, they were not used.

This is similar to the findings from the focus groups of street boys in different cities around South Africa, where HIV or AIDS were not listed as priorities by any of them and the attitude to condom use was negative (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997). The street boys listed much more immediate concerns as their priorities, primarily money and food, and the risk of HIV infection seemed to be abstract and distant compared to their other survival obstacles. This could also be related to one of the common characteristics of homelessness, namely the abandonment of a futuristic attitude, because survival becomes a moment-to-moment preoccupation (Epstein, 1996). It is similar to the situation for sex workers at the Durban dockside, where Trotter (2008) noted:

Though the women are at constant risk, they don't obsess over it. They merely add it to a long list of other concerns they must navigate through sex work. In fact, they are more fearful of pregnancy, a fate which burdens them with immediate and visible consequences. (p. 185)

The South African street boys failed to identify unprotected, penetrative sex as the means for HIV transmission, and had many moralistic explanations for the disease and who gets infected, such as “people who don't sleep at home everyday” or a germ aimed at wiping out black people (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997, p. 961). The dockside sex workers in Durban also had ‘mysterious’ explanations on AIDS-related deaths, mainly involving black magic (Trotter, 2008).

3.9 Substance use

Drug use is commonly associated with street children, especially glue sniffing. In Brazil, it was estimated that 80% of street children use drugs, especially inhalants like glue, aerosol, varnish and stain remover (Lalor, 1999). A study from India found that substance use was significantly associated with maltreatment of the child, pointing to an interrelationship between substance use and experiences of trauma (Pagare, Meena, Singh & Saha, 2004).

In my previous research study from Durban, both glue and alcohol were mentioned in a focus group as a way of dealing with the pain of sexual abuse (Osthus, 2009), thus confirming the findings in Pagare and others' (2004) study from India. This interrelationship was further confirmed in the survey, where the most common response given by girls (68%) to a question about why people sniff glue was "to forget about problems at home" (Osthus, 2009, p. 52). Other typical reasons, reported by both boys and girls, included to not feel hungry or cold.

3.10 The Group

Groups seem to be of vital importance for street children all around the world, and they organise themselves into groups primarily for protection (Lalor, 1999). Generally, girls have greater needs for protection than boys, and in the study from Ethiopia, street girls were found to carry out all their activities within the group setting and their groups were found to play an important protective and nurturing role if a girl was attacked or sick (Lalor, 1999).

In Sudan, girls' groups were reported to be more generous and supportive than boys' groups (Kudrati, et al, 2008), probably because of their unique vulnerabilities and needs. Street boys in Khartoum formed groups where they split during the day to seek money, and then joined again in the evening to share food, glue and cigarettes. Street girls in Khartoum formed groups that were generally smaller, with only 3-5 girls in one group. The groups in Sudan thus appeared to be gender-divided (Kudrati at al, 2008).

In Durban, children on the street were found to rely a lot on each other. Some supportive activities were carried out within a gender-specific group, for example, that the girls pooled the money they got from begging and bought a meal together and shared. However, boys and girls helped each other a lot, with boys providing protection for girls and girls providing help with domestic chores for boys, for example, cooking, washing their clothes and looking after their possessions (Motala & Smith, 2003). Trent (2007) similarly found that girls helped with cooking and washing clothes, and he commented on how the group operated as a family unit. This

is consistent with one of the main functions of the group, according to Lalor (1999), namely to fulfil familial needs.

Trent (2007) reported on friendships and love among the children, and also commented on the friendly welcome visitors like himself were given. Interestingly, street children have been found to have adequate mental health, despite their life styles and life circumstances, and this has been attributed to the strong friendships they formed with each other (Aptekar in Lalor, 1999). Children living on the street are no different from other children, but need and seek love and a sense of belonging – much of which is fulfilled through the group.

The findings in my previous research study were consistent with the findings above. When asked what they do when they are sick, getting help from friends on the street was a common response in the survey, and observation indicated a supportive function of the group. All street children in Durban lived in groups, and observation indicated that the groups consisted of both boys and girls, although there were gender-specific subgroups within a larger group that lived together. The groups were found to be like families, with close friendships, protection and material support (Osthus, 2009).

Among the girls, there were much solidarity and mutual support, and the exercise of sisterhood was found to be “one of the few hopeful aspects of life on the street” (Osthus, 2009, p. 74). The girls explained that whoever had money would buy food and they would share together. They also protected each other against physical and sexual violence by boys. What made this solidarity among the girls a hopeful aspect of street life was first and foremost its non-exploitative, non-violent nature, “As in terms of provision, the protection is provided ‘free of charge’ so to speak with no demands [of sex] in return, which is different compared with their relationships with boyfriends and other boys. The only expectation is mutuality in their sense of shared destination and sisterhood” (p. 76).

3.11 Conclusion

The dangers and difficulties of street life are vast. Children and youth living on the street are incredibly vulnerable and live in detrimental conditions with lack of substantial freedoms such as access to food, shelter, health, and education (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009). They experienced a lot of violence, and girls were particularly at risk (Osthus, 2009). Of 114 responses from 32 street girls in Ethiopia, every single response contained a negative consequence of street life and no positive aspect was mentioned (Lalor, 1999). Boys and girls living on the street faced many similar challenges, for example hunger, violence, rape, and lack of education (Motala & Smith, 2003; Trent, 2007; Kudrati et al, 2008). Boys seemed to be most vulnerable to being pushed into living on the street (Veale & Donà, 2003), but those girls who were on the street seemed to be even more vulnerable than boys to the hazards of street life (see, for example, Reddy, 2005).

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of literature on street children and youth, with a particular focus on differences and similarities between the experiences of girls and boys who live on the street. Literature on street life is to some extent silent about gendered experiences, especially in terms of in-depth understandings of the gendered dynamics on the street. In the next chapter, I discuss constructions of masculinities and femininities, in an intersectional perspective.

Chapter 4: LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONSTRUCTIONS OF

MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore constructions of masculinities and femininities. I begin with a historical account of the South African and/or Zulu context, briefly looking at the constructions of masculinities and femininities from pre-colonial times, through colonisation, industrialisation, and the liberation struggle. I then precede with discussing topics pre-eminent in contemporary society that are specifically relevant for this study, namely provider/breadwinner, motherhood and fatherhood, sexuality, and violence.

There is a danger that an apparent historical account, in terms of providing information chronologically, is in fact ahistorical, as it may fail to locate meaning, and add to prejudice rather than empathic understanding (Suttner, 2007). Though it falls outside this study's scope to make an extensive historical analysis, I have still chosen to include a historical account because today's gender constructions do not exist in a vacuum, but have emerged in a specific historical context. Locating current constructions of masculinities and femininities, whether in the wider South African society or on the streets of Durban, in a historical context should provide opportunities for deeper insight.

There are several different strategies in constructing masculinities and femininities at any given point in time. A hegemonic ideology is always co-existing with alternative ideologies and constructions of gender (Connell, 2009; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Also, as Gramsci argued, hegemonic ideologies emerge out of changing material conditions, and even they are therefore not static (Hunter, 2005). Throughout the discussions, I intend to pay attention to alternative constructions of masculinities and femininities together with hegemonic ones, and to the material conditions from which they emerge, in line with the intersectional focus of this study.

4.2 A historical account

4.2.1 The head of the homestead and the warrior

In pre-colonial times, one had to be the head of a homestead to really be a respectable man. The economic focus was on the homestead, and more specifically it's centre: the kraal and its cattle (Waetjen, 2004; Hunter, 2005). Having many cattle signified being a successful man, and having many cattle meant being able to marry many wives. Thus, being a successful man meant being able to marry many women (Hunter, 2005). It also meant fathering many children, and Desmond Lesejane (2006) called a father in pre-colonial times "the patriarch, the symbol and custodian of ultimate power and responsibility in the family and in the community" (p. 173). The man, or the father, was an uncontested authority, and with this authority came responsibilities of providing for and protecting women and children. Power and prestige were very male-oriented, with the father at the top of the ladder, followed by the eldest son, then other male relatives and, lastly, women and children (Lesejane, 2006).

Though women had little status or authority, they were of crucial importance in the running of the homestead and the society. Thembisa Waetjen (2004) argued that women's labour was *the* crucial component in pre-colonial Natal and that it was through wives' labour that men could accumulate wealth. Marriage and women were thus essential to men's wealth, and thus to men's achievement of manhood.

Linked to the Zulu kingdom, there was also a construction of a man as a warrior. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Zulu king Shaka had founded the Zulu kingdom and expanded it into a regional empire (Waetjen, 2004). Warrior qualities, for example bravery and fighting skills, marked manhood (Hunter, 2005; Suttner, 2007).

4.2.2 The migrant worker

The conditions for acquiring wealth changed dramatically during the colonial times and with industrialisation, especially with the mining industry. Black men were hired as cheap labour to work in the mines, and forced to leave their wives and children in the rural communities and move to urban centres around the mines. As implied in the

name, the apartheid⁶ regime intentionally used segregation to accumulate power and financial wealth for the white minority, and not only segregation between different racial groups, but also between different ethnic groups among black South Africans. The apartheid regime used gender and ethnicity in a wilful effort to divide and rule, as hindering black South Africans to unite and construct a common identity and a sense of belonging and solidarity was considered of utmost importance (Waetjen, 2004). The migration work system was part of this effort, as asserted by then Prime Minister Smuts:

It is only when segregation breaks down, when the whole family migrates from the tribal home and ... to the white man's town, that the tribal bond is snapped ... And it is this migration of the native family, of the females and children [that] should be prevented. As soon as this migration is permitted the process commences which ends in the urbanized detribalized native. (as cited in Waetjen, 2004, p. 36)

The male role of the breadwinner was consequently invented. In fact, in order “to become a man, the individual has to migrate (...) and fulfil the masculine function of breadwinner” (Waetjen, 2004, p. 80).

Women were also working in urban centres, often as domestic workers. Their financial power grew, and African men and the colonial state joined forces by looking to customary law to solidify patriarchal tradition and control women and women's sexuality (Waetjen, 2004). In pre-colonial times, though there were virginity testings and pregnancies outside marriage were considered scandals, women had been allowed some sexual freedom (Hunter, 2005). During colonial times, however, it became stricter, and a stark contrast was constructed for example between a man versus a woman with multiple partners. The woman would be labelled in derogatory terms, while men with multiple partners were to a larger degree celebrated as heroes. Hunter (2005) explains this with changes in the material conditions through which men constructed their masculinity. Black men's lower financial abilities, through the move from homestead-heads to migrant workers, made polygamy rare and marriage rates

⁶ Apartheid means separateness in Afrikaans

declined. Having multiple girlfriends became an alternative way for men to prove one's manhood. At the same time, men also compensated by asserting more control over women and women's (sexual) activities.

The humiliation experienced by black men during colonialism and apartheid were severe and amounted to a very real emasculation (Suttner, 2007). Black men were called "boys" by their white employers and bosses, regardless of age, and thus denied manhood. They also lost other manly roles except that of the breadwinner, as they were physically removed from home. On top of that, being exploited with low wages and few workers' rights, it was difficult to fulfil even the one role of the provider/breadwinner. The white minority rule was informed by a discourse of Africans as childlike, "the infantilisation of Africans and men in particular" (Suttner, 2007, p. 197), which justified the white minority's oppressive dominion. General Hertzog, then Prime Minister, said in 1926:

Next to the European, the Native stands as an 8-year old child to a man of great experience – a child in religion, a child in moral conviction; without art and without science; the most primitive needs, and the most elementary knowledge to provide for those needs. If ever a race had a need of guidance and protection from another people with which it is placed in contact, then it is the Native in his contact with the white man. (as cited in Suttner, 2007, p. 197)

The robbing of land, of nation, of citizenship, of dignity, of the right to move around freely, and everything else apartheid meant for black men and women, made their call for freedom and democracy a legitimate one. Suttner (2007) argues that the profound emasculation of black men entailed in apartheid made their claim of a need to restore manhood legitimate and a rightful part of the liberation struggle.

4.2.3 The liberation fighter

The denial of manhood was met with discourses of regaining manhood through the liberation struggle, that is, through joining the movement that would end the infantilisation of African men and take back their position as adults (Suttner, 2007). Becoming a man was particularly linked to joining the armed struggle, to fight the

oppression through violence. For example, Nelson Mandela referred to his military training as having “made me a man” (Cock, in Suttner, 2007, p. 209).

Joining the liberation movement, and particularly Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)⁷, was significant in restoring manhood in several ways, according to Suttner (2007). It increasingly meant facing danger, as the apartheid government responded brutally to resistance. It drew on “earlier pre-Union notions and values of manhood. These connoted martial bravery; they signified men who possessed land and who were able to protect it” (Suttner, 2007, p. 202).

The general notion of the resistance activist was that of a man going out to fight for the country, leaving women at home. Elaine Unterhalter (in Suttner, 2007) called this heroic masculinity, where men played the active role in heroic projects in the public realm with the support from women in the private realm. Suttner (2007) however contested its hegemony, pointing to alternative behaviours among men (such as tearful crying and longing for children) and to women actively involved in the liberation struggle as activists and soldiers.

Being active in the liberation movement called for a revolutionary morality, in which personal needs were sacrificed for the greater cause and this was especially linked to masculinity. Particularly with the apartheid government’s banning of political opposition, men had to leave their families to go underground and continue the struggle. Security measures often hindered them in saying good-bye or even informing their wives, and they would disappear quietly and could be gone for years. Eric Mtshali left his family to join MK, and eight years later, his wife died without them having been able to communicate at all. He referred to the revolutionary morality and the need to harden oneself to achieve success in underground struggle, as well as its connection to masculinity, when he commented, “Yes it did [pain me a lot], but I took it like a man” (Suttner, 2007, p. 218).

Women who joined the struggle met with similar expectations and experienced similar sufferings. Ruth Mompati, for example, was not able to return to her children

⁷ means ‘Spear of the Nation’, the armed wing of ANC

after having been sent for political training. Only after ten years of separation did they reconnect, “I was not their mother ... I was a stranger ... I think I suffered more, because they had substitutes. I hadn’t had any substitute babies” (Bernstein, as cited in Suttner, 2007, p. 217). Female soldiers thus met the same demands of sacrificing personal needs for the needs of the struggle as male soldiers. Women were active both in MK and the broader underground liberation movement, and held high positions, including having men under their command. Yet in some instances, women were expected to participate less than men and only to an extent where they still tended to their families and children. For example, Ben Turok wrote about himself and his wife Mary, “My personal life was now overtaken by my being swamped with work; I was constantly in meetings. Mary had also become fully integrated in COD⁸ as chair of the Johannesburg branch *while trying hard not to neglect the boys*” (Turok, as cited in Suttner, 2007, p. 211, italics original).

Yet also women who stayed behind at home while their husbands fought in the liberation struggle, were sacrificing their personal needs for the greater cause, carrying the responsibilities of the home and family alone. They raised the children alone, and also went to work, having to provide for their families (Suttner, 2007). Women working and effectively being breadwinners for their families contested the male breadwinner ideal. In fact, the liberation struggle brought about competing notions of masculinity. Being part of the resistance was difficult to combine with being a provider for one’s family. Mchunu (2007) argued that what is popularly understood as fighting between ANC and IFP, at a deeper level was a conflict between generations and a clash of masculinities. Younger men accused older men of complying with the oppressors in refusing to stay off work as part of the resistance, while older men protested against the constraints to their ability to feed their families imposed by what they regarded as young men out of (their) control. The ideals of a man as a political activist and as a worker/provider appeared quite incompatible, and in their drive for economic growth, the IFP battled to balance the two: “narratives of defiant Zulu warrior had to be rectified by those that advocated docile behaviour on the shop floor” (Waetjen, 2004, p. 8).

⁸ Congress of Democrats

4.2.4 Democracy

One of the defining features of post-apartheid South Africa is the new constitution. In contrast to the apartheid legislation, the new constitution is one of the most wide-ranging in the world in terms of securing against discrimination. Women's legislative rights are greatly improved, including in areas usually regarded as the private sphere, such as domestic violence, marital rape, and child maintenance. Yet, the legislative changes have not necessarily translated into positive changes in the lived realities of South African women, partly because men have responded with more violence (Walker, 2005). The considerable expectations for the new South Africa in terms of social and economic welfare and equitable access to resources and opportunities have failed, causing much frustrations and uncertainties (Mafema & Tshishonga, 2011). Many men grapple to find their place in the democratic South Africa, where their violence is no longer valued as a political liberatory action and they struggle to find alternative ways of asserting themselves in a manner respected or admired by society, made exceedingly difficult by the high unemployment rates and their minimal education (Xaba, 2001). Liz Walker (2005) argued that this struggle is a particular South African version of a "crisis of masculinity" (Frosh et al., as cited in Walker, 2005, p. 161), set in the transition between the apartheid past and the democratic present with tensions between violence and force on the one hand and provision and responsibility on the other.

Provision and violence are aspects of gendered identity formation that are relevant also to this study. I will now discuss constructions of masculinities and femininities in relation to provision, motherhood and fatherhood, sex and love, and violence.

4.3 Provider/breadwinner

Throughout history, being a provider has been a major way of asserting masculinity and being a real man. This is a common pattern globally. Ichou (2008) referred to a number of studies from different countries and continents, and argued that "hegemonic masculinity is built around the notion of being a breadwinner and providing for the family" throughout the world (p. 66). At different points in time and space, different political and socio-economic conditions have shaped this role. For example, the shift from the patriarch and the homestead-head to the mine-working

breadwinner as discussed above. In South Africa today, being able to provide is closely linked to being able to generate income, which mainly means to be employed.

Robert Morrell (2007) found in a study of school-going boys in Durban that the wish to provide for their families was very strong among township boys, and that work was central to constructions of masculinity across racial and socio-economic categories. Claire Ichou (2008) found a strong emphasis on work in her study on unemployed, black men in Clermont in Durban. All the men in her study maintained that a man has to work, often equating employment with being a real man, as this participant said, “if you are employed, then you are a man” (p. 45). They emphasized that work was important first and foremost as an income generator, and she concluded that money was “the most important tool for men to assert their masculinity” (p. 46). Township boys in Western Cape similarly regarded “having money, a car and a job [as] the ultimate” (Ratele, Fouten, Shefer, Strebel, Shabalala & Buikema., 2007, p. 125).

The primary importance of money and providing was confirmed in Elaine Salo’s (2007) study from Manenberg on the Cape Flats. Gangsterism is widespread in this area and becoming “ouens” (“good” gangsters who protect their local community but rob elsewhere) was the primary path to respectable(!) masculinity for the young men. The adult women, the mothers, in this area were very involved in maintaining a good image of their sons, yet they would boast about them having “obtained money or material resources by some mysterious means to provide for their households” (p. 179). Because these young men succeeded in the role as providers, they were successful men, despite their “mysterious means”.

One man in Ichou’s (2008) study from Clermont admitted engaging in criminal activities. He started shoplifting and pick pocketing when he was 15 years old, and though family members tried to convince him to stop, he maintained, “They can try but now who will help me? I am stealing because I don’t have any money” (p. 51). He effectively pointed to a problem faced by many men in South Africa. In today’s dire socio-economic climate, and especially with the high unemployment rate, men face immense challenges in living up to the masculine ideal of a provider.

Studies show that these challenges and men's failure to provide severely affect men's wellbeing and their sense of self and worth. Ichou (2008) found much emotional pain, such as hopelessness, low self-esteem and anxiety, and rage among the unemployed men in her study. Mkhize (2006) refers to a study on long-term effects of unemployment in an area of KwaZulu-Natal, which found considerable parental depression and that men were the most affected. This interview extract illustrates how closely an unemployed man linked working and providing to being a man, and how important being a man was to his sense of being human: "If you are not working, you are as good as dead. I have lost my dignity as a human being. ... I have lost my manhood. A man is a man because he can provide for his family." (p. 185-6). Another interview extract further confirms the crisis of masculinity experienced by some unemployed men: "[Being unemployed] is a big problem. I am now doing my wife's work [house chores], and she is gone to work [as a domestic]. It should not be so. I have lost the respect of my children. ... I can't provide them with anything. I am just like a child" (p. 186, brackets original).

This last extract brings women into the construction of masculinity and work. Being a provider is essentially about being a provider for a woman, and there are different constructions of men's work and women's work. Work outside the home, or paid work, is men's work, while women's work is constrained to the home (Kleinman, 2007). Yet, the interview extract illustrates that some women challenge these constructs and go out to work. Indeed, many women are providers. Studies from Durban, for example, documented women's home-based micro enterprises (Rasool & Mapadimeng, 2011) and informal street trading (Mapadimeng, 2011). The latter found that it was mostly women who engaged in informal economic activities such as street trading. Studies from KwaZulu-Natal indicate that marriage has ceased to be an option among the poor, and that cohabitation has also become unusual (Hunter, 2005; Denis & Ntsimane, 2006). Many, if not most, children experience absent fathers and live in families that are headed by a woman (Denis & Ntsimane, 2006).

Women as breadwinners challenge men's position as the head of the household. The unemployed men in Clermont disagreed about what happens to power in the household and the position of the head when a woman is a breadwinner (Ichou, 2008). Some reasoned that their wives were the heads of their households because they had

more income than the men, while others maintained that the men were still heads of the households. One young man said, “Her headship may be over something but she is not above you. Your manhood is there even if you are not working so you are still the head ... Even if she works there is no decision she can take without me” (p. 56).

This speaks to another aspect of provision in addition to the merely financial or material one, namely the ‘provision’ of decisions. The real man’s role of providing for his women and children include advises, rules and decisions, and this is especially important for the position of the head of the household (Lesejane, 2006). A boy from a study of school-going boys in Western Cape equalled being the head with the right to make decisions, “Men are always considered as the head of the household while women are subordinates to men. Therefore a woman is not allowed to equate her husband when it comes to household decision-making” (Ratele et al, 2007, p. 114). Indeed, this study found that most of the boys, from different socio-economic backgrounds and racial groups, agreed that a man “has a duty towards and an authority over females” (p. 114). School-going boys in KwaZulu-Natal valued “being trustworthy; providing for their families; offering leadership; advising others; being respected by others; and caring” (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p. 101), characteristics often regarded as part of a positive construction of masculinity (Morrell, 2007). Yet, the authors drew attention to how even these constructions maintain an ideology where men are above women: “many of these characteristics, while positive and desirable, were expressed in a patronising way, such as providing material possessions to women and children, effectively maintaining men in positions of power. ... even in men’s ‘caring’ behaviour is an implicit control of women” (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p. 101).

4.4 Motherhood and fatherhood

Literature shows that the notions of breadwinner and of men’s and women’s work are closely related to constructions of motherhood and fatherhood. Constructions of motherhood typically depict women as carers, while constructions of fatherhood typically emphasise on provision and fulfilling children’s material needs.

4.4.1 Motherhood: essential to womanhood

Motherhood is like a mirror image of celebrated femininity: woman as carer and nurturer. Worldwide, women are expected to provide nurturance to the men in their lives as well as to children, and make everyone feel good (Malacrida, 2009; Kleinman, 2009), and discourses of motherhood usually include “qualities that are stereotyped as core attributes of hegemonic femininity”, such as “the tasks of ‘protection, nurturance, training’, and a readiness to respond to the needs of children with ‘care and respect’” (Malacrida, 2009, p. 101).

Women from all cultural groups valued being biological mothers highly in a South African study by Vishanthie Sewpaul (1995). Motherhood is often regarded as natural for women, as “the ideal woman ... mothers naturally” (Malacrida, 2009, p. 99). Though she referred to the tasks of child-rearing, the perception of a real woman naturally being a mother also extends to childbearing. Like one man in a study from Cape Town stated, “Women are born to have children” (Dyer, Abrahams, Mokoena & Spuy, 2004, p. 962). Sewpaul (1995) found that infertility was an extremely painful experience, and that the failure to bear children led some of the women to wonder whether they were also failures as women and question how they could be successful or live fulfilling lives as women without giving birth.

While the equation of woman and mother is difficult for infertile women, it is an opportunity for women who otherwise struggle to assert themselves as women. A study on physically disabled women found that becoming mothers was an effective way of leaving a gender-less status as disabled and becoming gendered women as mothers: “Becoming a mother implied for many ‘capturing’ a gender” (Grue & Lærum, 2002, p. 676). For women who had been physically disabled since childhood, this was a first experience. Women who had become physically disabled later in life, either through accident or illness, regained a status they had lost. Both groups experienced that becoming a mother made them achieve womanhood, and gave them a sense of being normal or equal to, or at least of equal status as non-disabled women. Like one woman in the study said: “I instantly felt more like a woman when my son was born. During my whole life I had felt like a person without gender. ...My child made it possible for me to say both to myself and in relation to other women—see, I am the same as you” (p. 676).

Reviewing sociological, cultural and anthropological work on motherhood, Sarah Wilson (2007) found that it was marginalised women in particular that found motherhood's significance to women's identity attractive. This corresponds with Grue and Lærum's (2002) findings, where the women experienced their disabilities as socially excluding. A study from Australia found that motherhood provided a purpose in life when few other options were available and that teenage girls from socially deprived backgrounds therefore chose to be mothers (Hanna, 2001), and American studies have found similar patterns (Kleinman, 2007). In South Africa, girls in a disadvantaged community were restricted to an ideology of femininity in which motherhood was the only role that was celebrated (Salo, 2007).

Kleinman (2007) also referred to a study of middle-class and working-class women in the United States, where the working class women were found to have on average a more positive image of motherhood prior to their pregnancies and many more of the middle-class women than working-class women considered never becoming mothers, due to working-class women's fewer options for developing a valued self. Yet, the middle-class women had bought into the ideology that a real woman has children, and would not, for example, be sterilized even if they did not want children: "Thus for years, women could be nonmothers but potential mothers at the same time", and when they eventually had children, it was "more a *rejection* of permanent childlessness than an *embrace*ment of motherhood" (McMahon, as cited in Kleinman, 2007, p. 93, italics original). So even though motherhood might be most valued by marginalised women, it is perceived as essential to real womanhood across contexts.

4.4.2 Performing good motherhood

Becoming mothers changed the perceptions of their bodies for the physically disabled women in Grue and Lærum's (2002) study, from a perception dominated by impairment, to one where the body was given great value, capable of producing new life. Yet, this perception of their bodies, as well as their new identities, were precarious in the encounter with discourses on disability and the subsequent clashes with discourses on good mothering. Their bodies' impairments entailed a contestation of the very notions of good mothers as carers, nurturers, and always ready to respond

to their children's needs (cf. the quote by Malacrida (2009) above). For one, the mothers faced practical challenges in how to respond to their children's needs or keep their children safe, as they could not move around like other mothers. Secondly, and more essentially, they contested the seeming incompatibility of discourses on disability and discourses on motherhood. "Disabled people on the whole are primarily still looked upon as being dependent on other people's help and care ... as receivers, and not as carers" (Grue & Lærum, 2002, p. 671).

It was challenging for the disabled mothers to reconcile the two, and they felt a pressure to legitimate their motherhood by being "supermums" and demonstrating that they were "good enough mothers" (p. 677). Malacrida (2009) found the same tendency of making extra efforts to appear socially acceptable and competent as mothers in her study on physically and mentally disabled women in Canada.

Another group of women who contest the discourse on good women in profound ways are sex workers. They do not struggle with perceptions of being genderless, like the disabled women, but they are perhaps too gendered, in a way that challenge notions of modesty and decency in hegemonic femininity. The concept of commercial sex workers being mothers is controversial and research studies typically focus on the risks and vulnerabilities of their children, especially of female children, for example, sexual abuse, early sexual debut, introduction to sex work, and witnessing adult sexual activity (Beard, Biemba, Brooks, Costello, Ommerborn, Bresnahan, Flynn & Simon, 2010). Some research studies include sex workers' competency as mothers, for example one study from Nairobi, which found that more than ninety percent of the mothers in their study engaged in daily childcare activities like food preparation and washing of children's clothes, and that almost all of their under-five years old children were fully immunized (Chege, Kabiru, Mbithi & Bwayo, 2002). Though reporting situations of good mothering, the study was still concerned with the potential risks of the children, and not with the experiences of the mothers (as in the studies on disabled women discussed above), and thus invested in the contradiction of the discourses on women as good mothers vs. women as sex workers.

The middle-class women in McMahon's study (in Kleinman, 2007) considered a good woman to have children only when she was ready, that is, emotionally mature and

financially prepared, and women who had children before they had achieved this readiness were regarded as undeserving of motherhood. The working-class women, however, had a different experience, and the class-based readiness was out of their reach. One of them said: “[In deciding when to have children] you can’t say that you wanted to get financially stable, because that never happens, and you’d never have children if you waited for that. It just seemed as good a time as any [to have children]” (McMahon, as cited in Kleinman, 2007, p. 93, brackets original). Highlighting the constraints through which women of lower socio-economic status have to negotiate motherhood, the working-class women instead saw themselves as becoming mature “*through* having a child” (McMahon, as cited in Kleinman, 2007, p. 92, italics original).

4.4.3 Motherhood as a communal duty in African communities

Sewpaul (1995) found that for black women, childbearing was of particular importance. Given the emphasis on community in the African worldview, marriage and childbearing were considered communal matters affecting the clan (rather than simply individual or personal matters), and children were esteemed as “*izizukulwane*, a revered term meaning “generations”” (Sewpaul, 1995, p. 217, italics original). Childbearing is thus also a spiritual matter, involving ancestors.

In contrast to the other women, black women in Sewpaul’s (1995) study were labelled in derogatory ways because of their childlessness. Both the women and representatives of African traditional religion confirmed the lowered status of childless women. Sewpaul’s findings supported the argument that fertility and childbearing have special importance in African communities and that “the bearing of children is seen as an essential part of being a woman and of achieving success as one” (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, as cited in Sewpaul, 1995, p. 216). The high value placed on fertility and its strong links to community in African cultures have been confirmed in other studies (Dyer, Mokoena, Maritz & Spuy, 2008). Studies have found that it was a factor supporting teenage pregnancy in KwaZulu-Natal, that single women with children functioned as role-models on successful womanhood for teenage girls as they were neither ostracized from nor ridiculed by society (Preston-Whyte, Zondi, Mavundla & Gumede, 1990), and that some teenagers did not want to

use condoms as they wished to prove their fertility (Abdool Karim, Abdool Karim, Preson-Whyte & Sankar, 1992).

4.4.4 Fatherhood

Family was found to be important for male identity, especially for poor and African boys, in Morrell's (2007) study of school-going boys in Durban, where "virtually all township boys ... expressed the importance of family" (p. 80). More specifically, they expressed a strong wish to become fathers, and fatherhood was an important marker of masculinity for them, "Amongst the township boys, fatherhood is a dream that organises life narratives and dreams" (p. 83). Fatherhood was seen as essential to manhood among childless men in a study from Cape Town, where one man said, "You feel like you are half a man" and another, "You see, you are ... a man because you have children. But if you don't have children some other guys say you are a woman" (Dyer, et al., 2004, p. 963). Failing to have children thus led the men to question whether they were real men, or even men at all.

The men in Dyer et al.'s (2004) study were attending a public health institution rendering health services to socially disadvantaged communities. There was a significant difference in the importance given to fatherhood between boys from different socio-economic backgrounds in Morrell's (2007) study of school-going boys in Durban. For the more privileged boys, fatherhood was not of any major importance, and they were more concerned with short-term goals like academic performance. This is parallel to the findings on motherhood and socio-economic situation discussed above, and confirms that parenthood is an alternative way to status for men and women with fewer options due to socio-economic disadvantage (Kleinman, 2007; Hanna, 2001). Morrell (2007) commented:

If one adds ... the unequal effects of globalisation on developing countries such as South Africa, the value given to family, fatherhood and tradition makes sense. ... The masculinity of new world boys⁹ can be constructed around work and professional identity. For township boys, identity will most strongly be founded on family and fatherhood. (p. 87-88)

⁹ from socio-economic privileged backgrounds

Fatherhood is thus an alternative path to manhood for those men who are socio-economically disadvantaged and excluded from asserting a successful masculinity through work and career. However, the role of the father is so intricately linked to the role of the provider that one can hardly separate the two. The men in Clermont were very insistent on the primacy of providing materially for their children, and Ichou (2008) concluded that “fathering was *restricted* to “getting the children all their necessary needs”” (p. 44, italics added). For some, the pressure to provide for one’s family in order to live up to the notion of fatherhood is unbearable and they opt to leave. One man explained:

Eish man this is difficult especially to me because I am not working and I have a child and the child needs milk but I am not working. ... I’ll end up running away from the mother and the baby, and the child will grow up without a father. Why? It is because there is no job. (Ichou, 2008, p. 50)

Salo (2007) similarly found in her study on disadvantaged youth in Western Cape that young men regarded fatherhood as a crucial stage in obtaining manhood, and that being a father mainly meant being a provider. This construction of fatherhood coupled with their socio-economic situation made performing fatherhood difficult and risky: “Their identities as fathers are inherently fraught with, and fractured across the fault lines of their sporadic access to material resources” (p. 177).

Though the infertile men in Dyer et al.’s (2004) study from Cape Town reported that infertility challenged their identity as men, the study concluded that fatherhood was secondary to men’s primary role as workers and providers, and motherhood was more central to women’s identity, thus highlighting the exalted position of providing in hegemonic masculinity.

4.5 Sex and Love

4.5.1 Constructing masculinity through sex

Multiple partners and unsafe sex are found to be “normative vehicles for establishing the manhood of boys and men” in several studies across South Africa (Lindegger &

Maxwell, 2007, p. 95). For Zulu men, an identity as an *isoka*¹⁰ has become a substitute to the masculine ideal of a man as the head of the pre-colonial and pre-industrial homestead (Hunter, 2005).

The practice of multiple sexual partners as a method of attaining masculinity is upheld by “what has been well documented nationally and internationally as the ‘male sexual drive discourse’” (Ratele et al, 2007, p. 116). In this discourse, sexual conquest is central for asserting masculinity (Kleinman, 2007). Reshma Sathiparsad (2007) found in her study on school-going boys in Ugu district in KwaZulu-Natal that their masculine identity was built on notions of “insatiable sexuality” (p. 187). One boy said, “I don’t remember a man having had enough”, and another said, “Once you let him taste, he will want it all the time” (p. 188). More important than actually adhering to the male sexual drive discourse, school-going boys in another study from KwaZulu-Natal strived at *displaying* themselves as popular with girls, boasting among their male friends, and some times lying about their success with girlfriends (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Others have also found that it is other men and their opinions that are important in men’s construction of masculine identities, that men define and assert their masculinity in relation to other men, and not necessarily in relation to women (Kleinman, 2007).

4.5.2 Constructions of women and sex

In their study of school-going boys in Western Cape, Ratele et al. (2007) found that sex was constructed as critical for a real man’s wellbeing, and as something that set males apart from females. They commented, “Apparently males, and not females – or at least males more than females – need sex with females on pain of insanity. The male need for heterosexual sex is a maddening, potent obligation” (p. 117).

Their argument directs the attention to how masculine sexuality is constructed in opposition to feminine sexuality. While a proper, admirable man is constructed as sexually active, and even sexually conquering, a proper and well-regarded woman is constructed as sexually modest and passive (Hunter, 2005; Connell, 2009). Girls and women face a contentious contradiction: they are expected to provide sex (indeed it is

¹⁰ a Don Juan, a player, someone who is successful with women (Hunter, 2005)

essential to the construction of masculinity that the objects of men's sexual conquests are females and not other males, see Ratele et al., 2007), yet it is not acceptable for women to initiate it (Sathiparsad, 2007).

Even though women are the desired objects of men's sexual conquests, their sexuality is feared by men. Women as "vectors of disease" was one of the common constructions of women in a study of school-going boys in KwaZulu-Natal (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p. 102). Similar constructions were also found by Sathiparsad (2007) and Ichou (2008), and Bhana (2005) commented on the discourse of "the "polluting" effects of femininity" (p. 212) found among boys in her study at a school in Durban. Women are often blamed for spreading HIV (Sathiparsad, 2007), a trend also found among researchers who often focus on women, especially women who sell sex, as "high frequency transmitters of HIV", while the men who had sex with them are invisible (Kleinman, 2007, p. 27). They fail to address structural influences on the HIV-epidemic, and more so, structural influences regarding men and masculinity, such as male dominance (Strebel, Crawford, Shefer, Cloete, Henda, Kaufman, Simbayi, Magome & Kalichman, 2006), and the acceptance and expectance of multiple sex-partners for men (Nattrass, 2004).

4.5.3 Money and sex

Another contradiction women meet is about "the materiality of everyday sex" (Hunter, 2010, p. 178). Though not considered prostitution by neither the women and men involved nor by the community in his study from KwaZulu-Natal, Hunter (2010) found that money and sex was very closely connected.

School-going boys from KwaZulu-Natal claimed that girls preferred older and wealthy men, and were very upset by this, condemning it strongly (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Yet, it turned out that the boys were not against the practice per se, but rather were dismayed because of their own low status and lack of economic resources to pursue girls as successfully as the wealthier, older men. These men were able to maintain "men's control of women through economic resources" (p. 103), a position the school-going boys were excluded from, yet wanted. The materiality of

sex is thus linked to the connection between men's sexuality and the possession of women (Hearn, 2007).

The materiality of sex is not peculiar to KwaZulu-Natal, or even to women and men living in poverty. An American sex worker commented on how sexual relations typically labelled transactional are merely a continuation of more conventional relations: "Women ... receive subtle messages from childhood onward to use their sexuality as a bargaining chip in exchange for economic security and protection from a man under the guise of "love" and family formation" (Goodson, 1997).

4.5.4 Non-conforming sex

The way masculine sexuality is used in the construction of manhood is evident in the reactions toward boys who behave differently in their relationships with girls. One boy from the Western Cape said: "I don't sleep with my girlfriend, the boys ... call me a sissy" (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007, p. 140). Men's sex with men is very controversial in South Africa, and homophobic violence is on the rise (Walker, 2005). School-going boys in Western Cape expressed a complete rejection of gays, and fear of being identified as one. However, "the performance of moffie-ness¹¹ (ultimately more feminised masculinity) was what was offensive, rather than gay sexuality *per se* ... highlighting the centrality of action and appearance in the meaning made of being a boy/man" (Ratele et al., 2007, p. 126, brackets original).

4.6 Violence

4.6.1 Violence in constructions of masculinity

South Africa has, with apartheid's violations of the dignity of the majority of the country's people, a severe history of violence (Sathiparsad, 2008). The pervasiveness of violence in the South African society from apartheid until today has prompted discussions on a "culture of violence" (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007, p. 129). A better understanding of the gendered nature of the violence and the prominence of males' perpetuation (including in structural violence, such as the apartheid rule) has been called for (Campbell, in Mchunu, 2007).

¹¹ "moffie" is slang for "gay" (Ratele, et al., 2007)

Violence is generally perpetrated by men. A man is more than 20 times more likely to kill another man than a woman is to kill another woman, and the difference in probability is even larger when we compare the likelihood of a man killing a woman than a woman killing a man (Clare, 2000). There is more gender-based violence in South Africa than anywhere else in the world. About two per cent of South African women between the ages of 17 and 48 are raped every year, five women are killed every week by an intimate partner, about 30 per cent of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have been forced into sexual initiation, and about 50 per cent of teenagers' dating relationships include physically violent interaction (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007, p. 128-129). Abusive and violent behaviour seem common among men in KZN (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Violence in relationships was the norm among boys going to rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal (Sathiparsad, 2008), and the hegemonic masculinity among boys at a township school in Durban was characterised by violence (Bhana, 2005).

Violence is a strong marker of masculinity in many parts of the world, and throughout history. Constructions of what it means to be a real man commonly include being powerful, courageous, strong, being able to endure pain, being protective, aggressive, and in control. If a man fails to show these features, his manliness may be doubted, and his perception of being a real man might be threatened. The restoration of manliness can be done through violence, which is seen as an expression of power, strength, courage, aggression and apparent control. Violence is thus a gender-specific means of undoing shame and establishing pride for men (Gilligan, 2001). The problem of violence is therefore often being understood as a problem of masculinity (Morrell, 2007). The effect of violence in undoing shame is evident in this 16-year-old boy's explanation of why he hit his girlfriend: "Some times I hit her if I have to. I mean if she disrespects me in public I have to react immediately. Otherwise people might think I am weak" (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007, p. 142).

Generally, relationships full of conflicts about finances and jealousy are more violent than others (Jewkes, 2002). Violence as a reaction to jealousy has been found in local studies, including in cases where boys or men suspected a female partner's infidelity (Sathiparsad, 2007). Women separating from their partners are at much greater risk of

violence than other marital statuses (Hearn, 2007), and women who consider leaving a partner is at particular risk (Jewkes, 2002). The violence is clearly not only about jealousy or undoing shame, but also about establishing or maintaining control over the female partner (Sathiparsad, 2008). Young men used violence to control the movements of young women in their area and ensure that they did not find boyfriends in other areas in a coloured community in Cape Town (Salo, 2007). Their violence constrained the young women's physical movements and demonstrated the young men's toughness to their rivals. Violence is often used to show off to other men, and the majority of men in a study from Cato Manor in Durban were arrested for violent crimes over girlfriends and bravado over other males (Ntuli, 2009).

Violence is used not only to control women, but also to control other men. Mchunu (2007) explained inter-generational violence in the wake of the liberation struggle as older men's attempt at disciplining young men who were out of their control and refused to abide by the older men's authority. The ability to control others is a crucial aspect of hegemonic masculinity, and can be a determining factor in the construction of a masculine identity for men whose masculinity is otherwise challenged. In a study on disabled men, for example, some men resolved the problem of feeling emasculated and regained a sense of being real men through their control of their environments (primarily their assistants), thus constructing themselves as successful and normal white, middle-class men (Gerschick & Miller, in Kleinman, 2007).

4.6.2 Violence as a response to poverty

Reviewing international literature, Rachel Jewkes (2002) found that poverty and its associated stress were key influences to men's violence against women. However, poverty is not directly linked to violence, but is mediated through poverty's effects on masculine identity or the crisis of masculinity (Jewkes, 2002). This is thus quite similar to the discussion above, where violence is explained as a response to experiences that challenge a man's sense of masculinity at an interpersonal level, such as jealousy or lack of control over his girlfriend. In the case of poverty, men's sense of masculinity is challenged at a broader structural level.

South African studies have found that men explained their violence as a response to their failure to fulfil the role of the breadwinner (Mchunu, 2007). The lack of employment opportunities created much frustration for men, and some explained violence as a result of this stress (Ichou, 2008). Dyer et al. (2004) found that involuntary childlessness could be linked to domestic violence, and explained it through the threat to masculine identity posed by infertility. Some studies highlight that the violence would not only be directed towards women, but also towards other men (Bhana, 2005). Either way, studies confirm that some men make claims to masculinity through violence when poverty and social disadvantage hinder them in performing other types of masculinity (Jewkes, 2002). It is thus mainly about the experience of social exclusion, and not material poverty per se (Hearn, 2007).

Furthermore, it is about how being socially excluded feels like an assault to the masculine identity and how the social exclusion is experienced as a threat against a man's manliness. The mediation through the masculine identity points to male vulnerability and how men's violence is rooted in male vulnerability, derived from social expectations of masculinity that are out of reach because of socio-economic factors (Jewkes, 2002). Rather than simply being an expression of men's power over women (or over other men), violence is thus an action that creates and constructs power, especially useful when men feel that their power otherwise is threatened (Kleinman, 2007). Jewkes (2002) found, for example, that women's gender role transgressions and challenges to male privilege were particularly strongly associated with men's violence, for example relations where husbands had lower status or fewer resources than their wives. As an action requiring characteristics typically celebrated as masculine, violence is thus effective in restoring "a wounded sense of masculinity" (Kleinman, 2007, p. 53).

One factor that seems to be "necessary in an epidemiological sense" for men's violence against women in intimate relationships is women's unequal position in the particular relationship and in society (Jewkes, 2002, p. 11). Hearn (2007) argued that power over women is fundamental in black, marginalised men's constructions of violence, yet he warned against simplifying and essentialising marginalised men's use of violence. Clearly, men of all classes of society abuse power (Hearn, 2007). It is men in powerful positions in society that are behind most of the broader structural

violence, including the violence entailed in capitalism, violence against the environment and the earth, and wars (Connell, 2009). However, Hearn (2007) emphasised “the interlinking of men’s violence with economic and material circumstances, and issues of social inclusion and exclusion” (p. 21). Walker (2005) argued that the crisis of masculinity in South Africa being specifically located in the clashing of post-1994 masculinity, emphasising gender equality, and pre-1994 masculinity, characterised by authoritarianism. The male-exclusive power and authority dating as far back as pre-colonial times (Lesejane, 2006) are altered in the new constitution, and it is a challenge for men to construct new, acceptable masculinities (Walker, 2005). Kleinman (2007) contended that men “who lack signifiers of hegemonic masculinity – poor men, men of color, gay or bisexual men, men with disabilities – may be especially fearful of the control they are losing or have lost” (p. 51). The frustrations around the lack of socio-economic improvement (and the consequent lack of opportunities) for the majority of poor people in the new South Africa, is thus a possible explanation for the extensive use of violence among marginalised black men (Xaba, 2001).

4.6.3 Women and violence

Being caring is a defining feature of a woman according to hegemonic femininity (Kleinman, 2009). Violence being “a graphic form of non-caring for others” (Hearn, 2007, p. 28) is not compatible with proper womanhood. Violence is therefore not a general means of undoing shame or establishing respect, but a highly gender-specific strategy available to men. If a woman is insulted or her femininity is doubted, violent acts will not be effective in the same way for her as for man, as such actions would be further proof of her unfemininity (Gilligan, 2001).

Women are instead expected to be quiet, peaceful, vulnerable, and passive, and those who fail to adhere are at increased risk of violent reactions from men (Jewkes, 2002). Non-conforming behaviour by women may simply be to question established beliefs and practices, and to engage in activities associated with men (Feinman, in Ntuli, 2009). Boys in a township school in Durban asserted that girls must speak in hushed tones and would hit girls who spoke in class (Bhana, 2005). Boys at several schools in

KwaZulu-Natal claimed that it is women's own fault that they were beaten, because they refused to surrender to and obey men (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007).

However, Ann Jones (in Ntuli, 2009) argued that non-violent women are a myth, and that the myth is kept alive because men fear powerful women. She pointed to women who killed their husbands, and claimed that it was a response to patriarchy. But she ignored that women are much less likely to murder or engage in other forms of violence than men (Ntuli, 2009). In his own study from Cato Manor in Durban, Sifiso Ntuli (2009) found that females did commit violent crimes, although to a lesser extent than males. Some of the women used a discourse of motherhood to justify their conventionally non-feminine behaviour: "We only commit crimes to fend for our children as we are unemployed and have no other options" (p. 105).

Cindy Ness (2004) agreed that non-violent women are a myth. In her study from an American inner city, she found that girls were violent for many of the reasons that are typically ascribed to boys' violence. Violence was a means of establishing one's identity, like this girl explained, "Fighting is about image. It's about showing you're no punk" (p. 38), of obtaining status and respect, and as a response to insults: "If a girl looks at me the wrong way, I may hit her" (p. 40). To "fight like a girl" was despised (p. 42), indicating the contestations on the meaning of femininity entailed in girls' violence. Though not supporting conventional discourses on femininity, Ness (2004) argued that violence and fighting were common elements of "carrying out girlhood – something that girls are expected to show themselves to be good at" (p. 38), and part of an alternative construction of street-wise femininity. She argued that the advanced status of violence in the girls' relations and identities were influenced by issues of race and class, and she commented, "It is no coincidence that African American girls are three times as likely to be poor and three times as likely to be involved with the criminal justice system as white girls" (p. 36). She maintained that the most fundamental factor in explaining and understanding violence was poverty and the social disadvantage associated with few socio-economic opportunities.

4.7 Alternative constructions of masculinity

Given the crisis of masculinity, men's challenges in constructing acceptable, modern masculinities, and the constraints imposed by poverty, unemployment, and other socio-economic factors, most authors emphasise the need to construct alternative masculinities. Many studies also show traces of alternative constructions of masculinities. Although the patriarchal ideology was dominant, boys in rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal also resisted it and endorsed alternative constructions (Sathiparsad, 2008). Men in Alexandra township explicitly rejected men's violence against women and were eager to change and construct masculine identities that would benefit both themselves and their partners, even though they struggled to find out how (Walker, 2005). Both Sathiparsad (2008) and Walker (2005) emphasised that different constructions of masculinity existed simultaneously, constantly contesting each other. Gibson and Lindegaard (2007) also found opposing constructions of masculinity being performed, even by the same boy who behaved differently in the classroom in a school in a privileged area and at home in the township, thus pointing to the intersectionality and importance of context in gender performance and identity.

A young man from Khayelitsha struggled to come to terms with gender equality, "Actually I do not really think we are equal because you can see everywhere you go that the man can beat her, can get her to have sex, but to think of a woman as equal, to have safe sex, to not be violent takes hard work" (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007, p. 143). Changing from an ideology of force ("the man can beat her) is difficult, especially in a society like South Africa, where violence is a normative response to conflict (Jewkes, 2002), violence has an extreme history through apartheid (Sathiparsad, 2008), and violence has suddenly changed from being part of a celebrated heroic masculinity to being completely delegitimized (Xaba, 2001). Yet, change is evident. One man said, "Before 1994, a real man is one who beat, now a real man is one who understands" (Walker, 2005, p. 175).

Even though violence is delegitimised and being condemned as a crisis of masculinity for men who struggle to come to terms with change in contemporary society, some men have "nothing to lose and much to gain" in continuing with violence (Bhana, 2005, p. 213). Focusing on future, dreams, and hopes facilitate change in the masculine performance and identities (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007), but the

pervasiveness of poverty and social exclusion experienced by young black men gives little incentive to change, and without socio-economic possibilities peaceful and equitable gender relations are improbable (Bhana, 2005).

4.8 Alternative constructions of femininity

Dominant constructions of femininity are characterised by silence. Women and femininity are to a large degree described only implicitly, as the absence, and sometimes as the opposite, of men and masculinity. Femininity is for example the absence of violence, and femininity is home-bound nurturing or the absence of breadwinning provision. What appeared as the single most distinctive feature of femininity is passiveness. Moreover, hegemonic ideology of femininity construct the woman as a minor, with women depending on the providing man, vulnerable to male violence and in need of protection, and ignorant and ‘innocent’ about sex, thus similar to children. Women are thus constructed in direct opposition to – and, importantly, in need of – a man as defined by hegemonic masculinity: industrious, powerful, and responsible.

The contestations of hegemonic femininity are perhaps even more profound than of hegemonic masculinity. Alternative femininities appear more active and more rooted in actual lived experiences, for example as evident from the huge number of women working, providing, and heading households. While the lived realities of men contest the hegemonic masculinity by *failing* to live up to it, the lived realities of women contest the hegemonic femininity by *achieving* more than expected. Men’s lived experiences contest their ability as breadwinners and contest their reserved position as authorities and decision-makers. Not only do they fail in their roles as providers and are being rebuked for anti-social violence, but they also watch women succeed in places earlier reserved for men. Women are stronger than expected in hegemonic ideology, they are more active, more violent, and take on more responsibility. They, through their actual, lived lives, acquire more of the status hegemonically reserved for men. So while contestations to hegemonic masculinity are rooted in failure, they are paralleled with contestations to hegemonic femininity that are rooted in achievement.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed constructions of masculinities and femininities in the South African context, according to four main themes, provision, parenthood, sexuality, and violence. The male provider emerged as the most preeminent discourse on masculinity. Fatherhood was constrained by it, and sexuality and violence were deeply embedded in the ideal of the male provider. The socio-economic situation in South Africa negates men's opportunities in terms of fulfilling the expectations of male provision, and sexuality and violence are alternative means of asserting masculinity. Particularly violence is rooted in male vulnerability and poverty's assault on masculinity. Dominant discourses on femininity emphasise dependency and passiveness, and is contested by the real life experiences of, for example, female breadwinners and single mothers. Nurturance is dominates the hegemonic discourse on femininity, and motherhood is particularly important to womanhood.

In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology of this study.

Chapter 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology I have used for this study. I begin with an outline of the qualitative research method, and then proceed to the feminist research design that has guided this study. I clarify definitions of the population of the study, and then give an account of sampling strategies. Data collection methods as applied to this study are described, and the method of analysis, which is critical discourse analysis. I explain the ethical considerations of the study, and lastly discuss its limitations.

5.2 Research Method

I have used the qualitative research method. It is identified as the preferred approach to research that “delves in depth into complexities and processes” (Fouché & Delpont, 2002, p. 80) and was therefore well suited for this study. The qualitative research method is, as the name implies, about the qualities of a phenomenon rather than the quantity. It moves beyond measurement (as in the quantitative research method) to understanding and in-depth inquiry (Henning, 2004).

The emphasis on understanding and on meaning calls for a ‘thick’ description, as opposed to standardised descriptions in quantitative research (Neuman, 2006). A thick description involves more than merely and straightforwardly describing a phenomenon (the latter being termed a ‘thin’ description). According to Henning (2004), a thick description requires firstly taking the necessary time and effort to dig deeper and inquire more to get richer data during the data collection process, e.g. while interviewing, to pursue more complex and contradictory stories than what appears initially. A thick description then requires interpretation while the phenomenon is being described, that is, not simply collating the material according to apparent content, but looking for “*textured* or deeper meaning” (Henning, 2004, p. 7, italics original). The interpretation should draw both on other empirical information from the same study, on context, and on the theoretical framework.

A thick description illustrates the necessity of one of the characteristics of qualitative research, namely the acknowledgement of the self as the primary research instrument. A thick description sets requirements for both data collection and interpretation, and in both of these processes the primary instrument is the researcher herself. Everything necessarily filters through the researcher, and the construction of findings is a process where the researcher “makes meaning from her engagement” in the research area (Henning, 2004, p. 7). This requires listening and interpreting skills, refined from our everyday use (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999), but more so, good qualitative research, and especially within a critical framework, requires extensive reflection. Qualitative research rejects the positivist notion of objectivity where the researcher’s views, values, and even presence are (seemingly) removed from the study. Simply acknowledging the researcher’s presence is however insufficient, and reflexivity on and analysis of ones own lenses and position is essential. Importantly, researchers, and the research system itself, are not “outside the societal hierarchy of power and status” (Wodak & Meyer, 2007, p. 7), but embedded in and influenced by social, economic, and political structures. One of the chief contributions of critical theory to qualitative research is the awareness of “the political-ideological character of research” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 11). Therefore, the researcher must not only analyse a phenomenon within a specific context, but also analyse the context itself (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). That is in fact at the very essence of qualitative research within a critical theory framework, where “breaking down the institutional structures and arrangements that reproduce oppressive ideologies” is a main aim (Rensburg in Henning, 2004, p. 23).

Using critical theory in qualitative research requires some alertness, as qualitative research often is associated with (but does not equal!) an interpretive paradigm to research. Humpries (2008) pointed out in the more famous qualitative vs. quantitative debate: the question is “not so much a disagreement about techniques (e.g. quantitative and qualitative), but more *a divergence about theories of what knowledge is*” (p. 11, italics original). In an interpretive paradigm, knowledge is not seen as one truth, as in a positivist or quantitative paradigm, but as multiple and socially constructed. Critical theory, however, criticises interpretive research for being too relativistic and for being passive and amoral by failing to take a value position (Neuman, 2006). It claims that certain features of reality exist ‘out there’, regardless

of people's perceptions of them, e.g. structures that constrain marginalised groups of people (Humphries, 2008). The questions of knowledge, truth, and reality are thus fundamentally different between an interpretive and a critical paradigm, and the latter even contests the traditional assumptions of the meaning of research, as description or understanding is not adequate but action and change is pursued (Rensburg in Henning, 2004). Using critical theory in qualitative research requires the researcher to go beyond understanding in context, to also analyse the context itself and its underlying structures. It challenges the researcher to go beyond understanding, meaning, and explanation in her study, and to also aim at action and change.

In terms of how to do it, qualitative research is better described as a "process" than as a "set of distinct procedures" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 127). With the self as the primary instrument, the researcher will necessarily engage in some form of analysis while still collecting material, for example. Moving back and forth between different 'stages' or tasks in the research process, changing research questions or sampling strategy in response to findings, and so on, are accepted and expected features of the research process (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Stanley and Wise (1993) take it even further as they dismiss a tidy description of the research process altogether, but instead celebrate its messiness:

The 'research process' we describe in this chapter isn't our account of what happens when people do research and at what point it happens. Such mechanistic descriptions can certainly be found, but we believe that these are misleading and simplistic. 'What happens' is idiosyncratic and redolent with 'mistakes' and 'confusions' and almost invariably differs from such descriptions. And we believe that these personal idiosyncracies, 'confusions' and 'mistakes' are ... at the *heart* of the research process. In effect these *aren't* confusions or mistakes, but an inevitable aspect of research. (p. 150, italics original)

With that in mind, I outline the methodological details of my research study.

5.3 Research Design

I have used a feminist research design. Consistent with critical theory, a key characteristic of a feminist research design is the aim of empowerment and change. It acknowledges that research is not value-neutral, but political with an agenda: “to understand inequality in order to get rid of it” (Kleinman, 2007, p. 2) A feminist research design rejects the positivistic ideal of the researcher as neutral, detached, and distant. An alternative ideal of the researcher as practitioner, and as involved and empathic is embraced (Sewpaul, 1995). The power hierarchy between the researcher and the researched is challenged, and egalitarian and genuine relationships are favoured. A feminist research design was appropriate for this study because the sensitive issues dealt with called for the active use of social work values and skills, the integration of practitioner and researcher roles, empathic involvement, and relationship building with the participants. I elaborate on this later in the chapter.

Reflexivity on the researcher and the research process is emphasised (Kleinman, 2007), as a response to the acceptance of the messiness and non-linearity of real life research (Stanley and Wise, 1993). I kept a journal and wrote reflexive texts during the research process, which facilitated on-going critical reflection on the research and on my own thoughts, emotions, and processes. For example, moving between South Africa and Norway influenced the way I thought about the study and highlighted the impact of socio-economic inequality. It was not the wealth in Norway that stood out, but the lack of extreme poverty. It was a stark contrast to the high levels of wealth existing side by side with extreme poverty in South Africa. It served as a powerful reminder that a more equal society is possible, but also pointed to the global level of oppression. Linked to the global level of oppression, was the ambivalence I felt towards my own position as a wealthy, white woman from Europe. When I first came to South Africa, I was shocked by the intensity of the negative meanings attached to race, and overwhelmed by a sense of being ‘evil’ (Osthus, 2008). Dominelli (2002a) has pointed out that being identified as an oppressor can be paralysing, especially when it is difficult to change one’s membership in the particular social group. It was definitely difficult to change my skin colour, and equally difficult to change my place of birth. Giroux’s inclusion of dominant groups in conscientisation processes provided me with tools to come to terms with my social position of privilege, as he

called for dominant groups to “examine, acknowledge, and unlearn their own privilege” (Giroux, 1997, as cited in Sewpaul, 2003, p. 313).

During the course of this research study, there were times when I felt uneasy being a wealthy person critiquing poor persons. It would have been more comfortable to simply wear ‘gender lenses’, which would not cast me as an oppressor or part of the problem. But oppression is not comfortable (Mullaly, 2010), and gender cannot be adequately understood in isolation (Shields, 2008). Entering the street as a wealthy, white woman from overseas obviously had implications, but through prolonged engagement, empathy, care, and consistency, I experienced to be accepted, trusted, and embraced. During the writing of the analysis chapter, themes around for example male violence emerged clearly. Though being empathic, I needed to address that, and I became self-conscious of my privileged position compared to the people I wrote about and analysed. Sitting in a house with a full fridge, I asked myself, with what right can I as a wealthy woman be critical of poor, homeless boys and men? Alvesson and Sköldböck (2009) discussed the delicacy of using critical theory in empirical research, “One thing is to emphasize critical distance to generally defined elites and to broadly shared consensual views ... another is how to relate to the specific individuals and groups that are studied. ... One problem is that ... there is an element of an elitist and arrogant attitude” (p. 164). Lazreg (2005) addressed the issue of being privileged and writing about the ‘other’, and, although critical to colonising and stigmatising attitudes, she rejected a claim that a privileged person categorically cannot understand or say anything about others who are oppressed. However, reflexivity and empathy are vital.

It is imperative that privileged people engage in anti-oppressive practices, and simply withdrawing from contexts of oppression or being silent “is just as oppressive as a visible act of oppression” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 295). Anne Bishop advocated the involvement of ‘allies’ with “a critical analysis of social structures, ... an understanding of ‘power with’ as opposed to ‘power over’, ... a high degree of self-understanding, a knowledge of history, and an understanding that good intentions do not matter if there is no action against oppression” (as cited in Mullaly, 2010, p. 317). These characteristics require reflexivity, both around the action in the field, power dynamics, and one’s own intentions. I have found that writing reflexive texts have

been a crucial tool, throughout the work on the street and the research process (Sewpaul, Osthus & Mhone, 2011).

5.4 Sampling

5.4.1 Definition of population

I discussed the issue of definitions in chapter 3, including the contestations of age. While some authors claimed that adolescents were no longer ‘street children’ but ‘street people’ (see Lalor, 1999), others included participants up to the age of 25 in a study on ‘street children’ (Trent, 2007). I chose to include youth in this study, and not only children under the age of 18. My research topic did not specifically require only children under the age of 18, and I found that a dividing line at the age of 18 was abstract and detached from the lived realities on the street. Youth aged approximately between 16 – 22 years participated in this study. I say ‘approximately’ because age is a fluid concept on the street, and it is difficult to confirm the exact age of the participants. Youth on the street would usually report the age that they perceived would be most benefitting in the given situation. For example, many reported low ages when they were arrested, so that they could avoid jail or at least be sent to the juvenile section of the prison. Among themselves, some reported higher ages, to avoid appearing too young and vulnerable. I have experienced that youth have reported both too high and too low ages to me compared to what their birth certificates indicated. Many lacked birth certificates and some were not sure how old they really were. The fluidity of age was also a reason why conducting a study strictly on street children, and therefore exclude anyone above 18 years, would not be appropriate. Given the difficulty of confirming their ages, it would be quite arbitrary whether the participants really were under 18 years or not.

‘Street children’ is a stigmatised label, and when I first started working on the street, many children were explicit that they did not like to be called “street children” or, even worse, “street kids”. Instead, they said, they wanted to be called “children on the street” or, perhaps the best, “children living on the street”. Although using the term ‘children on the street’, they did not fit the UNICEF categorisation of ‘children *on* the street’ discussed in chapter 3. They usually slept outside on the pavement. Some of the participants had contact with their families, perhaps at a monthly basis or less, but

none of them stayed with them or had contact frequent enough that they fit the UNICEF definition. Because of the age span of the participants in this study, I refer to them as ‘youth’, and I use ‘youth living on the street’ and ‘youth on the street’ (cf. their own expressed wishes) interchangeably.

5.4.2 Sampling techniques

In qualitative research, the aim is to understand as thoroughly and deeply as possible, and information richness is therefore a determining factor in sampling (Fouché, 2002). I used snowball sampling and purposive sampling in this study, and the sampling process was guided by theoretical sampling. The particular conditions on the street influenced the sampling techniques, and I will here present a short narrative of how sampling shifted according to my needs, the needs of the participants, and in relation to the realities of the research field.

I had worked on the street for over two years when I started this study and had already negotiated entry into the field. I had established relationships and trust with some of the youth living on the street, and this trust was my overall guide in the sampling process. Initially, I used snowball sampling, as I began with some of the youth that I already knew and had established relationships with, and they introduced me to others and introduced others to me. Snowball sampling is when one person who is relevant as a participant in a study refers the researcher to other relevant persons – similar to how a snowball grows larger and larger as it rolls down a hill (Kelly, 1999). Children and youth living on the street are not easily accessible. The street community is intricately organised with complex hierarchies, and it would have been inappropriate for me to walk in and identify new participants myself. It would probably not have been practically possible, and certainly not safe. I therefore depended on snowball sampling, as the youth themselves were in charge of increasing the sample. Importantly, the youth decided who they were comfortable inviting to the focus groups.

Their control over the sampling process was important because the highly sensitive issues (e.g. sexual activities) that we discussed required high levels of trust, both between the participants and me, and among the participants in each particular focus

group. The internal dynamics in the groups were constantly changing, and someone could be best friends one day and fierce rivals the next. As will be evident in the analysis chapter, violence was a pervasive part of their relations, and the safety of the participants and myself relied on sensitive sampling. It would not have been possible for me to know who it would be appropriate to include at each particular meeting, thus handing over the power of the sampling process was the best and safest practical solution. Respecting their boundaries with regards to who to include at any given point was particularly important because I did not take them out to a neutral ground (for example to an office or a venue at a day care centre), but entered their life space and conducted the interviews physically located in their areas of living (for example in the shade of a tree). Observing the dynamics around the sampling processes – both their and my own negotiation of the situations – offered rich opportunities for insight on my topic of study and the sampling process itself thus became an integrated part of the data collection. For example, the girls prioritised sisterhood and each other's safety, and would always ensure that we did not leave any of them. The handing over of power corresponded with my feminist research design, which aims at more egalitarian relations and challenges conventional power relations (in this case notions of the expert researcher vs. the 'ignorant' researched).

I also used purposive sampling when I found it necessary. Purposive sampling is common in qualitative research (Kelly, 1999). In purposive sampling, the researcher purposefully looks for participants with certain criteria that are critical to the study, and the process is informed by information richness (Strydom & Delpont, 2005). In my case, I intentionally initiated contact with mothers and fathers when I found that the material from interviews with the participants from the snowball sampling strategy was too thin and inadequate to lay the basis for an analysis of parenthood on the street. Snowball sampling also share the underpinning principle of purposive sampling, namely to access people with the specific criteria relevant for the study (Kelly, 1999), consistent with the overall aim of information richness in qualitative research (Fouché, 2002).

My overall strategy was guided by theoretical sampling or theoretical saturation. Saturation occurs when the material is dense and rich, when further information becomes redundant, and new information no longer challenges or adds to the

emerging theoretical account (Kelly, 1999). The example of purposive sampling illustrates guidance by theoretical sampling, as I took action to ensure richness in data on a particular sub-topic (Strydom & Delpont, 2005). I concluded the information gathering process when the interviews provided much repetition, however, to reach full saturation in which the broad topic of gendered street life was entirely exhausted proved too gruelling for one Master's dissertation. While I found the material to be satisfactorily saturated with regards to my specific research objectives, I had to resist the temptation of further pursuing new (and often enthralling) possible themes that emerged in interviews or caught my mind.

5.5 Data collection: Focus groups and individual interviews

I have conducted focus group interviews with youth living on the streets of Durban. Group dynamics can be a catalytic factor in bringing out information (Greeff, 2005, p. 286) and in focus groups, the interaction between group members is used to stimulate discussion about a topic and to get more wide-ranging material than in an interview with one person (Humphries, 2008). Focus groups give insight into the differences between participants and the diversity within the population group (Kelly, 1999).

The bulk of the focus groups in this study were separate groups for females and males, in addition to a few sessions with mixed-gender groups. My intention at the onset was that the separate groups would provide a safe space for participants of each gender to explore their experiences and start conscientisation processes, and that it would lead to a level of trust and critical consciousness that would allow us to proceed to mixed-gender groups, where the conscientisation processes and the related changes in the youth's lives could be advanced further. However, I found that the relations between females and males were too harmful, and we did not reach a point of sufficient change in gendered perceptions and actions to conduct safe mixed-gendered group sessions at a larger scale. I did have a few sessions with mixed-gendered groups when this seemed feasible and beneficial in that specific situation, but it happened at the initiative of the participants (cf. previous section on sampling) and was not suitable as a blanket strategy.

In addition to the focus groups, I conducted in-depth individual interviews. Individual interviews provide a particularly large amount of information about each interviewee compared to focus groups, and is thus well suited for studies exploring in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and the meaning the participants make out of it (Greeff, 2005, p. 286, 293). Because the study dealt with highly sensitive issues, I considered it important to offer the opportunity of individual interviews to youth who were more comfortable with or preferred that to groups. Some participants were more comfortable in a private setting; others in a group setting with friends that they trusted. Others again wanted both, and some would be introduced to the research study through a focus group, and later come and ask for an individual interview.

An ethical challenge with focus groups is related to confidentiality. The researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality since she cannot control what group participants will say and do outside the group (Humphries, 2008). Offering individual interviews to those who preferred that was a way to deal with this dilemma. Another important way was that I handed over power over the sampling process to the participants and let them control who participated in any particular focus group meeting. In research on sensitive topics, the researcher needs to ensure that the participants are comfortable with the level of exploration and discussion of the topic (Kelly, 1999), and I was very sensitive in introducing topics and questions at each focus group meeting. I allowed the participants much power in deciding the pace of the interviews and which topics they felt comfortable with at that particular time. Intimate knowledge of the field and the complex relations among the youth facilitated this, and we would, for example, not discuss sex work if a particular girl attended the focus group meeting and there were tenuous relations between her and the other girls.

With focus groups and individual interviews combined, 37 youth participated in the study, of which 17 were females. I conducted, on a combined basis, approximately 50 focus groups and individual interviews over a six-month period. The length of these sessions would vary a great deal, mainly because of their shifting concentration levels due to drug use or lack of sleep. Because of the unpredictability of street life, a session could last from as little as 10 minutes to 45 minutes. The number of sessions partly compensated for the length of each. Importantly, a substantial level of trust was already achieved through my extensive involvement on the street over the previous 2-

3 years, which facilitated an adequate level of depth in the interviews. The bulk of my analysis is based on approximately 25 of the sessions, all with sufficient length and depth to provide rich material. With the participants' permission, the sessions were tape-recorded and transcribed.

All sessions were conducted in English, as most of the participants were fluent in English. In the focus groups, the participants were encouraged to speak Zulu if they struggled to express certain thoughts or emotions in English, and other participants would help with interpretation. Even though my Zulu skills were limited, I learnt most of my vocabulary from the streets, and thus learnt expressions that were used by the youth and relevant to the research topics. This helped a lot, both in interviews and focus groups, during transcription, and in the interpretation.

The interviews, both in focus groups and with individuals, were somewhere on the continuum between un- and semi-structured. In-depth unstructured interviews are referred to as “conversation with a purpose” (Greeff, 2005, p. 292), and that captures the essence of the focus group sessions as well as the individual interviews well. Our conversations often dealt with highly sensitive issues, and it would have been inappropriate with rigid structure. I used an interview guide (see Appendix 3) for the overall data collection process, but was flexible during each interview and sensitive to the participants' level of comfort and trust. Being guided by an interview schedule, yet remaining flexible is the defining principle of semi-structured interviews (Greeff, 2005, p. 296). Whether a particular interview or session leaned towards un- or semi-structured, shifted throughout the research process, according to the needs of the participants and of the research process. I deliberately let the youth guide the interviews. I aimed at a two-way communication, striving to avoid the misconception of participants as “passive vessels of answers”, but rather seeing them as co-constructors of knowledge (Henning, 2004, p. 67). The interviews were conducted holistically, and therapeutic outcomes were as important as research outcomes.

5.6 Data analysis: Critical discourse analysis

I have used critical discourse analysis as my method of analysis. Critical discourse analysis includes the objective of discourse analysis in general, namely to understand

“what discourse(s) frame(s) the language action and the way in which participants make sense of their reality and how was this discourse produced and how is it maintained in the social context” (Henning, 2004, p. 117-118). But it is also *critical*, as it aims at combating inequality and exposing power relations, by discerning connections between language and other elements in social life and by understanding the nature of social power and dominance and how it is reproduced and resisted (Humphries, 2008). Critical discourse analysis’ commitment to social change and its “emancipatory ‘knowledge interest’” (Fairclough, as cited in Humphries, 2008, p. 124) is consistent with critical theory and with the feminist research design’s aim of empowerment.

Critical discourse analysis sees “language as a social practice” (Fairclough & Wodak, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 5), and discourse is understood as socially constitutive and as socially conditioned (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Fairclough (2009) proposed a dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis, which especially emphasises the relations between discourses and other social processes and structures. According to Fairclough (2009), discourse and meaning-making is “dialectically related” to other social processes, “hence a ‘dialectical-relational’ approach”, where dialectical means “being different but not ‘discrete’, i.e. not fully separate” (p. 163). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) discuss the challenges of analysing oppression in empirical research, and argue, “We can hardly go around asking people about their ... ‘false consciousness’... nor do such things allow themselves to be readily observed” (p. 162). A pronounced focus on social structures, as in critical theory and critical discourse analysis, is therefore principal. “It is necessary to consider not only what interview respondents ... mean, and how we can understand their conception of the world and their way of imparting meaning to themselves and their situations, but also the totality of which they are a part of” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 166).

‘Discourse’ is a structural form of knowledge, while ‘text’ is the concrete oral utterance or written document that is analysed. A concrete oral utterance is embedded in a discourse, and regarded as “a manifestation of social action which again is widely determined by social structure” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 6, 10), highlighting language as an activity and social practice. Particularly in the dialectical-relational

approach to critical discourse analysis, analysis of structures and context, or the other social elements in addition to language, is crucial (Fairclough, 2009), and the discussions in the previous literature review chapters thus form part of my analysis. Linguistic analysis is integral to the approach, for example the use of verbs, but the textual analysis is only a part of the discourse analysis, and the focus is on how the language action is framed within a broader social order (Fairclough, 2009, p. 170).

Critical discourse analysis is typically concerned with the language actions of those in power. Political speeches or other similar texts are typical examples (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2009). However, critical discourse analysts assert that it is not useful exclusively in the analysis of political elites, and new areas of application, including ethnography, focus groups, and narrative interviews, are mentioned (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 18). Fairclough (2009) emphasises that he does “not want to limit” its fields of application (p. 166), and that the general question of the significance of a particular discourse and its dialectical relations with other social elements is relevant on social processes and issues across the social sciences and humanities.

Kincheloe & McLaren contended that researchers inject “critical social theory into the hermeneutical circle to facilitate an understanding of the hidden structures and tacit cultural dynamics that insidiously inscribe social meanings and values” (as cited in Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 166). This is consistent with the dialectical-relational approach to critical analysis, and aptly illustrates its relevance also in this study of gendered relations on the street. It is as compelling to understand the hidden structures and inscriptions of social meanings among oppressed groups, such as the female and male youth living on the streets of Durban, as among political elites.

5.7 Ethical considerations

In terms of the formal ethical requirements, ethical clearance was obtained from UKZN, University Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1). All names in this dissertation are pseudonyms, and I have omitted information that could identify participants from the quotations I have used (for example disability status). Informed, written consent was obtained, and the consent form was in both English and Zulu (see Appendix 2). The literacy levels varied substantially among the participants, and

many had only attended school for very short periods of time. In the consent form, I therefore strived to use as plain language as possible, to facilitate understanding. While some were fluent in both languages and could read and write well, others could barely write their names. I therefore talked over the issues of the consent form and carefully explained what the research was about, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw, and ensured that they really understood. I thus obtained oral consent as well, and it was the oral discussion and agreement that was my guarantee that informed consent was really obtained, in the sense that I would discuss the issues until I was certain that the participants understood and agreed.

Anne Ryen (2007, 2008) discussed the delicacies of ethics and trust in cross-cultural research and argued that written, informed consent is embedded in Western culture's institutionalisation of trust and does not necessarily carry the same meaning in other cultures. She related from her own experience as a wealthy, white, Western woman doing research in Tanzania, and pointed to time, and especially relationship-building over time, as crucial in gaining trust. She gave examples of building local competence and passing loyalty tests, which required time and interaction that could not be captured in a contract. Some of Ryen's research participants said that the written contract was valueless to them and explained that whoever has the most money would win a dispute anyway, so the piece of paper meant nothing. Taking local, contextual meanings into account was consistent with the Reissman's call for "an *ethics-in-context*" (as cited in Ryen, 2007, p. 214, italics original).

Time and interaction were also crucial in building trust in my study, and the study was in fact possible through the position I had gained on the street through my years of involvement. I had proved myself as consistently caring and non-judgmental, for example through accompanying youth to clinics for STI-treatments or pregnancy tests, visiting youth in prison and hospital, bailing out some of them, and grieving with some of them as they confronted death by AIDS. These specific acts in relation to situations that the youth considered to contest their preferred image as 'good' (in these examples, unprotected sex and crime) made a difference and, as I passed the tests, built the trust necessary for exploring my research topic.

The participants of this study lived in particular vulnerable circumstances and the study was embedded in practical social work. For example, I accompanied children and youth on innumerable visits home and supported their efforts of reunifying with their families. I assisted in applying for and obtaining identity documents, and advocated for their access to medication and health care. Several authors (for example, Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Humphries, 2008) emphasise critical theory's goal of social change, and Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) assert that simply considering "the ideological-political dimension" of one's research topic is a "limited adoption of the theory" and state that "the fundamental idea of critical theory" is "an emancipatory cognitive interest" (p. 162). The goal of social change has underpinned all my involvement on the street. It has caused a great deal of frustration and pain for me, as change has not happened as fast or substantially as I have wished. I have truly learnt how powerful and multiple the structures that hamper change are in the lives of these youth. Advocacy in different forms has been engrained in my work, including helping youth to access services and rights, speaking on their behalf, and helping them to speak for themselves (Schneider & Lester, 2001). In addition to family reunification, identity documents, and health care, some examples of issues addressed include abuse by the metro police and the public's stigmatising perceptions of children and youth who live on the street.

From the beginning, my involvement on the street has been informed by emancipatory theories about conscientisation, praxis, and social change (see Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009; Sewpaul, Osthus & Mhone, 2011). During the course of this research study, the focus has especially been on gendered relations. A particular significant experience was when, at one young man's idea and request, a group of youth from the street, together with Robin Willis who was a drama student at UKZN and myself, made a movie about street life. Some of the youth presented the movie at a social work conference in Cape Town¹² and at schools in a township in Durban. Some of them emphasised the heightened risks confronting girls in particular when they spoke to learners at the township schools. The screening of the movie and the youth's talks afterwards conveyed powerful messages about street life to school-children with the aim of trying to prevent children from migrating to the streets. The making of the

¹² Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC 2010) organised and hosted by the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI)

movie highlighted the pervasiveness of violence in their lives and started off a range of processes towards change in the youth involved. It was amazing to see the potential of drama, and the powerful conscientisation processes that took place among the youth involved when they ‘discussed’ through acting, that is, with their bodies, and not with words only.

The topics discussed in focus groups and individual interviews have been sensitive, and could potentially have been experienced as harmful by the participants. However, the youth have uniformly expressed that they appreciated the sessions and that it actually was helpful rather than harmful to participate in the study. I have consistently combined the role of the researcher with the role of the practitioner, and social work values and skills, such as empathic listening, congruence, and unconditional positive regard (Lee & Ayón, 2004). Group work creates a special bond of togetherness, which facilitates positive therapeutic outcomes, especially with women and other disempowered groups (Schiller, 1995, 2002), and this was evident in the study. The therapeutic outcomes were as important as the research outcomes. Though research with such an extremely marginalised group and on a sensitive topic was ethically challenging, I actually believe that the alternative of not conducting the research would have been less ethically sound. The sensitive issues that we discussed, for example rape, violence, and sex work, would have been a substantial part of the youth’s experiences whether we talked about it or not. This research study in fact provided the youth with a safe space for sharing and therapeutic work, and opportunities for conscientisation and action towards change, through its embeddedness in practical, therapeutic, and conscientising social work.

5.8 Limitations of the study

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) contended that, “Only limited aspects of a phenomenon will lend themselves to being illuminated in a particular study” (p. 165). They proposed the use of critical theory in the analysis as a strategy to overcome this limitation and see a phenomenon as wholly as possible. They argued that the purposive move between understanding in context and analysing the context itself, and the shifts in levels of analysis facilitate a more complete understanding. I have, through critical theory and critical discourse analysis, analysed the gendered relations

among youth living on the street and related their experiences to social structures of gender and socio-economic oppression.

Possible limitations to this study include lowered concentration levels among some of the participants due to drug use and lack of sleep, distractions due to its outdoor, real-life location (for example rain, heat, police who passed, and beggars who interrupted), and language obstacles since the research participants and I did not share a first language. These challenges were largely overcome by my prolonged engagement on the street, which facilitated substantial familiarity with the realities of street life and deep levels of trust. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, my extensive familiarity with the street and the youth, and the high level of trust we had built was particularly important. I had been involved on the street for about one and a half years when girls first started talking about their engagement in sex work, and for almost three years before the first boys told me about male sex work, which illustrates how crucial time, and building trust over time, was (cf. Ryen, 2007, 2008). Though, as I mentioned earlier, constructions of masculinities and femininities and gendered relations among youth living on the street is a huge topic that cannot be completely exhausted in one study, the analysis of this study builds on consistent findings acquired from extensive interaction with the youth and confirmed by my own experiences on the street over more than three years. The unique trust and my extensive involvement on the street should ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis.

5.9 Validity and reliability

While validity and reliability is associated with a positivist paradigm to research, the soundness of qualitative research is judged according to credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (De Vos, 2005, p. 345-347).

Credibility is the alternative to internal validity. I have stated the parameters of the context, population, and theoretical framework, as required for validity in qualitative research according to De Vos (2005). She commented, “An in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it cannot help but be valid” (p. 346). Interviews are,

according to Greeff (2005) regarded by some as a weak methodology because the participants will give the “official account” (p. 299), but she refuted the claim. My prolonged engagement in and deep familiarity with the research field, as well as the high levels of trust built with the research participants ensured that this study went far beyond “official accounts”. Indeed, participants would explicitly talk about what their “official accounts” were and the discrepancies between those accounts and their lived experiences.

Transferability is about the generalisability of the research findings. The aim of generalisability of research findings is contested in qualitative research. The importance of context is stressed, and providing rich descriptions of contexts facilitate the transferability (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). Triangulating multiple sources of data is also a strategy to enhance a study’s transferability (De Vos, 2005). I have included rich descriptions of the context of this study and analysed the data in context. The study has been framed by critical theory and guided by its concepts (De Vos, 2005). I have thus provided readers adequate detail to consider the study’s transferability to other contexts (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). The material has been collected from both focus groups and individual interviews, and it has been assessed against my extensive knowledge of the field. Given the depth of experiences, it should be safe to extrapolate that the findings reflect those of other populations of children and youth living on the street.

Dependability is the alternative to reliability (De Vos, 2005). In quantitative research, reliability is about whether the findings of a study are repeatable. In qualitative research, however, the notion of an unchanging reality is rejected, and dependability is instead about whether the findings really did occur as the researcher claims. Rich and detailed descriptions should show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and develop out of contextual interaction (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999), which I have done in this study.

Conformability is about whether the findings of a study would be confirmed by another, or whether the data confirms the general findings (De Vos, 2005). I have provided detailed descriptions of contexts, data, and analysis to facilitate an evaluation of conformability. The data clearly confirms the findings of this study.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the qualitative research method, particularly as it relates to critical theory which is the theoretical framework of the study. I discussed the feminist research design, including reflexivity and my social position in relation to the research field. I detailed the sampling processes and the data collection, and outlined critical discourse analysis, which is the method of analysis in this study. I discussed ethical considerations in conducting research with such a marginalised group, limitations of the study, and issues of validity and reliability. In the next chapter, I analyse and discuss the findings of the study.

Chapter 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This study is about constructions of masculinities and femininities and gendered relationships among female and male youth living on the streets of Durban CBD. I conducted focus group interviews and individual interviews with the youth, and in this chapter, I use critical discourse analysis to analyse those texts. Critical discourse analysis is concerned with the mutually constitutive relations between language and other social structures and how language is embedded in a broader social order (Fairclough, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This chapter is organised according to the following four broad themes that emerged during the analysis: Men as providers, violence, sex, and sexuality on the street; Girls' violence and contestations of femininity and masculinity; Gang culture and constructions of masculinity; and Constructions of motherhood and fatherhood.

Quotations by research participants are *italicised*. In quoting the research participants, the slash sign (/) indicates interruption, whether the speaker was interrupted by someone else or interrupted herself or himself. The exclamation mark indicates that the speaker shouted. When a speaker stressed a word particularly strongly, it is indicated by underlining the word. All names of youth on the street are pseudonyms.

6.2 Men as providers, violence, sex, and sexuality on the streets

The main theme that emerged in this study was men as providers, violence, sex, and sexuality on the street. The issues of male provision, violence, and sexuality were deeply entangled and in fact inseparable. This is illustrated in the case of sex work, where girls' sexuality contested the ideal of male provision and triggered violent responses from boys. Ntuthuko and Siyamdumisa talked about girls' engagement in sex work:

Ntuthuko: *Siyadumisa is saying ... if his girlfriend is going to do that, he's starting beating her*

Siyamdumisa: ... *kill!* ...

Ntuthuko: *Breaking your legs!*

Siyamdumisa: ... *so you can't walk ...*

Ntuthuko: *Because we don't want you to climb in the car*

Their assertion to use violence is linked with males' violence as a means to control women (Sathiparsad, 2008), and showed how violence was rooted in male vulnerability and was an act to compensate a wounded masculinity (Jewkes, 2002; Kleinman, 2007). A girlfriend's sex work was offensive because it contested the male role of the provider.

6.2.1 “He says he loves me but he gives me nothing”: boyfriends as providers

The discussion in the literature review on masculinities and femininities showed that being a provider was a prevalent hegemonic discourse of masculinity among South Africans, from different socio-economic backgrounds and in different age groups, though featuring even stronger among blacks from disadvantaged backgrounds (Morrell, 2007). It also influenced other ways of asserting manhood, such as fatherhood (Mkhize, 2006; Ichou, 2008) or violence (Jewkes, 2002; Mchunu, 2007). The male provider was also important in this study from the street. Young women expected their boyfriends to provide for them, and took pride in being provided for. Thobeka immediately proclaimed, “*My boyfriend is working*” when we discussed ways of getting money in a girls' group. She elaborated, “*He gives me money each and every day. He pays for my shelter*”. The boyfriend was the active agent (Fairclough, 2009) while the girlfriend was passive and invisible, even though the discussion was about how girls could make a living.

Promise, a 16-year old girl, similarly emphasised the boyfriend's provision when she explained why she liked her boyfriend Sihle, “*Sihle helps me with food when I'm hungry, clothes when I need clothes, and when it is cold, he makes me warm, and, and he is cute*”. She stated it as facts or as actions that really took place, even though she, the other girls present, and myself all knew from experience and observation that it was not always the case. Girls took great pride in being provided for by a boyfriend, or in presenting themselves as being provided for by a boyfriend. By using present tense (“*Sihle helps me ...*”) instead of a modal verb like must or ought to (Fairclough,

2009), Promise achieved that. But although the expectation was that a boyfriend should provide for them, it was not consistent with their experiences. Most of the girls had boyfriends who were also staying on the street, who were unemployed, and who obviously had a hard time accessing money. But the girls were annoyed at, rather than empathising with their boyfriends' struggle to provide. Nomusa, a 16-year old girl, complained, "*He says he loves me, but he gives me nothing. Even money. If I want money, he's talking first and then he gives me money. First he's talking, then he gives me*".

The boys had similar expectations of themselves being providers and of their girlfriends being provided for by them. Throughout history, dating as far back as precolonial times, being the provider has been the ideal of masculinity. The young men on the street struggled to reconcile this expectation with the difficulty of accessing money and actually fulfilling the role of the provider. Yet, they firmly upheld that the girlfriend should not get money for herself. Two 17-year old boys explored this dilemma:

Ntuthuko: *I don't mean that you have to be hungry. I mean that you have to understand my situation ... Sometimes I get money, sometimes I don't get money. You see. Because I can't just say, "today I must get money like this"... No, it's not like that. There is a day when I have to give you something; there is a day that / not that every day I buy for you food, I give you how much. No.*

Ingrid: *So I must also get money for myself, isn't it?*

Siyamdumisa: *No.*

Ntuthuko: *No! No, no, no. You don't have to do that. ... You see the girlfriend if she's starting to get money, that's how she starts to sell her body.*

Firstly, Ntuthuko represented "getting money" as a somewhat abstract activity outside his control. This is consistent with his experiences where he really struggles to live up to the ideal of a provider. Also, money is represented as something he simply "gets" (or "not gets"), without any reference to how. This was typical for Ntuthuko, and several of the other boys as well, who would categorically reject any involvement in stealing or robbery, and who would also not account for other ways of getting money.

Secondly, Ntuthuko pointed to girls' involvement in sex work, the apparently deterministic relation between girls getting a taste for money and their engagement in sex work, and the delicate link between boyfriends' provision (or rather lack thereof) and girlfriends' sex work.

6.2.2 “Hit that whore!”: boyfriends' reactions to girls' sex work

Sex work was the main income generating strategy for girls living on the streets and it was evident that boys battled to come to terms with it. As cited in the introduction to this chapter, Ntuthuko and Siyamdumisa expressed violent responses if their girlfriends engaged in sex work. 18-year old Velemseni felt so embarrassed by his girlfriend Gugulethu's sex work that he gave it the alias of “drinking”:

Just now maybe she wants to go in a bar, then I go with her. Then she starts drinking. Then after that I see her go to sit with another guy, and she is holding this guy, and, you know. Then I'm like, “stop doing this”. Then I actually go out of the bar, and I move around... then I tell her, “stop doing this” ... I tell her, “Are you bloody crazy? Why do you come and sit down with me, then you go and hold these too many guys? Who are you going out with?” ... But actually I think that Gugulethu got a drinking problem.... I actually wanted to take her to a rehab, to stop drinking. ... Then she didn't want to go. So I told her, “I can't force you if you don't want to go. It is your own choice what you want to do in life. If you still want to be the same, be an alcoholic –. What if your family finds you? What are they going to say? Maybe they are going to say that you are a prostitute, or something, you know. They will say bad things about you”.

Except from the remark that her family might say she is a prostitute, Velemseni would not explicitly say that his girlfriend sold sex. He expressed the pain of watching his girlfriend with other men, but would not explicitly admit that she sold sex. Some boys however claimed that boyfriends actually enjoy their girlfriends' engagement in sex work because of the income it brings. When Ntuthuko and Siyamdumisa talked about girls who sold sex, and despite their sentiments of violence if their own girlfriends did it, they argued that other boys liked it:

Ntuthuko: *Waaa. Zethembe, what can he say? He can't say anything. Because he likes Nomusa to go. ...*

Siyamdumisa: *You see, Ingrid, if you stay in the street, you like the money. Nobody doesn't like money. Everybody likes the money. ... Nobody says, "this is wrong, this is right", no. Eeverything you've done, eevery time, is right.*

Ntuthuko: *That's why Zethembe doesn't say, "Nomusa, stop this, stop that", you see. Because he knows that Nomusa, when she comes back, gives him money and buys for him glue. ... They can't feel bad, because they know they get money.*

But it was very important for these boys to make clear that they did not approve of their own girlfriends' sex work, and it was after this discussion about other boys that Siyamdumisa declared that he would beat, kill, and break the legs of his girlfriend if she sold sex. This tension between total and violent outrage on one hand, and appreciation of the money on the other hand, seemed to be common among the boys, and girls struggled with it. One example is Lungile and Mandla. It was common knowledge that Lungile's sex work provided for Mandla's marijuana consumption and that he required her to sell. Yet he consistently beat her. Mandla's violence against Lungile was usually framed as a reaction to her prostitution, at least all the incidents that I know about were conflicts around Lungile's "promiscuity" with men who paid. Thembelihle pointed out the resentment of girls' sex work that underlay the violence, "*And other boys, if Mandla is hitting Lungile, they say, 'Hey, hit that thing! Hit that whore!'*"

The other boys' cheering illustrates their collective anger at girls who sold sex. Girls' sex work was an assault to males' status as providers. It was a threat because it was a declaration of independence: the girls did not depend on their boyfriends but were their own breadwinners. It was also an offence because it revealed the boyfriends' failure in providing adequately. Boys and young men living on the street strongly expressed that being provided for by boyfriends was the only acceptable means of survival for girls.

6.2.3 “We don’t wear the short things”: when it is better to be a “street kid”

Girls were very aware of the negative stereotyping of sex work, and strived to present themselves as ‘good girls’. They employed several strategies to conceal their engagement in commercial sex:

Promise: *We don’t walk to the streets. ...*

Gloria: *They know where we are staying ... They come and pick us up. ...*

Brenda: *Maybe you say you go to buy cigarette.*

Nomusa: *Or you go to pee. And then when you come back, you say, “Hey, my stomach is paining too much”.*

They explained that the customers “*know where to park*”, so that the girls could see them and then make socially acceptable excuses to leave the group and go with them. The girls also explained that the way they dressed where intended to conceal that they sold sex. Nomusa said: “*You see with us, we don’t wear the short things so everyone must see you and what you’re doing. We mustn’t do that.*”

Their strategy shielded them from being perceived primarily as sex workers and they claimed a main identity as street children, or the style (Fairclough, 2009: 164) of street children as opposed to the style of sex workers. Although ‘street children’ had negative connotations, they regarded it as much better than ‘prostitutes’¹³ and upheld a sense of innocence by being ‘street children’. The girls rejected an identity as ‘real’ prostitutes (who are truly bad women), but held on to an identity as somewhat good girls by arguing that they had not fallen so deep that they wore short clothes or walked the streets in search for customers. Even young women above 18 years would strategically claim membership in the street children category, and say, for example, “*we are just street kids*”, and so would young men above 18 years. It was particularly common when discussing abuse by police, where the youth, regardless of age or gender, strongly claimed the identity of innocent victims.

As discussed in chapter 3, police harassment and police violence were indeed a brutal part of their reality. Girls would sometimes admit that there was a relation between

¹³ Both girls and boys talked about “selling the body” and “prostitutes”, never “sex work”. I use “prostitution” when I refer to the meanings they attached to it.

the police's actions and the criminal activities of some of the males, mainly to strengthen their own positions as victims (victims both of police abuse and of inconsiderate male friends who robbed near the places they slept). They would never admit their own involvement in robberies, even though some girls were arrested for violence and robbery right at the corner where they stayed. Boys who denied being involved in robberies could similarly admit that the police presence was related to robberies, but no one would relate it to their own behaviour. Also, both boys and girls would at other times claim that the police only "*come and take our things and beat us*" and profusely deny that anyone on the street did anything criminal that could possibly justify police raids or confiscations¹⁴. It was particularly in these situations when the youth rejected labels as criminals, robbers, or prostitutes that they would claim being "*street children*" or "*street kids*", despite their rejection of those terms in other settings¹⁵.

6.2.4 "I like to clean myself": girls' efforts at appearing 'good'

The girls often presented themselves as victims of boys' violence. It was indeed true and their lived experiences were extremely dense with physical and sexual abuse. Though obviously incredibly traumatic, it also served as a basis for an identity as proper women. Being innocent and helpless victims was consistent with discourses on femininity, and the girls could compensate for some of their transgressions of acceptable femininity implied by sex work. They usually omitted saying anything about why their boyfriends were violent, but the male participants in this study linked their violence against girls to the girls' engagement in commercial sex. The boys tried to look good, and expected my approval of their violence as disciplinary action against immoral behaviour undesirable for girls. It thus highlighted sex work's challenge to hegemonic femininity, as well as confirmed violence as a means of male control of females and females' sexuality.

The girls emphasised their strong bond of sisterhood and that they helped each other out with everything. Sisterhood was an effective means of establishing a positive

¹⁴ For the sake of clarity, let me point out that I do not think that police brutality should be justified even if the youth engaged in crime, and that, even if the youth violently refused to be arrested or otherwise cooperate and the police felt compelled to use violence, it still cannot justify reports of sexual abuse.

¹⁵ see section 5.4.1 Definition of population

identity for girls. It asserted them as 'good' in a gendered sense. Solidarity, support, and being helpful are positive, feminine attributes, well suited for a "good girl" or a "good woman". It also contributed to a positive self-efficacy by the actual solidarity it built. When we had girls-only groups and girls shared openly about their struggles, the sense of togetherness, care and understanding was notable. The mutuality and support built in women's groups, and its sisterly solidarity, make a substantial difference in many women's lives, both in terms of emotional well-being and practical help (Schiller, 1995).

The girls worked hard to maintain the status as good and were, for example, concerned with cleanliness. When asked to draw themselves as they really are (as opposed to how other people think they are), Promise drew a picture of herself with a bucket, and said that she was washing because "*I like to clean myself*". Thembelihle agreed with her drawing and explained that other people said they smelt, "*but I am not smelling*". The young women thus subscribed to cleanliness or hygiene as an expression of femininity connected to sexuality, or acceptable sexuality according to constructions of femininity, consistent with findings in other studies (Scorgie, Kunene, Smit, Manzini, Cherish & Preston-Whyte, 2009). Many girls gave their sex work activities aliases, especially "*begging*". Some, both boys and girls, also masked it as "*going to clubs*". So when Motala and Smith (2003) reported that begging was the most common means of earning money to buy food, and that girls often begged outside clubs and bars, the street children in their sample probably concealed engaging in sex work.

Despite their descriptions of what they did and did not do, observation reflected that girls did "*walk to the streets*" and they wore "*short things*". Some called me for help when they were arrested for "loitering for the purpose of prostitution". Yet, they never admitted to doing 'normal' sex work, but were very particular that although they did "*sell our bodies*", they did it in their own and, importantly, more decent way.

6.2.5 "They just rape them": boys' perceptions of girls' risks

Like mentioned above and in chapter 3, the girls' lives on the street were extremely dense with violence. Boys also acknowledged the dangers girls experienced. When I

asked a group of boys and young men about what was good for girls living on the street, especially what was good for girls compared to for boys, they immediately rejected the whole idea of anything possibly being good for girls, and instead insisted on the dangers girls faced. Buyani said: *“Because, for girls ... if a girl is sleeping, and then a boy comes and takes off his pants, and then, you see a knife... he puts the knife on her neck, and then she gets raped”*. Although mentioning “a boy” as the acting subject earlier in the statement, the rape itself does not have an active subject. The actor is deleted and the girl is the subject in a passive sentence, *“she gets raped”*. The rape is de-agentialised as something that simply happens (Leeuwen, 2009). A little later, they talked about boys being raped, and now the rape had an active agent. For example, Mondli said: *“the big boys, they are raping small boys”*. Rapes of boys were rejected as abnormal and wrong in different ways than rapes of girls.

Mondli qualified the general risks for girls to specifically new girls: *“Lots of girls here, they don’t rape them. Those girls that have been coming here from long time, you see. They already know them... If there is a new girl, who is coming to stay with us, and then, the big boys, the robbers, they come when they are drunk, then they point the girls with a knife, and then they just rape them.”* Although the rape here has an active subject *“the big boys, the robbers, ... they just rape them”*, the insertion of *“just”* projects rapes of girls still as something that simply happens, outside the perpetrators’ control. It is quite consistent with the girls’ experiences, as they found rape to be unavoidable. The difference between known and unknown girls points to a necessary prerequisite for rape, namely to dehumanise the victim. One of the generalisations that can be made about rapists, according to Vogelmann (1990), is that *“they are unable to perceive women as people”* (p. 99). It is obviously harder to dehumanise someone you know.

6.2.6 “I’ll take care of you”: boyfriends’ role as protectors

Similar to Mondli, Sthembiso, a 19-year old young man, referred to the dangers faced specifically by new girls when he explained how he got involved with his new girlfriend. He heard that Smangele was *“staying out in the street and all the boys want to do bad things with her. So I felt it inside my heart, and I said: “Ey, maybe I*

can also make a change in her life”, so I told her “Ok, don’t worry. I’ll take care of you”.” His solution was to protect Smangele by becoming her boyfriend.

As discussed in chapter 3, boyfriends were indispensable for girls living on the street because of the protection they provided, especially against sexual abuse by others. Boys recognised their function as protectors of their girlfriends, and some even claimed that girls did not have any problems, since their boyfriends looked after them. Though first rejecting the idea that anything was good for girls who live on the street, a group of boys a few minutes later changed their tune. Mondli said: *“The girls are right here. Because they give them everything. They got boyfriends. ... They will protect them”.*

Adding up both protection and provision as tasks for a boyfriend, Mondli concluded that girls had an okay life. But, as already discussed, the ideal of a providing boyfriend did not match their lived experiences, and the ideal of the protector was also not always consistent with their lived realities. Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) commented, “even in men’s ‘caring’ behaviour’ is an implicit control over women’ (p. 101). They related their statement to the provision and protection men are expected to provide for women, and in the case of the youth on the street, a major motivation for male provision was indeed to control the girls’ behaviour especially in terms of sexual activities. Ensuring that they did not have sex with others (such as sex customers) stood out in male youth’s discourses on relationships (though it did not match lived experiences where sex work was very common among the female youth), and physical violence as punishment was a normative feature of their relationships with girlfriends. The control implicit in caring behaviour of the young men (that is, protection and provision) was also evident in their demand for sex. Furthermore, the boyfriends did not always protect their girlfriends. For example, two young men came to rape Nomusa while she was sleeping with her boyfriend, but he didn’t protect her. Promise explained, *“They wanted to take Nomusa, and Nomusa’s boyfriend said that she was not his girlfriend”* and Nomusa confirmed, *“No one helped me.”* Samantha expressed disappointment over the boyfriend’s unwillingness to protect and exclaimed, *“He denied her, her denied her, her boyfriend denied her!”*

6.2.7 “She is lying”: boys’ and girls’ perceptions of girls as unreliable

Ntuthuko interrupted Mondli while he was explaining how “*girls are right*” because their boyfriends “*give them everything*”, and shouted: “*Stupid!*” The other boys also joined in and laughed and shouted, “*Stupid!*”. They explained that boyfriends are stupid because protective boyfriends are rewarded with girlfriends who cheat on them. Although laughing about it, they made it clear that a girlfriend’s cheating is unacceptable and that they take punitive action against them. Buyani made up an example where his friend Luyanda took his girlfriend, and then explained: “*I do [something] to the girl, because the girl made us stupid, the two of us. ... Nothing much, just (hitting the car seat)*”. The boys understood girlfriends’ cheating as an expression of them being deceitful and linked it to a lust for money. Buyani explained in the example he made up: “*If I go, Luyanda is going to stay with my girl, and just talk with my girl, say you know what. ... And then, this girl doesn’t like me, because I didn’t have the money now, so now she likes Luyanda.*”

A deceitful perception of girls was not exclusive for males. Even though sisterhood stood out as a strong and important bond among the girls, they also accused each other of cunningness. I had heard that one of their friends had been raped, and brought it up with a group of girls. Bongiwe protested: “*It is not true. She is lying. ... You see what happened? Nokwazi agreed to the sex, but the problem was that many people saw them, so she saw that it was better to lie. ... Nokwazi saw us, that we saw her. Then she said that Musa raped her.*” Thembelihle added, “*Then she planned that she will say Musa raped her.*”

All the girls in this group strongly asserted that the girl’s allegation of rape was a lie. They argued it was a strategy to save face after having been caught having sex – a strategy to retain an identity as sexually moral. Bongiwe said that Nokwazi “*likes sex*” and that the incident therefore was not a rape. Dudu similarly commented, “*She is lying. She just loves men too much.*” These are common myths about rape, drawn from discourses of women as pretending to be sexually modest and as really being deceitful. Furthermore, Bongiwe explained that Nokwazi had asked Musa for alcohol, and that Musa’s response had been, “*Nokwazi, I want to sleep with you*”, to which Nokwazi had agreed. Although not stating it explicitly as a transactional agreement,

Bongiwe alluded to the perception that girls cunningly used sex to get money or other gains (in this case alcohol).

6.2.8 “All my clients love me”: contesting the meanings of love and sex work

Girls were depicted, both by boys and girls, as deceitful because they apparently went after men to get money or other things. At the same time, the meanings of love were highly contested. When Buyani explained that *“this girl doesn’t like me, because I didn’t have the money now, so now she likes Luyanda”*, he complained that boyfriends cannot trust their girlfriends because they change their love according to who can provide at the moment. He did not question the validity of their love, or reject the strong relationship between love and provision. Indeed, the youth, both female and male, generally agreed on love and provision being inseparable and basically two sides of the same phenomenon, similar to Hunter’s (2010) discussions on the close links between money and sex in his study from semi-urban communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

The contested meanings of love were particularly salient when girls discussed their sex work. They argued that customers loved them, like Promise in a focus group meeting with only girls: *“Some of them they love us.”* Brenda immediately qualified and said, *“Sometimes”*, but Promise then insisted, *“With me, all my clients love me.”* Nomusa explained that one client in particular *“loves me too much. He is not taking another girl. I know that. He is only taking me.”* Her argument was thus not based on provision, but on her having a special, personal, and exclusive relationship with him. Gloria similarly said that the customers *“know our names”*, emphasising that it was not impersonal sex only for money.

At the same time, the material help that sex customers brought was highly appreciated and understood as an expression of care. Promise said, *“Sometimes when he doesn’t have food, he will not come by the place where I am staying, but when he has food, he will come.”* She expressed that the customer did not come mainly for sex, but to help her. Similar to the girls’ claims of not walking the streets or wearing short clothes like ‘real’ prostitutes do, this served the purpose of retaining an identity as good girls and legitimising their sexual activities with men who paid. It was not ‘bad’ because it was

essentially about men's care for them. It was just another version of male provision. Like the American sex worker Teri Goodson (1997) maintained, sex work is simply an extension of conventional relations between men and women in society, rooted in the ideology of men as providers.

In one focus group meeting, Ntuthuko was extremely upset, and he explained that his girlfriend Pearl was cheating on him: *"She is going with another boy, and then after that, she come back to me: "Ntuthuko, I am hungry" Hungry? Hungry? I give her one punch, and she is die."* He was upset not only because of the cheating, but because of the expectation of him to fulfil the role of the male provider, yet she went with other boys. It turned out to be a sex customer, and not just one that had randomly picked her while she was walking the street, but a regular customer, who came to her where she (and Ntuthuko) stayed. He said, *"She say: "No, he's not my boyfriend. I just ask him to give me money to buy food and he give me" ... There is someone who can just give you hundred rand for nothing? No, no, no. I don't believe that."* It highlights the blurred lines between sex customers and boyfriends. Pearl claimed that the man was not a boyfriend, but Ntuthuko didn't think he gave her money *"for nothing"*, and linked the exchange of sex and money as a sign that he was indeed her boyfriend.

There seemed to make a difference for the boyfriends whether their girlfriends walked the streets and sold to strangers, or had regular customers who knew their names. Ntuthuko's friend Sakhile explained laughingly how his own girlfriend as well as other girls *"walk in the street, they're doing it like this with the hand, ... and then the car sees them ... she says, "hey baba, what you want?""* Yet he did not laugh at Ntuthuko's situation and suggested that he should *"take a string and put her in a tree"*. These boys and young men thus acknowledged their girlfriends' relations with the regular sex customers as serious relationships, beyond meaningless sex simply for money¹⁶.

6.2.9 Transactional sex with boyfriends: relational sex work

Girls' descriptions of their relations with sex customers were not so different from their descriptions of relations with boyfriends on the street. Both were explicitly based

¹⁶ for discussion on the violent response, see later this chapter

on provision. Obviously, a relation with a sex customer entailed being paid, either with money and/or food or other goods. As discussed above, relationships with boyfriends also discursively emphasised provision (although the lived experiences did not always match the ideal). Regardless of gender, youth on the street generally stressed that boyfriends should provide for girlfriends. The exchange of sex was also explicit. Boys reported raping girls because they had bought things for her, and she therefore owed them sex, and girls reported being forced into sex by boyfriends and being beaten if they refused to have sex on a boyfriend's demand.

Perhaps because boys and young men living on the street struggled to live up to the ideal of a provider, and thus struggled to hold on to a girlfriend, some of them detested the strong link between love and provision. Jabulani, a 17-year old boy, said, *"The girls that are here on the street they are not like, they love you. You see. If I am in love with, for example, you ... When I'm not in front of you, ... or you see that "oh, Jabulani is not here", you see, when someone comes with glue, you will go with him."* He argued that it was not real love, and argued that real love was not dependent on provision: *"If you love me, you don't love me because I have money. You don't love me because I am rich. You love me because it comes from your heart."* Yet, generally, there was a mix of 'love' and 'provision', both by boys and girls, and both in girls' relations with boyfriends and with sex customers. Nomusa said that she had two boyfriends, but that she loved one the most. She did not give any romantic or emotional reason, but stated, *"because he gives me everything that I want."*

The relationships between boyfriends and girlfriends were clearly transactional. Both the provision of money, food, and other goods on the one hand and the expectation of sex in exchange on the other hand, were explicit. Though girls' descriptions of sex work at times were framed in discourses of love and care, it was clear that it was a primary way of generating income, and it could thus be termed commercial sex work. Their descriptions of having relationships with boyfriends on the street were also transactional, and I term it 'relational sex work'. Relationships between men and women generally are largely based on male provision, and the institution of the heterosexual marriage is largely based on the ideal of the male provider (Goodson, 1997). But the transactional nature is exaggerated in these girls' relations with boyfriends. Not only is it very explicit, but there is also a relative lack of alternative

descriptions, for example of emotional bonding or romantic feelings ('relative' because it is not absolute, cfr. Jabulani's sentiments above and Promise's earlier comment that her boyfriend "*is cute*"). Differentiating it from 'common' sex work, the qualifying term 'relational' emphasises that it is situated in what is commonly perceived as a romantic relationship, yet it is signified as a transactional relationship, first and foremost, rather than affectional. This is consistent with the discussion on romantic relationships in chapter 3. Kudrati et al. (2008) questioned the mutual affection in so-called romantic relationships among street children in Sudan, and studies from South Africa (see Reddy, 2005; Motala & Smith, 2003) reported relationships characterised by the exchange of protection or material provision for sexual favours.

6.2.10 "You need money": sex work and poverty

Gloria said she felt bad about engaging in sex work, but did not see that she had any options: "*Isn't it, you need money to buy food, to buy things. You need money. Sometimes you feel bad. But it's like. It gets away. You don't feel that worried. But sometimes you feel bad. But we have to do it.*" She articulated the link between sex work and poverty. Nomusa explained, *Even my mother, I was saying I want to go to school ... She did not want to give me money for the school fee. That's why I'm doing that. Selling my body.*" Not only poverty as lack of income, but also as lack of education was thus a push factor. Although Nomusa claimed her mother did not "want to", it was more likely that she was not able to pay for school fee. Poverty in South Africa is dire, and it is a structural problem, which cannot be blamed on individuals. Nomusa said she was able to provide for her brother through her sex work: "*Even for my brother. Me, I paid for my brother. Clothes, the school, all that ... if I got money from my client ... My mother she doesn't know that he is a client. Me I know that.*"

South Africa has one of the highest rates of income inequality in the world. Black people, women, and black youth are among the groups that are proportionally poorer (Triegaardt, 2006), suggesting the particular structural vulnerability of the girls in this study. Youth on the street are among those with the least access to jobs, as they often have limited or no education and many lack identity documents (IDs) (Trent, 2007),

which is required for formal employment and for business permits to start (legal) income-generating activities. In the survey in my previous research study, 65.1% indicated that they did not have IDs (Osthus, 2009). In relation to the youth on the street, poverty should not be understood merely in a narrow sense of limited income or hunger, but more broadly as lack of opportunities and denial of human capabilities (Sen, 1999). This corresponds with the understanding of poverty as a deprivation trap, taking into account the complex dynamics of poverty that manifest themselves in intertwined and reinforcing ways (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006). Their intersectional disadvantage rendered the youth with few opportunities, and sex work was one of the few options available. Like Leggett (2001: 96) aptly commented, “Some might find it harder to get by than others but, especially for women, sex work is the one area where there is always work available”.

The link between sex work and socio-economic deprivation speaks to the unequal power balance between the youth on the street and the men who bought sex. The girls who sold sex were indisputably deprived, their sleeping outside on the pavement being an immense public disclosure of personal destitution (Epstein, 1996). Though they expressed that their customers loved them and provided for them, the girls were quite powerless in these relations and it was a case of “men’s control of women through economic resources” (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p. 103). The men’s care did not for example extend to a public disclosure of love, such as co-habitation or appearing officially and publically as a couple. The ‘love’ was not more sincere than that the men left the girls to sleep outside on the pavement while they went home to their beds. It was similar to the dreams of being loved and rescued by a sex customer that sex workers in Leggett’s (2001) and Trotter’s (2008) studies expressed, and the discrepancy between the fantasies and the actual realities of their relationships with men who paid. Despite claims the girls in this study made about being loved, their relationships were inevitably less romantic transactional exchanges of sex and money.

The link between sex work and socio-economic deprivation also speaks to the unequal power balance between the male youth on the street and the men who bought sex. The materiality of sex is closely linked with men’s possession of women (Hearn, 2007). The school-going boys from KwaZulu-Natal in Lindegger and Maxwell’s (2007) study did not discard the materiality of sex per se, but were upset because men

with more money threatened their own successes with girlfriends. Similarly, the young men in this study far from rejected the materiality of sex. On the contrary they distinctly endorsed it and regarded being provided for by a boyfriend as the only acceptable means for girls to make a living. Girls' engagement in sex work was an assault to their sense of masculinity because it bluntly pointed to their failures as providers and therefore as men. Their girlfriends were being more successfully possessed by other men, than by themselves. That was the core of the problem, and the principle of men's possession of women was not questioned.

6.2.11 Boys' sex work

The boys would come with accusations about girls' engagement in sex work strategically – to evoke aversion to or disapproval of the girls in me or somehow turn me against the girls. When I didn't react with the anticipated horror, the boys eventually stopped talking about girls' sex work in that scandalizing way, and some even admitted that boys also “*sell their bodies*”. Despite their heavy condemnation of girls who sold sex, boys also did it. It was extremely taboo, and it was difficult to estimate the extent. It was rarely admitted and hardly ever talked about, but two boys, Brilliant and Sihle, shared how it happened. Brilliant explained: “*There by the road, if the boy is walking, some other car ...it comes there and he calls one boy ... And then he'll say to you that he is going to buy food for you. And then he will go with you, to his house, and then if he tells you something, he says, “Do that, and this, and this”. You will do it because you want money.*” He said that the men who pay will ask the boy to “*suck them or to eat you in the bum*”, and that the boy will get fifty rand for it.

There are many similarities to female sex work. A boy also got sex customers by walking the streets, just like they accused and condemned girls for doing. For both, the overarching motivation was money, and the need for money overruled any hesitation or aversion to do what the customer wanted. Brilliant even recognized the similarity with female sex work as he commented on the price, “*Same like a girl*”. Yet, there was no trace of solidarity as a consequence of the similarities. Boys, whether those who spoke about male sex work or others, did not moderate or muffle their condemnation of girls' sex work, and they did not admit their own engagement in sex work to girls. Instead of empathy with each other's extremely difficult life

circumstances, the young men held on to the commonsense perception of dichotomy and in particular the superior-inferior polarity between males and females (Dominelli, 2002a). Despite sharing the destitution of homelessness and engaging in sex work as an income-generating strategy, the boys strongly asserted their superiority over the girls.

Sihle said that people can “*see that there is something wrong*” with boys who “*do that*”, and Brilliant explained that they can’t walk properly because their behind is paining. They thus distanced themselves from it (since they could walk properly), and also pointed to the most humiliating aspect of it: to be “*eaten in the bum*”. That was the uttermost humiliation and assault to a boy or a man’s masculinity, and it was thus selling sex to men that was taboo, not having sex for money per se.

6.2.12 Boys’ transactional sex with women

Muikila (2006) found that that both girls and boys on the streets of Dar es Salaam engaged in transactional sex with sugar daddies and sugar mommies. There were indications that boys and young men engaged in transactional sex with women in this study too. These relations were however not spoken about as prostitution (like boys selling sex to men discussed above), but rather as male achievements. A group of young men talked very excitedly about Themba’s luck with women:

Wiseman: *Too much girls, this one. If he just talks to the girls/*

Blessing: *From the flats/...*

Fortune: *Sibahle!*

Blessing: *And Lindiwe! ... Yeah, another girl there from the flat.*

Fortune: *And next week, there is another girl.*

There was definitely a skewness in terms of wealth. Themba slept outside on a pavement, while Sibahle and Lindiwe were living in flats. There was undoubtedly an element of transaction in those relationships. Yet, they talked very proudly about them. The females were achievements and conquests, and the young men were thrilled on Themba’s behalf and boasted about his skills and luck. Themba was present at this focus group meeting and took great delight in the others showing off on

his behalf. It was a manifestation of his success as a man, where sexual conquest was a proof of his masculinity (Kleinman, 2007). Their identities as males were so deeply entrenched in the male sex drive discourse (Ratele, et al., 2007) that even transactional sex with women was celebrated.

Girls' transactional sex was also to some extent rooted in the male sex drive discourse, since they were providing the satisfaction of men's need for sex, yet it also contested it to some extent, since it entailed them being very sexually active, and not in an innocent or ignorant way. The girls thus failed to negotiate the contradiction inherent in the dominant discourse on female sexuality, to provide sex to gratify males' sex drive, but at the same time to be sexually modest (Sathiparsad, 2007).

6.2.13 “I’m a player”: the high status of multiple girlfriends

Studies have found that multiple partners is a normative strategy for establishing manhood in KwaZulu-Natal (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). The male sex drive discourse had a strong position on the street, and having many girlfriends gave boys and men high status. Sthembiso boasted, *“All these girls they call me I’m a player (everybody giggling). Maybe here in town, I think it’s almost like 50 girls now ... Eish, too many girls now. Even Nokubonga, too. Nokubonga, you see how beautiful she is? But, one man! How many guys here around still want her? When I was growing up, there were so many guys hunting for her, but she always said no. But when one soldier came – he just said what has to be done.”* The references to *“guys hunting for her”* and *“soldier”* illustrate the masculinity and the achievement implied in having girlfriends. Sthembiso was so sure of himself that he even challenged me: *“Point out one girl now, and I will show you how this thing is done.”*

Sthembiso's bragging about his many sexual conquests and his skills with women was consistent with the characteristics of the isoka as described by Hunter (2005). Isoka is a male identity where sexual conquests and having many girlfriends are celebrated as successful masculinity. Hunter (2005) argued that the isoka has gained prominence in the current socio-economic situation where many men fail to live up to the ideal of male provision, and has become a substitute for Zulu men to the masculine ideal of a man as the head and provider of a homestead. Boys and young

men living on the street fail as providers, and the discrepancy between their lives and the ideal of the homestead head is even more profound, since they are homeless and actually sleep, eat, and live outside. Their need to compensate and assert their masculinity in alternative ways is substantial.

The male sexual drive discourse was also evident among the girls, and some considered boyfriends' cheating as unavoidable and even expected. Lungile only wanted the decency that her boyfriend tried to hide it, and not parade it in front of her. She said, *"He wanted to come and sleep with the girls in front of my face. ... And I decided that I can't deal with/ I can't afford all of that. If he wants to cheat, he must go and cheat far away, far away. Not in front of me. He must go far."* Though boys' multiple partners were to some degree accepted by girls and celebrated by the boys themselves, girls with multiple partners were heavily condemned. Not only would they be violently reprimanded by the boys, but they would also be seen as 'bad' women. The double standard in terms of acceptable and expected behaviours among males and females was striking (Kleinman, 2007).

6.2.14 "You are killing all the boys": HIV and AIDS on the street

As discussed, multiple partners and unprotected sex were common on the street. Women are often blamed for spreading HIV (Sathiparsad, 2007), especially women who sell sex, while men's roles are made invisible (Kleinman, 2007). Although multiple partners and unprotected sex are largely embedded in the male sexual drive discourse (Nattrass, 2004; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007), girls were usually blamed for the spread of HIV among the youth on the street. In a focus group meeting, Promise described how Dudu was stabbed: *"Another boy said: "Hey! There you are! You are killing all the boys in Point!" ... Then they poked her. And it came out / what's this in English? That meat from inside there"* and Pearl indicated with her hands that organs had welled out from Dudu's stomach. Males' collective anger was thus expressed against girls as "vectors of disease" (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007).

Few of the youth would openly admit their HIV positive status, especially to each other. It was usually concealed as "TB", consistent with findings from an informal settlement in Durban (Simpson, 2001). Lack of ID and proof of address were serious

obstacles in accessing medication. To be eligible to government-provided AIDS medication, the patient has to disclose their status to at least one other person who will be their treatment partner and commit to helping them to adhere to the treatment regime. The youth's lack of parental care and their reluctance to disclose their status to their friends were therefore other factors that complicated their access to medication. Those who did access it usually concealed it as "*chest tablets*". Adherence was a huge challenge, and several youth from the street died of AIDS-related illnesses during the course of this study.

Similar to other studies on children and youth living on the street (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997; Trent, 2007) and sex workers (Trotter, 2008), HIV was not a concern that manifested in any practical steps from either girls or boys to avoid being infected. It could be that they were preoccupied with more immediate concerns in their day-to-day living, such as getting food, and that the risk of HIV seemed too abstract compared to their other survival challenges (Swart-Kruger, 1997; Trotter, 2008). It could also be that they do not perceive that it is at all possible to avoid infection. I found that sex with multiple partners was widespread and in effect unavoidable. Rapes of girls were so pervasive that the girls considered it an inevitable part of street life. Obviously, they did not possess the power to negotiate condom use when they were raped. Likewise, as discussed above, sex work is common and the girls have little power to negotiate condom use in those transactional relations. For both boys and girls, their sense of power is constrained. Their sense of hope is limited and being in charge of their future is a notion they can hardly perceive. The weight of their multiple oppressions is heavy, and they have abandoned a futuristic orientation (Epstein, 1996). Even though the youth watch their friends die from AIDS, and discussions reveal that they are well informed about HIV and AIDS, multiple sexual partners and unprotected sex are normative.

6.2.15 Provision, sexuality, and violence on the street: the assault on masculinity

While some girls seemed resigned to their boyfriends' cheating, boys also commonly perceived girlfriends' cheating as unavoidable (cf. earlier discussions on how girls cannot be trusted and will go after whoever offers them something). But boys still found it utterly unacceptable and responded with violence (like in the earlier example

where Ntuthuko found Pearl cheating with a boyfriend/sex customer). A cheating girlfriend challenged the male sexual drive discourse and the discourse of modest feminine sexuality (Sathiparsad, 2007). The boys' violent responses correspond with violence as a gender-specific procedure of undoing shame for males (Gilligan, 2001), and as a means of constructing power when men feel that their power is otherwise threatened (Kleinman, 2007). Reviewing literature from across the globe, Jewkes (2002) found that women's gender role transgressions are particularly strongly associated with men's violence against women. This applies to the young men and women on the street in several ways, including girls' cheating (which contests males' superior position as sexual conquerors and appropriate feminine sexuality), but is particularly relevant to girls' engagement in sex work. Selling sex is a major gender role transgression, and the young men would punish the young women brutally. Sex work contests the male sexual drive discourse generally in that it entails inappropriately sexually active women. Specifically for the boys living on the street, it contested the male sexual drive discourse because it meant that their girlfriends did not exclusively engage in sex with them, but also with other men, and, importantly, wealthier men who paid. Girls' sex work profoundly challenged their boyfriends' successes in living up to the male provision discourse.

Many studies have dealt with the great constraints South Africa's socio-economic situation places on men and their ability to live up to the hegemonic masculine ideal of provision (Xaba, 2001; Hunter, 2005; Walker, 2005; Morrell, 2007; Salo, 2007). Reviewing international literature, Jewkes (2002) found that poverty was a key influence to men's violence against women, through the mediation of poverty's assault to the masculine identity. Throughout history, being a provider has been a masculine ideal among black South Africans, dating back to the precolonial head of a homestead. The young men in this study were extremely deprived. Sleeping outside, they were far from the ideal of the homestead head. Having girlfriends who slept outside, they profoundly failed as providers. The assault on their sense of masculinity was further intensified by the fact that their girlfriends engaged in sex for money with wealthier men. Suttner (2007) commented on the emasculation of black men under apartheid, and black men's response of joining the liberation movement, and said that they drew on "earlier pre-Union notions and values of manhood. These connoted martial bravery; they signified men who possessed land and who were able to protect

it” (p. 202). The boys and young men in this study had no legitimate liberation movement to join, but they were utterly dispossessed and unable to protect what they perceived as ‘theirs’ from other men. Severely marginalised in terms of class and consistent with marginalised masculinity, the young men strived towards hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2009). Drawing on cultural values of manhood connoting martial bravery, and consistent with global constructions of masculinity (Jewkes, 2002), they attempted to restore their “wounded sense of masculinity” (Kleinman, 2007, p. 53) through violence.

6.3 Girls’ violence and contestations of femininity and masculinity

6.3.1 “I poke her!”: violence perpetrated by girls and constructions of femininity

While violence is central to hegemonic masculinity, it is quite different for girls. When being treated badly by other people and feeling bad, Themba said he “*feel like hitting someone*”. Nomusa, in a similar situation, said she “*feel like crying*”. They are typical examples of femininity and masculinity. As discussed in chapter 4, violence is not compatible with proper womanhood because it is “a graphic form of non-caring for others” (Hearn, 2007, p. 28). Nomusa said, “*Mum is going to drink with her boyfriend, it breaks my heart in many pieces, thinking many thoughts at the same time, thinking to do bad things to get this out of my mind, but I mustn’t do it*”. By restraining herself from doing what she thinks, Nomusa thus recognised that violence contests hegemonic femininity, as it clashes with the ideals of being soft, caring, passive, dependent, and so on. Most of the girls’ stories are stories of victimization, and often describing themselves as innocent and helpless. It is a discursive strategy, and helps the girls construct an acceptable feminine identity. Against the backdrop of all the unfeminine qualities of prostitution, at least being a proper victim of males’ violence is one area where the girls can lay claims on being good girls who deserve sympathy. Indeed, males’ violence against the girls is common and severe. Buyani explained, “*a boy can fight, a girl can’t fight*”.

However, some girls can and do fight. For example, Pearl tried to stab Ntuthuko when she suspected that he was cheating on her. Ntuthuko said, “*She said she will kill me, today is my last day speaking*”, and she threw a stone at his head. Ntuthuko survived, though, and took violent revenge. Some girls explained that they did not beat cheating

boyfriends specifically because the boyfriends' response would be excessively violent. Thembelihle said: *"Hey! Hooo! You must ask these other girls. Hey, he was hitting me. You see, when I was fighting him or slapping him, if I was getting so sad, because I was pregnant. He was hitting me even when I was pregnant. He was hitting me, then I call the police, and they took him."* She thus showed a different form of power: by calling the police, the boyfriend was arrested, and he was sent to jail.

Thembelihle did however react violently, but her violence was directed towards the girl her boyfriend slept with. She explained: *"He likes the girls very much. Even when I was pregnant, he wasn't frightened to take a girl and sleep with her. ... I would fight with those girls. Sometimes I would take the bottle, I poke¹⁷ that girl, and another girl, she was called Happy, I poked that girl. I poke her! I poke her! I poke her!"* Thembelihle did not blame her boyfriend, but the girl he slept with. She expected the boyfriend to cheat, but expected sisterly solidarity from the other girl. She had told Happy, *"if my boyfriend comes and tells you that he loves you, you must come and tell me"*, but Happy didn't tell her, and she got angry and stabbed the girl.

Contrary to hegemonic femininity's notions of being passive and vulnerable, Thembelihle asserted her violent abilities, and violence among girls was common. Some girls described that they would fight off young men who harassed other girls, thus framing their violence as an expression of sisterhood (but also asserting impressive physical strength). Others described their violence in quite similar terms as males, for example Thembelihle who stabbed Happy when she humiliated her by sleeping with her boyfriend. The girls in this study subscribed to an alternative construction of street-wise femininity, similar to Ness's (2004) descriptions of violent girls in an American inner city. However, the girls on the street constantly negotiated this with more hegemonic constructions of decent behaviour appropriate for 'good girls'.

6.3.2 Girls' violence and constructions of masculinity

Not only boys' violence against other boys, but also violence against girls as well as violence committed by girls was often a part of contestations of manhood among boys

¹⁷ poke = stab (with any sharp object, such as knife, broken bottle/glass, metal wire)

and young men. For example, Bongiwe left her boyfriend Sizwe and became Buyani's girlfriend instead. This was humiliating to Sizwe, and Buyani said that Sizwe responded by challenging him: "*He told me that he was going to hit Bongiwe in front of me*". Threatening to beat a girl in front of her boyfriend was an offense, by which Sizwe tried to save face, and Buyani was obliged to interfere. He said, "*when he started to hit Bongiwe, then me too I hit Sizwe*". Sizwe was humiliated again by losing to Buyani, and had to try and save face yet again. Buyani explained that Sizwe had a bushknife, "*and then he said he is going to come back to kill me.*" Buyani stood the ground and replied, "*I am always ready for you*". All the boys in this focus group meeting laughed and cheered as Buyani narrated this love drama. He had saliently challenged Sizwe's manhood, as well as confirmed his own, first by taking his girlfriend, then by winning over him in a fight, and lastly by not being scared of his threats to kill him. However, the love drama was not over, and neither was Buyani's triumph.

After having lost the girlfriend and the fight, Sizwe accused Bongiwe of giving him pubic lice. Usually a referral to an STI would be understood as implying prostitution. It would not only be an insult for the girl, but in this case even more so for the new boyfriend. When the boys told me this story, however, they didn't dwell on that or even seem affected by it at all. They were too excited about Bongiwe's response. While Buyani tried to tell the story from the beginning, the other boys repeatedly interrupted him, too excited to wait for the grand finale. Mondli eventually exclaimed: "*Bongiwe bit him!*" The level of excitement and noise was beyond what I am able to describe. It was a celebration of the girl's violence, however, it was a celebration of the girl's violence as an utmost humiliation of Sizwe. By biting her ex-boyfriend in front of her new boyfriend, Bongiwe crowned Buyani's triumph.

A girl's violence was a challenge to manhood not only when it was directed at boys, but even when it was directed at other girls. Wiseman told about a different love drama: "*Pretty left Blessing and she went to fetch for Themba.*" Then Themba's girlfriend Namandla came. Fortune interrupted Wiseman, "*And hit them!*" Themba protested fervently, "*Not hit them, she hit the girl! Not me! I am not a –*". Fortune made peace and agreed that Namandla had only hit the girl, and Wiseman continued, "*And then Blessing came, he had a bushknife*". Blessing laughed loud and said that he

told Namandla, *“Namandla, leave her alone. Me I am going to sort all my things nicely.”* He thus rejected Namandla’s violence and made it clear that he should be the one to beat Pretty. A violent girl was controversial and contested male superiority. The centrality of male control has historical roots going as far back as precolonial times, when power and authority was male-exclusive (Lesejane, 2006). Girls’ violence negated the crucial purpose of violence of men establishing and maintaining control over a female partner (Sathiparsad, 2008), and Namandla’s violence to maintain control over her male partner (that is, to stop Themba from having an affair with Pretty) was unacceptable.

6.4 Gang culture and constructions of masculinity

6.4.1 The 26 gang

Violence was extremely common on the street, and much of the perpetration of violence was consistent with the discussions on violence and constructions of masculinities in chapter 4. However, violence on the street cannot be seen in isolation from the gang culture. Gangs on the streets of Durban are number-gangs¹⁸, 26 and 28, which originate in prison. Although not all the boys or young men who stay on the street are members of the gangs, it permeates the street so that no one is unaffected by it, and especially males have to relate to it and negotiate their identities and behaviours according to the constraints of the gang culture.

Even though the gangs on the street to some extent functioned independently from the original number gangs in prison, prisons still played an important part, especially when it came to joining a gang. To join a gang was called to *“pick a number”*. Mbulelo, a 21 year old young man, told me about how he became a 26 after an older gangster took him on robberies and taught him what to do if he was arrested and jailed. In prison, he was taught about the laws of the gang, and this teaching was done through violence. Mbulelo said, *“when you get the number, the 26 they hit you, until you know ... If they ask a question, you know everything. And if you are scared, all the boys they hit you. They teach you about the number.”*

¹⁸ see chapter 4

He explained that he was taught and asked about special names, riddles, and myths, and their imaginary uniforms, with a certain colour on the socks, belts, and so on, according to what was appropriate knowledge at the lowest rank. Like Steinberg (2004) also observed, the number gangs employ an army discourse, with ranks and uniforms, and command discipline and obedience according to a strict hierarchy. Mbulelo explained: *“If I [as a sqomane¹⁹] said, “go and search somebody”, you are going to search him, and if you find money, sometimes you don’t bring me the money. It is yours. But if it is a mashlone²⁰ [who orders you], you bring the money”*.

At the top of the rank is the igunya. Mbulelo said:

Even in prison, they have a president! Igunya is not doing nothing. Even if he goes to the kitchen, he doesn’t carry a plate of food; he doesn’t carry a cup of tea. But when he is back, he will find everything there. If he wants meat, too much meat, the special²¹ and the sqomane are going to buy it for the gunya in the kitchen. ... You pay with cigarettes. You pay for the meat. But it is not for you.

Being a 26 thus requires self-discipline and sacrifice. The ability to endure pain is the test at the initiation ritual, when the candidate is brutally beaten up and is not allowed to express pain or utter any sound at all. But in order to *“climb the number”* or *“grow in the number”*, perpetration of violence is necessary. Mbulelo explained: *“They have the stages like the cop. (...) Inside in the prison, they take out the blood (...) If, like me, I am a sqomane, you see. If I kill somebody and go inside there, I take the blood, you see, and then they bring me the next stage. I don’t say, “ish!”, I am so happy, that they bring the other stage for me.”* Mbulelo’s friend Victor is one of the top leaders of 26. He has killed a police officer to get to that rank: *“He has a writing [tattoo] for the/ you know the car of the cop? The sticker? He wrote the sticker for the cop there on the chest. ... That thing says that he has killed a cop. That’s why he is so big.”*

¹⁹ the middle soldier rank in the 26

²⁰ the highest soldier rank in the 26

²¹ the lowest soldier rank in the 26

6.4.2 Violence by non-gang members

Violence is at the core of the 26, and it dictates a way to manhood. Gang members were never referred to as “gangsters”, but either as “26” or as “*the big boys*”. “*The big boys*” were juxtaposed with “*the small boys*”, the latter referring to non-gang members who had not endured the violence of the initiation rites or perpetrated the violence necessary to “*climb the number*”.

However, even for boys and young men who had not “*picked a number*” violence was normatively used to claim manhood. As already discussed, violence was a common response to a perceived threat or assault to one’s manhood, such as girls’ sex work, and there seemed to be no difference between gang members and non-gang members. Indeed non-gang members frequently made claims to violence specifically to ensure their masculine reputation or to clarify that they were still men even though they were not gang members. For example, Mpendulo said that he got respect through sports activities like surfing and soccer, which got him friends and protected him from being stabbed. He explained this as an alternative strategy for surviving on the street as a male, instead of joining the number gang. But as he was explaining this non-violent way of getting respect, he suddenly started asserting his ability to be violent: “*You know how many people I have been hitting them here in the street? I even don’t remember, Ingrid. They take me as a child. Ey! Even you, if you can take me as a child, you will see for yourself, how it is. ... (Touching one bicep) One shot, one hospital. This (touching his other bicep) is one shot – one mortuary.*”

The interview with Mpendulo illustrated the differences in genres between individual interviews and group interviews, and how different genres influence the styles of the speakers (Fairclough, 2009, p. 164). Focus groups with boys typically included a lot of boasting and bragging about violence and girlfriends. In individual interviews, there was more space for sensitive, “weak” topics. This is consistent with the experiences of Lindegger & Maxwell (2007), who found that boys gave different accounts of their successes or failures with girlfriends in group settings and individual interviews. I have, for example, had numerous experiences where boys have cried when we were alone, but never when others have been present. The conversation with Mpendulo was not likely to happen in a group setting, yet even in the safety of our individual interview, he abruptly changed the topic and asserted his violent abilities.

To make sure that I did not “*take [him] as a child*”, he used my name and also challenged me directly (“*Ey! Even you ... you will see for yourself ... One shot, one hospital*”).

In this interview Mpendulo had talked about the difficulties and dangers boys on the street faced, thus exposing himself as vulnerable, and he had described himself as a peaceful boy. It did not fit the dominant discourse of masculinity, where a man is powerful, strong, and in control. He felt that he had cast his manliness in doubt, and tried to restore it by expressing his ability to be violent, consistent with Gilligan’s (2001) explanation of violence as a gender-specific means of undoing shame and establishing masculinity. Apart from the general effects of violence and its embeddedness in male vulnerability (Jewkes, 2002), violence was particularly important as a marker of masculinity on the street because of the prominence of the gang to males and the hegemonic position of violence in the 26 gang.

6.4.3 Male to male sex and the number gang

Another controversial issue was male to male sex. It was generally associated with the 28²², and zealously rejected in the 26 area. Both being the passive partner who was “*eaten in the bum*” or the active partner who was “*eating the chocolate box*” were intolerable, and Dollar killed Siphamandla because he raped boys in the 26 area.

Mfanafuthi had been in jail for raping a boy, but his friends excused it as a once-off “*mistake*” and he was accepted by the 26. However, some time after he came out of jail, he raped and tried to rape again. He raped and/or tried to rape both boys and girls, but it was the male victims that caused the most outrage. Although many youth were upset because of the girls, it was the rapes of boys that were sensational and that did not fit the script of gendered relations. Many were confused about whether he really was a 26. Mpumelelo said, “*as far as I know, it is the 28 that do that*”, and Malusi declared, “*he can’t be a 26!*”

But Mbulelo revealed, “*Mfanafuthi is a 26. The 26 also do that.*” He referred to two well-known young men on the street, “*You know ... Richman? He’s been doing like*

²² see 3.6 Gangs

that from long time ago. He's been doing that to another friend, Mvunyelwa. ... He's doing like that and saying he will bring him the number." Both were famous and feared on the street, and their sexual relations had to be common knowledge, although nobody else would admit that others than 28 "*do that*". Male to male sex as an alternative route to gang membership was too controversial to be admitted. Mbulelo explained how it still happened, "*There are so many boys ... they want to be 26. But they don't know ... where they can get it. And then someone tells lies to you and then they bring you the number.*"

He emphasized that it was not the real number, "*It's like a fake. It's called 26 but it is not the 26. ... They never hit you, but if you get the real number, the 26 they hit you*". To let a senior gang member have sex with you was an alternative "*if you are scared*" to be beaten. The true way of joining the 26 was through violence, both enduring it and committing it, requiring courage and the ability to not be scared. Mbulelo captured this when he said he was a sqomane and explained that a sqomane is a "*man who must not be scared of blood. Every time they have to take out the blood. They like to fight. Even if you are scared of a boy, but you must not show him that you are scared. You fight.*"

6.4.4 "A real man": contestations of gangsterism

Mbulelo was recruited into the 26 by the igunya after several periods in jail, and whether one had been in jail or not was a big dividing line for the young men. Sthembiso said, "*I do not know what Westville²³ look like*" as an argument that there was still hope for him, hope of a better life. The difference between "*big boys*" and "*small boys*" (alias gang members and non-gang members) had little to do with age or size, but was essentially about being good or bad, and having hopes for a better future or not. "*Small boys*" had retained some innocence, some goodness, and there was hope for them. "*Big boys*" had overstepped a line and were perceived as beyond hope. Gang members never called themselves "*big boys*", but said "26" to refer to their gang membership. Some even occasionally called themselves a "*small boy*", to emphasise that their life could still change. Even though violence was entrenched as

²³ main prison in Durban

the most exalted proof of masculinity and permeated most aspects of street life, most of the youth acknowledged that their way of life led to destruction.

Sthembiso admired honest work instead of gangsterism. He spoke about those who rob, and said, *“I don’t see any manship in them. Because if they were men enough, they would not do such things like that. Because a real man who knows where he wants to go does not do things like that ... all the things he has, like driving nice cars, it is not from killing people, it is from his own powers, seeing that he is doing hard work”*. Sthembiso was not 26, and he distanced himself from that type of life. But valuing hard, honest work above gangsterism was not reserved to non-gang members. Mbulelo was a 26, and he had killed, but he too held honest work higher than robbing. He acknowledged that robbing and the gang may give immediate gratification, but denied that it could bring a good future. Despite much of his behaviour and his lived experiences, he expressed a desire for the ideal that a real man does honest work and provides for his family.

6.5 Constructions of motherhood and fatherhood

6.5.1 “Buy nappies for the child”: fatherhood and provision

The ideal of a man who provides was unitarily embraced by the youth on the street, and it was particularly evident when a boy or a young man became a father. Everyone agreed that a good father should provide for his child. Luyanda, a 16-year old boy, said, *“If you are a good father, if the baby wants something, the father will make it fast. Yah. He never takes long /long time to buy something.”* Sthembiso added, *“If there is anything that the child needs, the child will speak to the father, maybe, “Daddy, I need this for school”. The father will take the child in his car, buy the child something, and then the child is happy. Sometimes the father buys the child a bicycle, phones, every kind of things like that... That is what a father should be of, that is what he is made of.”*

Their account of “what a father should be of” was a fantasy far from the realities of the streets. Ntuthuko said, *“Hey, for the guys who are staying on the street, it’s/ to get a baby is too hard.”* Yet he upheld the importance of providing, and continued: *“If he gets a baby here in the street, he must make sure that he has something that he can*

buy for the baby ... He must have a job, so when the child is born, you can buy her some clothes, something like milk, food to eat". None of the boys and young men expressed any alternative way of being fathers, other than providing materially.

Girls had the same expectations and maintained that material care was fathers' (only) responsibility. Felicia said that a good father is "*making sure that the child is fed ... making sure that his child has clothes and nappies*". Nokuphila stressed the importance of having a job and said, "*He works hard for his baby*". Similar to the discussion in chapter 4, fatherhood was primarily, and even exclusively, perceived as a matter of taking responsibility for material provision among the youth on the street.

Some young fathers expressed great joy and pride. Macintosh, a 19-year old young man, for example, said, "*It means many things to my life. ... It's really great and I'm like overjoyed. You know my heart is like continuous.*" He saw it as an opportunity to change from street life to become a responsible and well-behaved man: "*Because he's born so I am no longer to be a person who I was ... and I must start changing my life, acting like a real father ... This is an opportunity that I can never let it go ... So, I better take a good stand, and make things right, make things happen and – live life, change things, start buying nappies for the child, milk, cereals and everything*".

Macintosh's perception of fatherhood as "*an opportunity*" to change his life is similar to the young men in Salo' (2007) study, where gangsterism was considered the first stage in the path to manhood, but fatherhood was the next stage, and thus closer to 'real manhood'. But the young men in Salo's study struggled to live up to the ideal of fatherhood, just like the young men in this study. Macintosh used the modality "ought" or "must", as opposed to an "is" (Fairclough, 2009), and rightly so. It remained an idealised fantasy, and he did not actually do any of the changes that he aspired to. Fatherhood did not provide a realistic, alternative path to manhood for young men on the street, because it was restricted to provision (Morrell, 2007; Ichou, 2008).

6.5.2 “You become a woman”: motherhood

Boys acknowledged that they ought to change their life style when they became fathers. The changes related to girls who became mothers were less material, but perhaps more profound. Angel was 16 years old and had recently given birth to a baby girl. She said, *“I have someone now to call me a mother. I know now that I have someone to take care of. Not like just another person.”* Her life had meaning and purpose, and similar to the disadvantaged women in McMahon’s study (in Kleinman, 2007), it was achieved through becoming a mother. Khanyi, a young woman who was pregnant at the time of the interview, said, *“It changes a girl. You become a woman, a mother, same like other one.”* From being perceived as, at the most, a street child, or perhaps more likely, a prostitute, she recognised a new status and identity as *“a woman, a mother, same like other one”*, quite similar to the changes the disabled mothers in Grue and Lærum’s (2002) study expressed.

They expected to be treated differently, that is, treated with more respect due to the status as mothers. For example, Thembelihle was angry that her boyfriend slept with other girls while she was pregnant, which was a lot worse than cheating on her while she wasn’t pregnant. She was also angry with Happy because she slept with her boyfriend even though *“she knew that he was the father of my baby”*, and she was not reported to the police for stabbing Happy because of the status her pregnancy gave her.

The girls struggled to negotiate their heterogeneous statuses and convince others that they really deserved the respect given to mothers. They lived by selling sex, which was perceived as the opposite of being a good mother, consistent with dominant discourses on motherhood and sex work (Beard, et al., 2010). Angel was dismayed with how Nothando behaved: *“She is wearing a short thing. That girl is pregnant, and she is wearing a short thing”*. Felicia agreed, *“She should protect her body because she is pregnant.”* Angel affirmed that sex work and motherhood was incompatible and said, *“Even though you are still pregnant, but it means that you are now a mother.”* The girls thus voiced the controversy of sex workers being mothers, or mothers being sex workers, and the serious clash with dominant discourses on womanhood and motherhood, as reflected in research across the world (Beard, et al., 2010). The boys in this study also confirmed the contradiction between motherhood

and sex work, and some made a big point out of having children with girlfriends at home and not from the street. When I was discussing fatherhood with a group of boys, Sakhile became very upset as he thought I was saying that he had a baby on the street, “*I don’t get in the street! I get in the home! Inanda! You know she is from Inanda! Not from the street!*” Sthembiso did not explicitly mention sex work, but said, “*I prefer to have a woman with my kid near my home. Because I know she is trustable.*”

6.5.3 “I can’t throw my child”: abortion and adoption vs. acceptable mothering

While the girls and young women of the street hardly could achieve being perceived as good mothers, the decisive factor determining whether they could be accepted as good enough mothers was whether “*you keep your child*” or not. Macintosh told about what happened while he was still with his ex-girlfriend Samantha:

I’m trying to touch her stomach to see if something is still there. Nothing was there. And when I asked her: “Hey, what happened? What did you do to the child?” She told me, “No, it’s a mistake”. She drank the wrong tablets. I asked her, “How can you do that?” ... You know she was doing bad things ... they were selling their bodies ... I tried to speak to her many times, convincing her and telling her, “You must stop doing this thing!” It’s not better neither for her nor the baby that is in her stomach. ... I was also going to start saving money in case the child comes out and I was going to support the child like a normal real father. But she did her own things and she took the child out.

Macintosh asserted his own intentions to be “*a normal real father*”, but was cheated of the chance since Samantha “*took the child out*”. He blamed her and her fundamental failure at decent womanhood. Since she was selling her body, and refused to stop despite his pleas, it made sense to him that she also did not keep the child. She simply confirmed what a bad woman she was.

To “*keep your child*” was also about keeping the custody after birth. Staying on the street and sleeping outside is in the best interest of a baby. It was therefore difficult for girls who live on the street to keep their children with them. The helping system became an enemy. Khanyi explained that it was difficult to be a mother on the street

because “*when we are sleeping, the Metro police come.*” Given the extent of police brutality, I thought she was concerned about the baby being exposed to violence or tear gas, but she continued, “*Maybe if you are sleeping with your child, the Metro comes and takes your child. ... Maybe they take them to a social worker*”. Khanyi was pregnant, and she was struggling to make a plan to keep her child after giving birth. One day we discussed the options she had, and she said, “*They tell me that I must take my baby to a place by Bluff, and me I must stay here in the street! No. They are going to adopt my baby, when I leave there by Bluff, no! ... No! No, no, I won't leave my baby there. They are going to adopt him. No.*”

Khanyi wanted to prove being at least an acceptable woman and mother by avoiding adoption. Adoption was demonized on the street, and was pretty much the worst thing a girl can do. Mpumzi declared, “*I can't throw my child*”.

6.5.4 The motherhood mandate and contestations of adequate care

There was a persistent story in the street community that Elihle had sold her baby. She had lived outside on the street with the baby for a while after giving birth, and changed from the area where she normally stayed to a different street – probably to stay away from service providers. A family living in a flat nearby Elihle's new street ‘home’ came in contact with her, and the baby stayed with them for a while. It became formalized as foster care, and maybe later as adoption. As I was not formally involved in the case, I am not sure about the details, but I do know that the baby went from living with Elihle on a pavement to living with a family in a flat. The street community did not acknowledge this as an act of care from Elihle's side. Elihle was instead heavily condemned. Having failed the minimum requirement of keeping her child, she was accused of selling it. Lust for money was again used to explain and judge girls' behaviour.

At the same time, mothers who did live on the street with their children were also disapproved of and criticized for being bad mothers. For example, Londeka came back to the street after giving birth to a daughter, and she lived with her outside. She struggled with hygienic care, trying to change nappies on her baby without warm water, without soap, without baby jelly, and without nappies. She would sit on the

pavement and breastfeed her baby, while at the same time sniff glue, surrounded by violence. I was constantly called by other youth from the street, both boys and girls, who urged me to take the baby to a children's home. They said Londeka was a bad mother, a bad girl, and a bad person. They were very concerned about the baby's wellbeing in such a dangerous and inappropriate environment.

Elihle lived under the same conditions as Londeka. The youth could have judged Elihle positively by acknowledging that a good mother should make sure her baby is safe and cared for, even if it means giving the child up for fostercare or adoption when the alternative is to live on the street. But they did not. Young mothers on the street thus face an impossible dilemma: If you live with a baby on the street, you fail in protecting your child and are a bad mother. If you separate from your baby to keep her/him safe, you have committed a cardinal sin as a woman and are considered an even worse mother. They were confronted by the mandate of motherhood (Sewpaul, 1995), where "the ideal woman ... mothers naturally" and is always ready to "respond to the needs of children" (Malacrida, 2009, p. 99, 101). Girls living on the street who get children are almost inevitably doomed to fail the mandate of motherhood and to be 'bad'.

Angel acknowledged this dilemma, and spoke about how she weighed the difficulty of being able to be a good mother by taking adequate care of her child against the condemnation of not even keeping her when she found out she was pregnant: "*The first time the nurse told me that I'm pregnant, she asked me if I want the child or not. Yah, at that time it was difficult. But, but I told her that I want the child. Even though I know that I don't have money, I don't have work, I don't have nothing, but I didn't want abortion.*" She accepted that it would be difficult living with a child when she didn't "*have nothing*", but decided against abortion "*because I know that even though I don't have anything, but the child will grow up.*"

Like many of the youth on the street, Angel had grown up under difficult conditions and in poverty. She was a living proof that "*the child will grow up*". Also, taking care of the needs that require money or work was first and foremost the responsibility of the father, and not the mother. By keeping the child she had done what was required. However, the emphasis on male provision did not necessarily translate into keeping

fathers responsible. For example, Elihle explained that they could not keep the baby because the father did not support: *“Aaron is working. He gets paid. I said he must buy something for the baby, but then he fights with me. (...) The problem is that when Aaron gets money, he drinks. He is not buying for the baby. If we need the baby back with us, he must buy for the baby.”*

Absent fathers and fathers who are present, but un-involved, is a normative experience in KwaZulu-Natal (Denis & Ntsimane, 2006). The discrepancy between the discourse of fatherhood and lived realities is huge, and mothers, through the mandate of motherhood, bear the brunt. Despite Aaron’s failure to provide, Elihle faced a unison condemnation from everyone on the street, and nobody blamed Aaron for the loss of parental care and/or custody of the baby. It could be because of male solidarity and the acknowledgement that the expectation to provide was difficult to live up to for young men on the street. However, Aaron did have a job. Furthermore, girls condemned Elihle just as heavily as boys. The mandate of motherhood placed the responsibility on her, regardless of her circumstances or the actions of her partner. Importantly, Elihle was not blamed simply for giving her child up for foster care or adoption, but for selling him. The pervasive perception of girls being essentially cunning and lusting for money lay behind.

6.5.5 Having a baby as motivation to change: an atypical case

Being pregnant or having a baby generally did not translate into any substantial change in terms of how the young women lived. Several would express their intentions *“to change”* during the pregnancy, for example to get a job in order to be able to provide for the child and keep custody or move back home. Few of them put their plans into action or made a significant effort to really be able to live with their children. An exception was Angel. She was an orphan, but after she gave birth, she tried to move to some extended family members. She however found the conditions unsatisfactory for the safety and wellbeing of her baby, Nosipho, and decided to place the baby in foster care and go back to school so that she could improve her life and be able to care adequately for the baby in the future. Angel was visibly uneasy when she told me about this, and when I commended her for her care towards the baby and her agency, she exclaimed relieved, *“Eish, I thought you were going to say. ‘You are*

throwing the child away! You see, Ingrid, I really do love Nosipho”. I had heard good plans before, and was not convinced about her intention or ability to really follow through with her plans, but when I asked when she wanted to do this, she replied, “*Even now. Hey, Ingrid, Nosipho is suffering*”. We went to find a suitable foster home for the baby that same day, and Nosipho was eventually placed in foster care and Angel did go back to school. She was thus a wonderful example of agency. Despite fearing that her plans would be rejected as “*throwing the child away*”, she realised that good mothering and true caring entailed to really ensure the baby’s wellbeing even if it meant giving it up. She moved beyond fantasising and talking about a different future, but actually went through with her plans and went back to school.

6.5.6 Parenthood as a strategy for securing a relationship

To have a boyfriend is almost a matter of life or death for a girl living on the street, as discussed earlier. To get a child with a boyfriend was a possible strategy of securing a relationship. Jabulani and some of his friends were telling told me about Nothando, who had been home for a while but came back to the street and wanted to be Jabulani’s girlfriend. He eventually found out that she was pregnant, and that she had been pregnant before she came back to the street, and consequently broke up with her. He said that she told him that, “*she wanted that baby, she wanted to give it to me.*”

Lungile similarly tried to secure her relationship with Mandla. Mandla was sleeping with many girls, and when Lungile became pregnant, she saw the opportunity to establish their relationship. The main obstacle that she identified was the possibility of losing custody of the child. During her pregnancy, she introduced a rumour on the street that I stole babies and then sold them overseas. I was not doing any casework with her, but the social worker who did was black and South African, so I was more believable as a baby-stealer and baby-seller. The rumour was believed and invoked anger among the street community. I was warned that some of the “*big boys*” wanted to take me, and for weeks I could not go to the streets. Lungile hoped that although I was not dealing with her case, others who did would also be scared, and she was right.

Lungile also said that her boyfriend would be very angry if the baby was taken away from them. Knowing that he was a 26, it was a scary situation. It puzzled me at the

time that Mandla would lay such strong claims of fatherhood and threaten with violence if his child was taken away, yet at the same time show so little responsibility for the wellbeing of Lungile and the baby during the pregnancy. He did little to ensure that she had food, and he slept in a different place than her. Later I learnt that he had not made any threats, but that Lungile had made it up. Aiming to scare away any attempt at removing the child from her, she hoped that Mandla's love and loyalty could be won once she eventually gave birth and kept the child. She partially succeeded. Even though Mandla was far from sexually loyal to her also after the birth, she had established herself as his main girlfriend. He could have affairs with others, but she was the primary relationship. The baby was eventually placed in foster care.

6.5.7 Contestations of conception and destined parenthood

Nothando attempted to become the girlfriend of several other boys too, after Jabulani had rejected her. At least two other boys were mentioned as her boyfriends, and some of the boys were very confused about what consequences that had for the fatherhood of the baby. By having had sex with Nothando, they could have contributed to making the baby. The boys did, although with some doubt, conclude that since she was already pregnant before she came back to the street and before she had sex with any of those boys, they could not be the biological fathers.

Understanding how conception occurred proved to be tricky. Macintosh had a child with a girlfriend at home. Now he had a new girlfriend on the street, and he did not want children with her. Since he had stated a conscious intent to not get children with this new girlfriend and knowing that contraceptives were rarely used among the youth on the street, I was curious to know what he did to make sure she would not get pregnant. He simply replied, “*Nothing*”, and then he explained that he could only impregnate a girl if it was destined:

Not even one girl here in town, ... I have slept with I don't know how many girls. But not even one – . But when I went home, hey! I got something. So, it's not that kind of easy to just make a girl pregnant. Because it doesn't just fall like that. It is a gift. God gives you a gift. If God doesn't want that woman to be pregnant with you, he won't. By luck or by mistake, he won't. How many

times you can –, but still too. Never. If God says no, [then it is] no. He knows the person he wants you to be with.

Macintosh understood having a child with a girl as meaning that they were destined to be in a serious, possibly life-long relationship. The significance of having a child together or having a boy accepting paternity was amplified by this understanding of parenthood being God-given. It resembles Sewpaul' (1995) findings of childbearing not simply being a personal matter for the Zulu women in her study. According to the African worldview, having children together is a communal matter affecting the clan and a spiritual matter involving ancestors. It thus points to both the God-given aspect of conception and childbearing, and to parenthood's significance for the commitment to a relationship, as expressed by the youth in this study.

6.5.8 Multiple sexual partners and uncertainty over paternity

As mentioned earlier, some young men made a point out of having children with girlfriends at home and not on the street. It gave them higher status as having children with good women at home rather than with bad women on the street placed them closer to being respectable men. Similarly, young women could get higher status by having a child with a boyfriend at home. Nokuphila was 17 years old and had recently got a baby with a boyfriend at home. She was thrilled when she talked about what it meant for her. She said, *“I was very, very happy! Because, ehm, this person, this guy, I love him so much. So I was so happy because it was his baby. ... I was so happy, but I was scared at the same time. ... Because, ehm, I wasn't really sure. Because I had too many boyfriends (laughing)! I don't have to lie. I did have too many boyfriends”*.

Nokuphila said she was very happy *“because it was his baby”*. Probably, she was happy that he accepted that it was his baby. It was something she could not take for granted. Although having multiple sexual partners was equally common among boys and girls, it had different consequences for them. It was evident for everybody who the biological mother of a baby was, but there was much uncertainty around who the biological father could be. There was much ambivalence among the young men. Sthembiso explained:

When the father hears that she is pregnant, he starts being funny. All the time he was being kind to her, you know, but all the sudden he starts being funny to her, and he asks her, “Whose baby is this?” ... Then, now, as father now, what I will do now is, I will start speaking bad and tell you “sometimes in the night, you are going to clubs”. Now you as the man you are starting to change now, it’s like you are not agreeing that it is your child.

Even if a young woman succeeded in convincing her boyfriend that he was the father of the baby she was expecting, things could change after the baby was born. Elihle gave birth to a baby who, as weeks passed by, manifested clearer and clearer Indian traits. Her boyfriend was black, and all the boys on the street were black. Sex customers were however from different racial groups, including Indians. Aaron was furious. It was a disgrace for him that the child he had publicly claimed was his, turned out to be from a sex customer. For Elihle, it was a huge fall from the relatively privileged position of having a child with her primary boyfriend, to being confirmed as a prostitute. Even worse than being a prostitute per se, was to have a child through prostitution, given the prevalent myths about parenthood as God-given and determining who you should be with. Elihle tried to convince Aaron and others that the baby looked like an Indian because her grandfather was not “*a real African*”. She partly succeeded, maybe because the incident was so shameful for Aaron that he was relieved to have an alternative explanation. But neither Aaron nor the rest of the street community were completely convinced, and they repeatedly beat her for being “*a whore*”.

6.5.9 Mothers’ responsibility for the performance of fatherhood

Again, Elihle was being one-sidedly condemned. Given the prominence given to male provision, Aaron could have been at least partly blamed for Elihle’s engagement in sex work since it implied that he had failed to provide for her. But, again, that was not what happened. Though there was an expectation towards boys to provide for girls and children, and though it was humiliating for them when they did not live up to that expectation, they were not blamed for any of the consequences for the girls and children. That burden was borne by the girls. Velemseni and Gugulethu had a one-year old baby who was removed to a children’s home. Velemseni gave Gugulethu the

sole responsibility both for what she ought to do as a mother and what he ought to do as a father:

I'm actually worried about the baby. Because Gugulethu don't care about the baby. ... Because if she care ... she must go and see the baby. You know? Or maybe ... she could tell me, "Ok, Velemseni, try to get some money and buy the baby clothes" or something. You know. She don't tell, she don't talk about the baby, she don't do nothing ... So I don't know what's on Gugulethu's mind because she's drinking too much. And the way she's drinking, she is over-drinking. ... Don't just like give birth to the baby, then leave it there and say, "Ey I got a baby, I love my baby", then you gotta wait for me to actually go there and do something. ... Because you gave birth to the baby. ... Not like, you gotta wait for me.

Although he had not provided the baby with anything as he was supposed to do as a father, Velemseni blamed Gugulethu for not telling him to do it. It was unthinkable for him to be the one who initiated "showing the baby some love". It was Gugulethu, as a good mother, who was given the responsibility, even for making sure that the father did his part. The motherhood mandate gave her the sole responsibility for her child's wellbeing, and as a mother, she was expected to always be ready to respond to her child's need (Malacrida, 2009), regardless of her own life circumstances and whether they facilitated or negated her chances of living up to the dominant discourse of good mothering. Velemseni acknowledged Gugulethu's multiple partners and implied sex work, which explained her bad behaviour and failure as a mother. He continued, "Only thing she thinks about drinking and joling²⁴ with boys ... I don't have to believe her. Rather you go for a blood test with the baby, then, if it is with my blood, then I can believe it is my baby".

He suggested giving the baby for adoption: "Because I see Gugulethu don't care about the baby so I'm thinking of giving him to the adoption, you know. Having the better parents. You know. Coz I can't, I can't, like, support the kid alone, and she is this side here joling with the other guys." His suggestion was not so much a result of

²⁴ "joling with" is similar to "messaging around with", but implied having sex.

his concern for the baby, as an expression of resentment against Gugulethu. Knowing how devastating it would be for the status of a woman to have her child adopted, his statement was one of revenge.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed and discussed the findings of this study on sexuality, parenthood, and identity among female and male youth living on the streets of Durban CBD. I have explored constructions of masculinity and femininity, and the gendered relationships among the youth. In the next and final chapter, I outline the major findings and conclusions of the study and make concomitant recommendations.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I provide a summary of the study, outline the major findings and conclusions, and draw on them to make recommendations.

7.2 Summary of the study

This study was framed by critical theory. Critical theory aims to “go beyond surface meanings” to unravel underlying power structures (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 166). It is concerned with social structures and power relations at a macro level and how these relate to actions and relationships at micro levels (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Humphries, 2008). The main aim of the study was to investigate sexuality, parenthood, and identity, and explore the relationships among female and male youth living on the street. Critical theory was appropriate because I wanted to explore how constructions of masculinities and femininities influenced the identities of and relationships among female and male youth living on the streets of Durban CBD. The objectives were to understand how constructions of masculinities and femininities influence the lives of females and males on the street; to explore how their relations with each other are influenced by their gendered identities; to investigate the relationship between sex, violence, and gendered expressions of power; to explore the meanings of motherhood and fatherhood; and to examine how the youth negotiate dominant socio-cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity.

I used the qualitative research method, which is preferred in research that “delves in depth into complexities and processes” (Fouché & Delpont, 2002, p. 80), and a feminist research design. Reflexivity (Kleinman, 2007) and the researcher as practitioner and as empathic (Sewpaul, 1995) are main principles of a feminist research design, both of crucial importance to this study on deeply marginalised youth. I used snowball sampling and purposive sampling, guided by theoretical saturation. 37 youth, aged between 16 and 22, participated in the study, of which 17 were females. I conducted approximately 50 focus group sessions and individual interviews on a combined basis. The length of each would vary a great deal,

particularly because of lowered concentration levels among the youth due to drug use and lack of sleep, and the bulk of my analysis was based on approximately 25 interviews/sessions with sufficient length and depth to provide rich material. I used critical discourse analysis to analyse the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups. Critical discourse analysis is about discerning connections between language and other elements in social life and understanding social power and dominance, including how it is reproduced and resisted (Humphries, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2009). The study was a continuation of my extensive involvement on the streets of Durban, and deeply embedded in practical, therapeutic, and conscientising social work. My prolonged engagement in and knowledge of the field, my extensive involvement in holistic work with the youth, and the high levels of trust built with them are major strengths of the study, both in terms of the depth of analysis, ethical considerations, and issues of validity.

7.3 Major conclusions

Four major themes emerged in the analysis: Men as providers, violence, sex, and sexuality on the street; Girls' violence and contestations of femininity and masculinity; Gang culture and constructions of masculinity; and Constructions of motherhood and fatherhood.

Constructions of male provision, violence, sex, and sexuality were deeply entwined and emerged as the main theme of the study. The dominant construction of masculinity emphasising male provision was prevalent among both female and male youth on the street. It is a hegemonic construction of masculinity worldwide (Connell, 2009), and its roots in Zulu culture go far back to precolonial times when the head of the homestead was the ideal of manhood (Hunter, 2005). The boys and young men in this study gravely failed to live up to this ideal. They did not even live in what would conventionally be considered a home; sleeping outside on the pavement gave very graphic and public evidence of that. Having girlfriends who slept outside on the pavement gave equally unambiguous evidence of their failure in terms of the male mandate of provision.

International literature speaks to the assault on masculine identity entailed in poverty, and how men's violence is mediated through male vulnerability as a consequence of socio-economic deprivation (Jewkes, 2002). This is also reflected in South African studies, which highlight the particular strains on masculinity in the transition from apartheid to a democratic society, coupled with extreme socio-economic inequality (Xaba, 2001; Walker, 2005). Violence, as an expression of power and control, is a gender-specific means of undoing shame for men who feel their masculinity is threatened (Gilligan, 2001). Women's gender role transgressions are particularly highly associated with men's violence against women (Jewkes, 2002), consistent with findings from KwaZulu-Natal (Sathiparsad, 2007).

The most salient female gender role transgression in this study was girls' engagement in sex work. It was the most common income generating activity among the girls, and violently renounced by the boys. Girls' engagement in sex work contested dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity in multiple ways. It asserted girls' independence from their boyfriends' provision. It contested the male sexual drive discourse (Ratele, et al., 2007) in the sense that it entailed inappropriate sexual activity by females and in the sense that boys' girlfriends engaged in sex with other men. It profoundly assaulted the boyfriends' sense of masculinity in that their girlfriends engaged in sex specifically with wealthier men. It was an outstanding broadcast of the masculine failure of young men who lived on the street, both in terms of failing at provision and in terms of losing control over their girlfriends (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Sathiparsad, 2008).

Sex work's contestation of hegemonic femininity was acknowledged by the girls, who went to great lengths to present themselves as 'good' girls. They denied being 'real' prostitutes and made claims of having emotional bonds and meaningful sexual relations with the men who paid. The distinction between boyfriends and sex customers was blurred. Indeed, their relationships with boyfriends could be termed 'relational sex work', as its transactional nature was striking, with boyfriends providing protection and food and demanding sex in exchange, and there was a relative lack of non-transactional descriptions, for example in terms of conventionally romantic feelings. Transactional sexual relationships are not exclusive for youth on the street. Conventional sexual relations, such as the institution of heterosexual

marriage, are rooted in the ideology of male provision (Goodson, 1997). But it is exaggerated on the street, both in girls' relationships with boyfriends and with sex customers. They profoundly drew on this ideology and legitimised their engagement in sex work by framing it as sexual relations with male providers.

Girls' engagement in sex work was the foremost threat to their identities as mothers. Constructions of motherhood and good mothering severely clashed with constructions of prostitution. Young mothers struggled to disprove the incompatibility of being sex workers and mothers. Their success largely depended on whether they kept custody of the children or not. Their socio-economic circumstances compromised their chances of keeping custody of their babies, since living outside on a pavement is not in the best interest of a child. Abortion and adoption were cardinal sins, and the mothers' engagement in sex work would be used to explain that they were inherently 'bad' women. Yet, even mothers who managed to keep their babies were judged for staying with the child in such a dangerous environment. They failed as mothers by not protecting and caring for their children adequately. Thus, with the exception of Angel, whether they kept their children or not, young mothers on the street were doomed to fail as 'good' women and mothers. Constructions of fatherhood were restricted to provision, but even though fathers failed as providers and could have been blamed for losing custody or having responsibility for mothers' failures at good mothering, the opposite was the case and mothers were one-sidedly blamed.

Violence was pervasive among the youth on the street, and it was greatly influenced by the 26 gang. The ability to endure and to commit violence is crucial in being accepted into the gang, and a critical marker of masculinity on the street, both among gang members and non-gang members. Girls' violence against males was a pivotal threat to masculinity, and even girls' violence against other girls was rejected because it contested the sovereign position of males and the significance of violence to masculinity. The number gangs originated as insurgency against colonial exploitation and oppression (Steinberg, 2004), resembling the emergence of violent villains in townships as frustrated response to today's socio-economic oppression (Xaba, 2001), and consistent with the strong associations between violence and poverty and oppression (Jewkes, 2002; Walker, 2005; Kleinman, 2007; Hearn, 2007). The studies that highlight the roots of violence in a wounded sense of masculinity discuss the

situations of unemployed men, working-class men, and even middle-class men faced with non-economic threats to their masculinity (for example, physical disability or a spouse who wants divorce). How much more emasculated must the boys and young men who live on the street? They are unemployed and exceptionally poor financially, and may search through garbage bins in search for food and not eat every day. Though they may compensate for their financial inadequacy through sexual conquests, these eventually fail them since they fall sick and eventually die (adhering to AIDS-medication is extremely difficult while living on the street). Furthermore, their sexual conquests are ambiguous because they are unable to provide for their girlfriends, who instead engage in sex with wealthier men for survival. Ultimately, sleeping outside on the pavement and having a girlfriend who sleeps outside on the pavement are extremely grave assaults on masculinity. It is not surprising that street life is permeated with violence. How wounded must the masculinity of the homeless boys and young men be?

7.4 Recommendations

Freire's (1970/1993) thesis that the oppressed often oppress each other is supported by the high levels of violence within the street community. Those with relatively more power execute power over and oppress those with less power, mainly through boys' violence to control girls and other boys. This is detrimental for the empowerment of youth living on the street because it further dehumanises them (Freire, 1970/1993). Engaging in conscientisation processes is crucial, where, through dialogue, they critically reflect on the oppressive features of their lives, identify the real sources of oppression and their own destructive actions and take actions toward empowerment and change. Freire (1970/1993) contends that poor and oppressed people have the ability to reflect on their situations, including deeply entrenched structural factors like poverty and patriarchy, and their agency to act on such critical knowledge.

Conscientising and emancipating work with the youth on the street is clearly needed, and therapeutic services are no less required. The youth's severe experiences of sexual abuse and violence demand therapeutic work. My experience indicates that committing the violence is amounting to as much trauma as victimisation, so

therapeutic services for the perpetrators are also paramount. Girls need services focused on their specific needs, and providing spaces where they can build their sense of togetherness and solidarity and be validated in constructive ways as females are valuable in strengthening their resilience and building on the non-exploitative survival strategy of sisterhood. Practical work aimed at for example income generation is also needed, given how the exploitation inherent in their current ways of life, both in terms of sex work and violence, is so deeply rooted in socio-economic marginalisation.

The study pointed to the intricate interactions of poverty-related and gender-related disadvantages. The girls living on the streets, for example, were deeply entrenched in the oppression from multiple sources of injustice. The transactional nature of their sexual relations, the prevalence of commercial sex for income generation, and their dependency on boyfriends for protection testify to the synergic effects of poverty and neo-liberalism on their lives. Girls and young women suffered under men's privileged position in society, especially in terms of males' violence to control and punish them for female gender role transgressions and perceived threats to masculinity. But even though boys and young men are the chief perpetrators, they can hardly be called privileged. Their utter socio-economic oppression and its gendered meaning in terms of constituting a major assault to masculinity are staggering. In literature, there is a unison voice calling for deconstructing the male privilege that facilitates the violence that springs out of poverty's assault on masculinity, and for reconstructing alternative and egalitarian masculinities and femininities. I do of course agree, however a change only in gender constructions, and not the material conditions that prompt the male vulnerability, is insufficient. In the case of the uniquely unequal society of South Africa in general (Triegaardt, 2006), and in terms of the severe oppression that underscores homelessness among children and youth, addressing poverty is essential. The influence of homelessness was great, and has to be addressed. Yet, women's lower position in a relationship and in society is "necessary in an epidemiological sense" for men's violence against women (Jewkes, 2002, p. 11) and gender relations, both on the street and in society generally, must change. The oppressive lived experiences of the youth on the street are clear examples of the intersectionality of oppression, and the root cannot be said to be only one or the other social structure (Bowleg, 2008). One must not be at the cost of the other. Efforts towards equality and justice among genders as well socio-economically are both paramount.

While the need to avoid dependency is often emphasised with rhetoric such as ‘hand up, not hand-out’, a hand up is meaningless without resources (Dominelli, 2002b, p. 2). One way of providing such resources could be through introducing the Basic Income Grant (BIG) (Triegaardt, 2006). The BIG could address several of the oppressive factors in the youth’s lives (Sewpaul, 2005). Some of them might not have come to the streets in the first place, if their families had had access to it. It would also have the potential of enabling them to get out of street life. Financial vulnerability was the reason for girls’ engagement in sex work and for their dependency on a boyfriend. Socio-economic marginalisation was also at the core of boys’ oppressions and a root of their oppressive behaviours. Importantly, the BIG and other measures to combat poverty and inequality could be a counteractive force to the hopelessness the youth experience, as it would open up opportunities for them and give them a better chance to plan for a future.

Martha Nussbaum (1999) discussed sex work and argued, “The really helpful thing for feminists to ponder ... will be how to promote expansion in the option set, through education, skills training, and job creation. These unsexy topics are not common themes in U.S. feminist philosophy, but they are inevitable in any practical project dealing with prostitutes” (p. 278). An “expansion in the option set” is no less important for men, whether those who engage in sex work or not. Their reliance on robberies and handouts speaks to the complete lack of opportunities and their substantial unfreedoms (Sen, 1999). Education, skills training, and job creation are important in the work with the children and youth who already live on the street. Equally, it is crucial to implement them on a broader scale to reach the disadvantaged parts of the society in order to prevent more children and youth from coming to the streets. Social workers, people from the streets, and others must engage in advocacy in favour of more socio-democratic policies in South Africa, which support constitutional commitments and values like social justice and equality. Indeed, a deep transformation of the society is required, both in terms of patriarchy and neoliberalism, including “egalitarian relations, the recognition of mutual interdependencies and inter-generational solidarities and the creation of an economic system that is geared to meeting people’s needs rather than subverting them” (Dominelli, 2002b, p. 5).

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have summarised the study, drawn out the major findings and conclusions, and made recommendations. The objectives of the study, namely to understand how constructions of masculinities and femininities influence the lives of females and males on the street; to explore how their relations with each other are influenced by their gendered identities; to investigate the relationship between sex, violence, and gendered expressions of power; to explore the meanings of motherhood and fatherhood; and to examine how the youth negotiate dominant socio-cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity have been met.

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