

**EXPERIENCING GENDER:  
A CASE STUDY OF GRADE 7 LEARNERS**

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**PREFACE**

**I hereby declare that this dissertation, unless specifically stated to the contrary in the text, is the original work of the undersigned.**

  
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**MELANIE YVETTE MARTIN**

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## ABSTRACT

Part of living in a social world requires that we learn to be identifiable to one another. The assumption that exists is that there are only two identifiable genders – male and female. In learning to take on the ‘correct’ gender, children consciously and unconsciously learn the discursive practices that enable them to become male or female. Being correctly positioned within these two gender categories is important and is part of the social interactive world of humans. This process is an active one with children positioning and being positioned, rendering them powerful and powerless, depending on the context in which they find themselves.

This discursive study set out to explore the perceptions of gender equality in the lives of twenty-eight, primary school children. This understanding was explored within the context of cross gender friendships. I examined too, the discourses that exist that determine the kinds of friendship that unfold and the impact this had on the construction of their subjectivity. Using a number of qualitative methods to obtain data and applying a Foucauldian, feminist post structuralist view of discourse, power, subjectivity and meaning, I sought to understand the lives of children in a social world at a micro level. The findings reveal that for the most part children constructed gender around the concept of ‘difference.’ This difference manifested itself as a strong adherence to a particular gender category. The children learned how to position themselves and others according to traditional discourses of femininity and masculinity. In this way they learned how to be male and female. Failure to be identified as a member of a particular gender category resulted in them being alienated and recognized as a failure.

Whilst, attempts were made to challenge dominant understandings of masculinity and femininity, often this was unsuccessful. The constraints and limitations of a particular discourse ensured the continued existence of the prevailing dominant worldview.

Because they were not equally valued as part of a particular gender category, power relations between girls and boys was unequal. It revealed too that children are continuing to learn the same lessons about gender that work against gender equality.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the scope and context of my research. Firstly, I provide a rationale for the research and a description of the research topic, followed by a historical contextualization of gender research and initiatives in South Africa. Further, a reflexive account for the research is provided.

### 1.2. Setting the Context of the Study

Gender is so pervasive in our society that we tend to forget that gender is constantly constructed and re-constructed in human and social interaction. It is a concept that we use to organize our daily lives. Lorber (1994) indicates that the concept of gender is an institution that establishes expectations for people and is pervasive and entrenched in all major social organizations in society. One of the institutions where gender plays out is education. Education is key to understanding gender relationships for schools mirror what exists in wider society. Schools are also the background for struggle against dominant discourses and practices. Thus, examining what occurs within schools and how gender interacts with educational expression is a worthy pursuit (Persell, James, Kang and Synder, 1999).

There exists a cornucopia of research into gender, both internationally and in South Africa, ranging from research into masculinities, femininities and the impact this has on the creation of division or alienation (Mac an Ghail, 1995; Martino, 1999; Swain, 2003; Skelton, 1997; Reay, 2001), the analysis of reform policies (Kenway and Willis, 1994, 1997; Ohn, 2001; Morrel, 1998; Unterhalter, 1999), and male domination and female subordination (Measor and Sikes, 1992; Acker, 1994). However, there exists a paucity of research into how boys and girls think and behave in relation to each other. There is wide spread recognition that masculinity and femininity are relational, that is, they cannot be understood in isolation from each other. However, research that I have found thus far tends to focus on one or the other, not both.

This study is to some extent a replication of a study conducted by Allard and Yates (2001). Their study was conducted amongst Year 10 secondary school Australian students. The schools targeted were those that had participated in gender reform projects. Their aim was to ascertain how students constructed cross gender friendships in relation to difference. This impacted on the forms and benefits of the students' friendships. My study differs in that whilst I use the concept of cross gender friendships, I use this to ascertain how children understand gender equality and how they position themselves in discourses surrounding friendships. Further, students in my study had not undergone gender reform projects.

### **1.3. The Research Focus**

In this research, I aim to explore children's understandings of gender equality within cross gender friendships. Specifically, I set out to identify discourses that constitute their subjectivities (ways in which they understand and give meaning to themselves and others.) Further, I seek to find out how relationships play out within these discourses. The study is conducted with the understanding that there exists little research in this area in South Africa. It is hoped that this study will fill in the gap that exists. I also locate this study within a post structuralist and feminist research framework. Researchers Chisholm and Unterhalter (1999) have indicated that very little research using a post structuralist framework is being done in South Africa. It is further intended that this study would fill the gap that does exist. I draw on the principles of post structuralism to enable a theoretical analysis of learners in this context. Learners in this study are drawn from an inner city primary school in Pietermaritzburg. Data collection techniques included focus group interviews and individual interviews using scenarios with 28 learners. Learners were all in Grade 7 and were from the three race groups that exist in the school, that is, African, Indian and Coloured.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

The study intended to answer the following questions

- How do children understand gender equality within their cross gender friendship groups?

- How do they take up their positions within the discourses of friendships?
- How do they resist this positioning?
- What impact did this understanding of gender equality and their positioning within friendship discourses have on the formation of their subjectivities?

### **1.5. Analytical Framework**

Although I discuss post structuralist theory in greater detail in Chapter 2, it is helpful to provide a brief explanation of key concepts. Post structuralism is often explained as an epistemological understanding of a person in a social world. Foucault is one of the key figures in post structuralism, and he argues that what enables us to make sense of a world that both shapes and limits our choices and possibilities, is language (Weedon, 1987; Burr, 1995, 2000). Post structuralism is concerned with discourses, which are a set of meanings or representation we make of an event or picture. Further, this theory seeks to understand how these discourses form our subjectivities (the way in which a person gives meaning to herself/himself, to others and to the world). Finally, understanding how power operates within these discourses to position us and form our subjectivities, whether actively or passively, is important within post structuralism. It is within this paradigm that I attempt to make sense of the children that I have researched.

### **1.6. Mapping Gender in South Africa**

This section attempts to map the path of gender in South Africa. It focuses on policy that has been implemented in South Africa and the significance and impact of Curriculum 2005 and its ability to ensure gender reform. This section also focuses on initiatives that have been implemented in order to bring about gender equality, as well as gender research that has been carried out in South Africa. Finally, whilst mapping this, I attempt to show the gaps that exist and the manner in which my study aims to fill in the gaps that exist. Throughout this section one will notice the absence of research that focuses on friendship and interpersonal relationships that occur. I have not found research in this area to date.

The South African Constitution of 1996 protects the rights of all. One of the rights enshrined in the Constitution and pertinent to this study is that of gender equality. Researchers Chisholm and Napo (1999) and Unterhalter (1999) show the disjuncture between the legislative framework and the actual policy implementation. Whilst the Constitution is important in that these rights are protected legally, within everyday interactions between people the Constitution may not have an impact. It becomes important to understand the micro power relations that exist in the everyday interactions of people to understand the impact this power may have on the children in my study. Being able to understand how children relate to one another as boys and girls will provide insight into the extent to which the right to gender equality is fulfilled.

Since 1994, the new ANC government's education policy framework undertook to transform the apartheid education system. The new curriculum attempted to democratize education with the promotion of human rights being of paramount importance. Curriculum 2005 aimed to promote the values and attitudes necessary for building a democratic, egalitarian nation. The implementation of Curriculum 2005 was an attempt by the government to move away from the curriculum of the past with its focus on social and gender division and to bring South Africa into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. C2005 has the enormous responsibility of bringing about this change. It is an attempt to foster:

“Critical thinking, rational thought and deeper understanding, central principles of the new education system will soon begin to break down class, race and gender stereotypes” (Department of Education, 1997:2).

Unterhalter (1999) questions whether any curriculum has such ability. Education is often seen as neutral and the terrain where injustices can be overcome. For Unterhalter (ibid), C2005 is highly unlikely to break down inequality because there, firstly, exists very limited understandings by educationalists of gender inequities. Moreover feminists, question whether the state should be used as a vehicle to promote gender equality (ibid). They point to globalisation and the state's role in the further impoverishment of women, stating that very few governments have paid attention to gender justice (Unterhalter,

1999). The question she poses about whether C2005 has the ability to promote girls and boys into becoming productive and self-fulfilled has important implications for my study. The children in my research have gone through the entire primary school phase exposed to C2005. It would be interesting for me, as researcher, to note the extent to which educators have understood gender inequality, and, the extent to which they have promoted equality and what effect this has had on boys and girls. This, however, is not the focus of my study. Whatever the findings in this study reveal about educators' understanding of gender equality are of little importance except for me as a social justice educator and agent of change. The findings would provide me with the knowledge of where to start in the struggle towards gender equality. Thus, I do not seek these answers from educators themselves. Instead, I focus on the children with the assumption that their constructions of gender equality would reflect how educators promote gender equality within the curriculum. Whether education policy has the ability to break down the barriers it seeks to, can then be explained through the lens of learners.

In order to fulfill the needs of the Constitution and Curriculum 2005, the Education Department implemented gender equality initiatives. Moletsane, Morrell, Unterhalter, Epstein (2002) agree that since the onset of democracy in South Africa there has been a number of, albeit on a small-scale, gender equality initiatives in South African schools. For Moletsane et al (2002), the most significant gender initiative efforts in South Africa, have been those that have focused on gender violence in educational settings, where the focus has been on promoting anger management, the understanding of emotions, understanding prejudice, bullying etc. Whilst these initiatives are useful, they question the extent of its usefulness, for the initiatives target the individual rather than challenging, "group social norms and gender regimes in schools" (Moletsane et al, 2002:17). They also question the state's involvement in the promotion of gender equality and indicate that, if any, the political will to promote gender equality has been almost non-existent. Where initiatives exist, the focus was primarily on that of the educators. This is in keeping with research by Chisholm and Napo (1999) who take note of these initiatives. Chisholm and Napo (ibid) indicate that women are visible in the most senior positions in the education department, but are almost non-existent in senior and middle management.

They conclude that gender reform has been largely symbolic (ibid). For them, reform that has occurred falls within the gender and development paradigm providing access rather than focusing on the gendered institutional power relations that exist. The understanding within the gender and development paradigm is based on the perception that if one provides opportunities for females to progress, then the playing fields between the sexes can be leveled.

Moletsane (2005) provides reasons as to why some gender equality initiatives have failed. Attempts by the Department of Education of ensuring equality for women and the protection of girl children in all spheres, have been largely unsuccessful. Proposals coming from the Gender Equity Unit, which was formed in an attempt to ensure gender equality, have failed to be implemented. She offers reasons for this pointing largely to a lack of resources, skills, infrastructure, inadequate and inappropriate teacher training and a poor understanding of curriculum implementation. HIV/AIDS, poverty and gender based violence continues to impede gender equality in schools itself. For her, in order for gender equality to be a reality within education, taking these above-mentioned factors into account, have to be eliminated first.

Gender research in South Africa is prolific in some areas but lacking in others. Chisholm and Unterhalter (1999) attempt to chart gender research in order to highlight the state of gender research thus far. They map this research over a period of twenty years starting from the 1980's, and identify the theoretical and methodical perspectives and the policies that have been informed by these approaches. Significantly, they identify a gap in the research that exists in South Africa, namely work within the post structuralist paradigm. These authors indicate that this is the least developed approach in South Africa, and one which they see as vital in the attempt to understand the construction of gender. Chisholm and Unterhalter (ibid) point also to the fact that feminist post structuralists have had very little impact on gender research in South Africa. For the researchers, the work that does exist, fails to consider identities, discourses and the constraints imposed on people that work against gender equality. Thus, they believe work in this field is limited. One way for post structuralist work to impact is to highlight the limitations surrounding policy

change and the manner in which people perceive change. This would then enable one to ascertain if gender equality is possible or to even offer ways forward to achieve gender equality. They offer a possible reason for the lack of development in this area. They indicate that primarily the concern was to establish gender redress and not to deconstruct institutional discourse (ibid). This post structuralist approach offers a way to systematically explore, for example, how discourses surrounding masculinity and femininity are constructed and the power dynamics present in this construction, and the impact this may have on friendship, identity or subjectivity formation.

A great deal of research has focused on violence including corporal punishment, rape, bullying and sexual harassment (Morrell, 1992, 1998a, 1998b; Mukasa, 1999). A more complex and wide spread understanding of gender relations needs to be made. Of particular interest to me is the focus by Morrell (1998) on masculinities. Influenced by the work of Connell (1995), Morrell argued that gender is a relational construct between boys and girls, and that the school as an institution as well as broader social structures influence this relation. This need to understand broader social structures is echoed in the ethnographical study by Margie Gaganakis in 2003 using Giligan's concept of voice and care. She argues that girls rejected traditional understandings of female roles and wished to establish their own identity. However, they are constrained and silenced by the psychological fear of the requirements of school and the over-riding and debilitating patriarchal understanding of their 'correct' place by their families and community. Gaganakis (2003) also calls for teacher training that would enable critical examination of gender and the devolutions of patriarchy and indicates that evaluation of the family in this would be crucial. It is within this context of understanding broader patterns in society that one can understand how "inequalities develop and are sustained and how power is wielded" (Morrell, 1998:629). Morrell brings to the fore understandings of discourse and the impact this has on the formation of masculinity as well as the understanding of gender power relations in the establishment of hegemonic masculinity.

Bhana's (2003) uses post structuralism in an attempt to bridge the gap that exists using this theory. She concurs with other researchers such as Chisholm and Unterhalter (1999)

that there exists very little research about young children and gender, and concludes that gender equity policy implicit in the Constitution as well as C2005 have 'barely touched' let alone reformed the early years of schools" (Bhana, 2003:23). Bhana (ibid) conducted an ethnographic study of four primary schools in the Durban area. Participants ranged from 6-9 years of age from all race groups. She states that if we are to understand how gender operates in primary schooling, the gendering processes that occur must be emphasized. Her focus was on how the teaching practices influence the gendering of young children's identities. She shows how the assumptions about gender by educators influence their decisions and actions and identifies discourses, which for her, serve to set the parameters of what is possible for children in schools. These discourses work against gender equality because they privilege certain ways of thinking, knowing and living (Bhana, 2003). If attempts at gender equality and social justice are to be achieved, educators have to understand not only how societal discourses about children inform their practices, but also how they work against the social justice trend of gender equality. Her research findings indicate that pedagogical influences reinforce unequal power relations. She calls for re-skilling of educators so that they become critical and self-reflective of commonly held assumptions about masculinity and femininity and its implications.

This work by Morrell (1998) as well as by Bhana, (2003) are important in that they bring to the fore the concept of discourse as understood by post structuralists and the impact this has on the formation of subjectivities. Further, they point to gender power relations that occur between male and female. I, therefore attempt to focus and locate my study within post structuralist theory in order to understand the lives of the children I research, as well as to fill the gap that exists using this theory. One of the most important influences for me in attempting to address this gap is to focus on how power is explained in post structuralist theory. This is an attempt to move away from the perception of power as being solely oppressive. Moreover, it is a move away from the simplistic argument of access and provision of access or the understanding of identity as being fixed and static. Further, my research attempts to fill the gap identified by Bhana (2003), that is, work that focuses on primary school children in interaction with each other.

## 1.7. Rationale and Motivation of Study

### 1.7.1. Capturing the feminist journey

The initial conceptualization of this study focused exclusively on the manner in which children constructed their gender and became gendered beings. However, during the course of my readings into gender, post structuralism and feminist post structuralism, I came to the realization that this study was as much about me as about the children in the study. I listened to them constantly and watched the ways in which they behaved, and wondered to what extent I contributed to how they constructed their gender subjectivity. I find that I am unable to distance myself from the text to which I was exposed.

Questions began to arise about how far I developed within this democratic society. I reflected on my historical background in an attempt to analyze and recognise why I am the person I am

In my journey, I came to reflect on what has caused me to be the feminist that I believe I am. The understanding of post structuralism has had profound impact on how I see myself. Since I am in this text, it then becomes imperative to state my subjectivity and interest in gender equality.

Foucault argues that it is important to analyze oneself as author of particular texts, as views forwarded are the expression of an author who has the ability to impact on how others think of themselves. Simons (1995:7) in attempting to explain Foucault's position on authorships, claims "authorship is an inter-textual position, existing prior to the author's utterances, in which a subject makes statements." Previous historical institutions and the existing systems of truth, which influenced the manner in which we thought, verbalized and acted, therefore, influence what we say now. In his theory, Foucault saw writing as a way of reflection and transformation of the self and a way of constantly questioning the limits that have made us who and what we are. He sees himself as an agent of change through his writing process (ibid).

I then reflected on myself and questioned what has brought me to this present position. Where do I stand in this text?

#### *1.7.1.1. The early years*

I shall attempt to describe some of the positions I have taken up both actively and passively, which have influenced my thoughts and writing.

My formative years were spent at a Catholic convent. Here, I was taught to be traditionally female – influenced, of course, by a religion dominated by patriarchy. I was constantly alienated by a discourse that sought so hard to define me into a particular category. This was constantly reinforced by the discursive practices of schooling, for example, we were not allowed to interact with boys. The exception was within the confines of the classroom where our behaviour was constantly monitored and controlled under the watchful eye of educators and nuns. Imaginary lines existed that created boundaries of play. We could not, and somehow we did not, cross these lines. No one questioned the reasons for this, but more importantly no one crossed the ‘line.’ These unspoken rules constructed the manner in which we interacted with each other. As females we were groomed to fulfill our roles in life, that is, we did chores such as scrubbing, washing and cleaning. Boys, on the other hand, seemed to spend their time playing or working in the garden

Transgressions of rules were unheard of. Everything we were taught made us ‘docile bodies,’ never questioning or challenging. The disciplinary technique of surveillance ensured that we constantly monitored the behaviour of others. Once a relationship occurred between grade 6 learners. The couple went off to spend time with each other. The sensational contravention of the rules was a hot topic of discussion. However, the girl was expelled but not the boy. No one gave much consideration (including myself) to the unfairness of it. We all believed that she, and not the boy was responsible simply because his behaviour was natural. Anyone who attempted to reject the status quo was made to feel inferior and was thus marginalized. At the time, I did not question anything, I instead became a self-regulating subject, constantly examining my behaviour and

making determinations about its correctness, and using the prevailing schooling discourse as a benchmark of how successful I was at negotiating myself. The constant need to be on my best behaviour unsettled me, making me feel like a prisoner that was trapped. The unease and quiet rebellion, however, were always a part of me. My silent dissatisfaction then, I believe is what has enabled me to be vociferous in my fight against exploitation now. This is what has spurred me on and has had impact on me as an educator. This too has allowed me to be more accepting of alternative ways of being and thinking in my role as educator.

#### *1.7.1.2. My high school years*

I later attended an all girls' school where I think these discontents deepened because of the acute awareness of traditional ways of being female which allowed me to think about rebellion, but never to actively proceed against this discrimination. We were taught the rules of etiquette, that is, the proper way to sit, to behave, to talk. Still in the early years, we felt loved, protected and cared for. Educators were not allowed to loudly reprimand us, after all we were 'ladies.' The concept of being a proper lady was not one that I was comfortable with. Within the school environment, I learned the rules in order to be accepted and valued. After school, however, I was free to lead my other life – one that would have outraged the principal if she had witnessed it. I spent my afternoons climbing trees, playing in the river, stealing fruit - definitely not 'the lady.' My parents placed no restrictions on me. A possible reason for this could be because we were only girls in the family. This meant that because there were no males around and so we had to do everything that was required. This is not to say that my behaviour was totally acceptable – the old ladies in the neighbourhood feared that I would be badly injured and would often chastise me for my unruly and unladylike behaviour.

#### *1.7.1.3. The recognition*

It was during my studies at university that I began to understand my discontent and took on feminist ideas. Being brought up under apartheid education had made 'difference' seem so normal, but I now began to question these and to challenge myself into new ways of thinking. At the time, my focus was on recognizing oppression with regard to

race. What this allowed me to do was to inculcate the need to be critical and to recognize how power operated. I became particularly interested in gender issues in my masters course-work study. Further reading around gender introduced me to post structuralism and, in particular, Michel Foucault and feminist post structuralists like Chris Weedon (1987). Having become aware of the gender silence in Foucault's work, I became interested in enquiring whether feminists found anything fruitful in post structuralism. I needed to understand if a feminist reading of post structuralism could help me to understand the relationship between discourses, power, subjectivity and meaning. More in-depth discussions of power, discourses and subjectivity are presented in Chapter 2. Understanding these concepts was important in my work. Everyday I encountered students who would display contradictory positions when interacting with one another. I needed to make sense of this behaviour, and the role I played in the way in which they constituted themselves, and to reflect on ways I could resist dominant ways of thinking in my teaching practice. Thus, this study serves as a catalyst for a more in-depth analysis of issues surrounding gender.

#### *1.7.1.4. An educator in the primary school*

The inspiration for this research came in the form of an incident that occurred at school. A male prefect in my class was caught kissing a younger girl. When I confronted him, I laughingly called him a 'glamour boy.' Upon further investigation, I found out that he was being bullied by a group of girls. This particular incident started when he asked one of them to pick up litter. The girls circled him and one grabbed him, and forced him to kiss her. He did not resist because he was frightened that she would hit him. Upon reflection, I wondered about the turn about in power relations between the girls and boys. Further, I wondered about my role in the whole process of gender construction. What impact did my reference to him as 'glamour boy' have on his relationships in the school, as well as his understanding of himself. I also questioned my initial reaction to the girls as being 'wild and precocious.' I then began to ponder on the success of Curriculum 2005. Were all educators like me? Did we not realize the extent to which we impact on the children's lives and on their construction of gender?

## **1.8. Structure of Thesis**

Chapter 1: Introduction - The aim of this chapter is to describe the context of the research project. I provide an overview of gender research and initiatives done in South Africa thus far, as well as provide a rationale for the study undertaken. A description of the research topic is also given.

Chapter 2: Locating the study within Theory and Literature - This chapter presents the theoretical perspectives that underpin the research. Literature dealing with the central tenets of the theory that underpin my study are also detailed. Thereafter, I review literature that deals with friendship.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology – This chapter presents a description of the methodology used in the research. Explanations are given about the research tools as well as the effectiveness of the tools.

Chapter 4: The Struggle Continues – Understanding Gender Equality within Cross-Gender Friendship Groups – The chapter aimed to outline the major research findings. Data in the research was analysed at two levels. This chapter focuses on the first level, which analyses how children understand gender equality within their friendship groups. A discussion of the findings is linked to the literature reviewed in chapter 2

Chapter 5: Deconstructing Gender Discourses in Cross-Gender Friendships – This chapter focuses on an analysis of data at the second level, which looked at the discourses that emerged and how children interact within these discourses and the impact their interactions had on the formation of their subjectivities. Findings here, were also linked to research and literature exemplified in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6: Final Reflections - This chapter deals specifically with limitations of the study and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO: LOCATING THE STUDY WITHIN THEORY AND LITERATURE

### 2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter was aimed at locating my study within the context of gender initiatives and research in South Africa. This chapter has a dual focus. Firstly, I aim to draw on the theoretical suppositions that fall under the theory of post structuralism. I draw particularly on the work of Michel Foucault and several feminist post structuralists such as Chris Weedon in order to provide insight into the research undertaken. I have not read theory offered by Foucault because of the language barrier, instead I have relied on a number of authors' translations, interpretations and understandings of Foucault. Post structuralism has been explained as an epistemological understanding of a person in a social world. I also present research within this post structuralist paradigm and focus particularly, on the crucial tenets of this body of knowledge – power, discourse and subjectivity. Secondly, I present research found within the area of cross gender friendships, which is the focus of my study. Very little research has been done in this area using post structuralist theory in South Africa. Research done, and it is quite prolific, focuses either/or on one sex but very seldom on both sexes in relation to each other. Further, the research I have found tends to fall within the developmental psychology framework. To date, I have found no research around cross gender friendship groups in South Africa. It is hoped that this research would fill in the gap.

I look to post structuralist theory as a way forward in an attempt to understand the complex way in which society, institutions, meaning, human subjectivity and gender all impact on one another. By recognizing the inter connection of power, knowledge, practices, institutions and individuals, one would be able to be aware of how oppression operates in society. However, it is worthy to note that Foucault's discourse analysis has been accused of gender indifference. Feminists such as Weedon (1987), Davies (1989, 2003) and MacNaughton (2000), however, think to the contrary. They have recognized how post structuralism as proposed by Foucault can be used to deconstruct multiple discursive practices and subjectivities that exist, and to critically examine how power

operates in these contexts. Important too, for them is this concept of a way forward – a way of change or reform that is inherent in this theory. It will provide a background to analyse what has occurred within the gendered peer relations of the children I seek to understand, and offer possibilities of a way forward. Moreover, this understanding will illuminate the motivation for undertaking this study. Given the fact that we are 10 years into democracy in South Africa with a new educational system, it would be interesting to know how far we have come in promoting gender equality amongst children. Like Kenway and Willis (1994:3), I see post structuralism as a theory, which “acknowledges discourses and practices of struggle and resistance whilst attempting to understand the dynamic interplay of social forces.” In my study, I have not made any attempt to analyse discursive schooling practices or analyse educators understanding of gender. This does not mean that these have no impact on the gender dynamics operating in school. My focus is on understanding how boys and girls understand gender equality within the context of cross gender friendships.

Foucault’s understanding of the world and our place therein is a far cry from sex role and other humanist theories, which assumes that males and females are rational and occupy stable, fixed power positions. Sex role theory, for example, indicates that we are socialized or conditioned into occupying various traditional masculine and feminine roles. We are influenced by, and through our interactions with various social institutions, for example, the family, media and schools into occupying these roles. This theory, however, fails to explain other forms of masculinity and femininity that exist or why individuals may challenge the existing status quo. In such a view, an individual is never able to exercise personal choice but is constantly subject to the various roles given by society (Davies, 2003).

## **2.2. Discourse, Power and Subjectivity: A Post Structuralist Approach**

We often think of ourselves as individuals in control of our lives. We make meaning of our world and we do this because we have developed cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally. We are rational and in control of our thoughts and actions. This is not

something we reflect on nor do we question it. For Foucault, however, our perceptions of ourselves in this manner are false. Rather, what makes it possible for us to think in these ways and one of the most significant forces that shape our understanding is language. His interest is in discourse and this is a dominant theme in his oppositional politics. This emphasis on discourse is because of the desire to understand the inter-relationship of discourse, social and cultural practices and the impact this has on the individual as part of this relationship (Burr, 1995, 2000; Weedon, 1987).

Burr (1995:48) indicates that a "discourse refers to a set of meaning, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events." But a variety of events or representations of the world exist too, and this enables us to make sense of ourselves and informs our ability to distinguish what is right/wrong, or important or not. It follows then, that, as individuals we will have a multiple understanding of what is represented to us through language. Also, there will be a variety of discourses available which will have a different way of representing a specific reality for people. These varied discourses will bring different understandings into focus for us to consider and our understanding of these discourses will have different implications for how we behave.

Discourses represent and construct a person, and so a person becomes possible if he/she can be read by themselves and also by others in society. It is only when people or ideas are brought into existence that they become possible, for example, rape in marriage was not considered a possibility. It was only considered a possibility when women's rights came to the fore, and so this idea came into existence. This is done in terms of discourses that are available at that particular time in that society. Discourse can be thought of as frames of reference against which we can interpret and analyze our reality. But discourses are not only ways of understanding our social reality - they construct or constitute our lives both consciously or unconsciously. As people we operate within various social institutions, for example, education. These social institutions have the ability to shape the way in which we experience our world. Such institutions operate on a system of hierarchy, and people occupy positions within this hierarchy. It follows,

then, that certain positions will carry more authority and power than others. Through particular practices people in positions of power will be able to influence individuals, impact on individuals, and form individuals. These institutions have discursive structures in place. These discursive structures or discursive fields are those that stipulate rules and regulations that determine what is possible to do, think or verbalize. Discourse enables a discursive field to “speak of itself to itself” (Danaher, Schirato, and Webb, 2000:33). Weedon (1987:108) believes that the body and even our thoughts cannot exist “outside their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases.” They are the ways in which one is then able to see differences among and between people, and can enable a critical understanding of how power operates.

Because discourses could be seen as having the ability to influence, regulate and control ways in which we think and act, it would then seem that we are merely constructed and are not in control of our lives. Critics of Foucault have indicated that his theory is deterministic (Kenway, 1995). Marxist theorists argue that discourse theory merely reduces social systems to ideas and language and that it fails to take into account the material conditions or the ways in which institutions produce meaning, and that it makes no claim to truth or validity (Howarth, 2000). But Howarth (2000:13), disagrees, arguing that what discourse theory does is provide a “useful analogy between linguistic and social systems, thus providing a powerful means to conduct social and political analysis.” Further, whilst discourses exist, we are active agents and make the choice to participate or not. It is because of this choice that we can then negotiate and renegotiate the positions we wish to take up through a process of reflection.

#### 2.2.1. The formation of a discourse and its inherent power

Discourse put forward a common sense, natural view of people, social phenomena and events. As humans we often think that the knowledge we have of ourselves and the world that we inhabit is based on the truth. Our understandings of truth and knowledge form the basis of our lived experiences. Foucault, however, indicates that this operates

through a system or game of truth. By this system of truth, one means procedures or discursive practices that allow, produce, regulate, distribute and circulate a particular knowledge or discourse. The function of a discursive structure is to prohibit, exclude and oppose anything considered to be an untruth to a particular discourse. We see our experiences and knowledge as true, normal, right and desirable and we do this unthinkingly but, as Foucault suggests, knowledge and truth have a history. Our understanding of a particular 'truth' originated at a particular time and for a particular reason.

This afore-mentioned understanding is elaborated in Foucault's concept of genealogies or the study of the relationship between history, discourse, and the impact of the state and institutions in these. In his genealogy, he forges a link between knowledge, power and truth. For him "truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power but a thing of this world, which must be internally connected with logics of power and domination" (Foucault, 1987 cited in Howarth, 2002:72).

Truth and power have been intertwined with relations of power over the years. Thus, as stated before, we can conclude that our understanding of truth and knowledge comes from a particular time and are bound up with power. Knowledge and truth have networks of power because of the ways in which they are used to regulate, normalize and form our understandings of each other and ourselves. For Foucault (1987), knowledge and power must not be seen as two distinct entities. Rather, knowledge is suffused with power relations and forms of power are imbued within knowledge. They can be seen as linked. He refers to this as the power/knowledge concept and says:

"Power produces knowledge. Power and knowledge directly imply one another. There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations" (Foucault, 1987 cited in Kenway, 1995:133).

Often we think that the knowledge that we have provides us with the power to do the things that we want to do. Foucault, however, argues differently, indicating that instead

knowledge can be used as a power over others. For him, the power to be able to define others, their world and field of possibilities is an exercise in power (Sarup, 1993). No longer can our knowledge be seen as solely liberatory but also as a means of control and discipline. This knowledge that we gain is then a construction of events in our society that has been given the level or stamp of truth. In this way, it is possible that a discourse or knowledge can fix meaning and that the very process of constituting or constructing a discourse is an exercise in power because of its ability to control what is valid and true as well as what and who is given the authority to verbalise it. For post structuralists, what enables discourses or knowledge to come into existence is rules of formation. These rules determine what becomes possible and significant. These procedures and rules are determined by “experts” usually in the field of human science and particularly in disciplines like psychology. Rules of regulation enable particular truths to be told but also constrain what truth is to be circulated.

Therefore, for Foucault, knowledge cannot be neutral; neither can it be a reflection of a ‘truth.’ We should not accept our reality as the ‘truth’ simply because of its reference to history, but we should also recognize the power that goes with producing that particular truth. In his book, *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault indicates that what is required, is that we trace the origins of ‘the truth’ that allowed the discourse to emerge at that particular time. In considering knowledge or discourses historically and politically, he speaks of the “politics of truth telling” the manner in which social and self-government proceeds through the production and institutionalization of “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980). Important too, for researchers working within this field is to focus, as Foucault does, not only on the idea of ‘truth telling’ but specifically on the discursive practices that enable and sustains a ‘regime of truth.’ When we understand the origins of the ‘truth’, the support mechanism that enabled such a system and the impact that it has on our current understandings of ourselves, we can then question its truth as well as its legitimacy (Mills, 1997).

Regimes of truth may also be accompanied by or be the same as regimes of rules of right and truth and reproduces power. Hence we have a triangle of power, right and truth.

This triangle proposed by Foucault (1980), is used by Tamboukou (2003). She used a Foucauldian perspective to analyse women and how they produce themselves in the arena of education. Tamboukou indicates that these three aspects are all intertwined. Truth is bound up with power, and then produces systems of morality – or ethics of the self. One can establish knowledge and truth by referring to that which is morally correct. This adds to its power and has the effect of producing a person – the self who will follow the rules of regulation because of their reference to morals and the sense of being right.

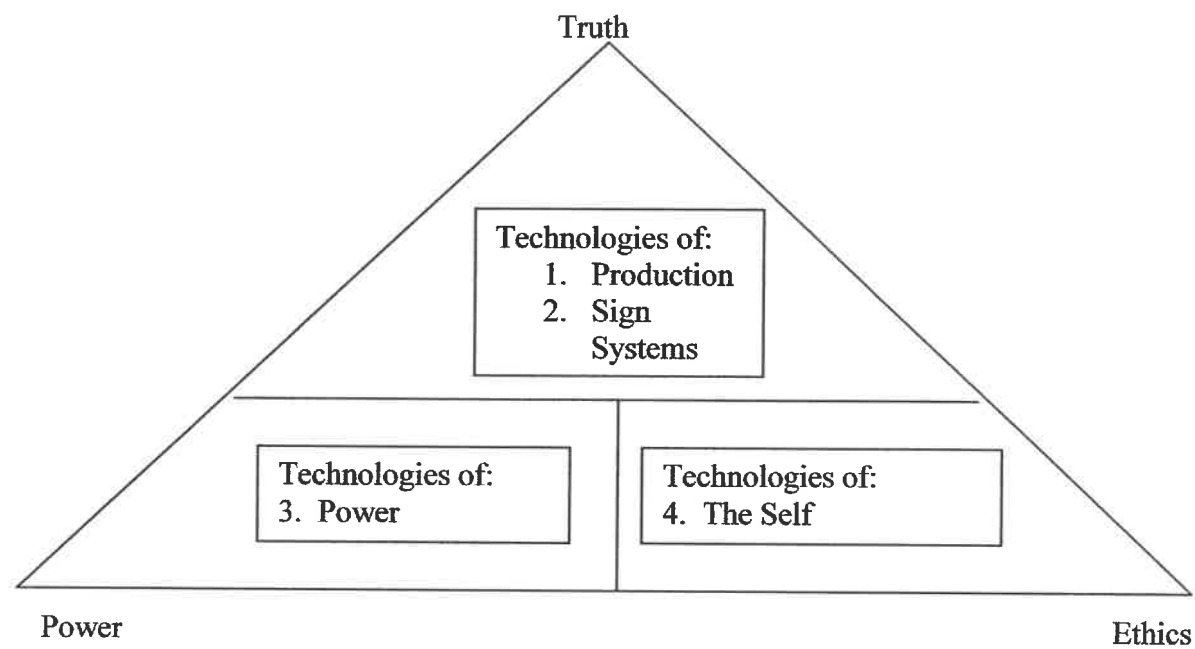


Figure 1: The Production of Self. (Tamboukou, 2003:16)

In attempting to analyse his genealogies, Foucault examines the ways in which discourses, which have an institutional base gains and assigns control and power. Discourses become true because they point to historicity, and they also use the system of exclusion to enable people to make determinations about how ‘true’ a discourse is. People, who do not follow or adhere to these systems of truth given their moral implications for the self, are then excluded or marginalized. Power then constitutes conditions of possibility and can impact on the formation of our subjectivity. Power in this context has two meanings viz; the ability to coerce, constrain, oppress and dominate and on the other hand, it is a form of power which subjugates and forms subjects – thus

in a positive sense an ability, the ability to construct a subject. Thus a subject can be controlled by others and controlled by his/her own self-knowledge or conscience. Here choice is possible. One has the ability to make the choice but this choice is limited by what is possible within a particular discourse.

Discourses can then also be used as political tools to justify and provide reasons for doing things that may be oppressive. Alternative understandings and the plurality of meaning for people are then considered illegitimate. Individuals who have alternative identities or contrary understandings are often marginalized. Both Martino's study (1999) and Renold's study (2001) into the construction of masculinity of boys at school show how boys are subjected to a "game of truth" where they learn to become men. They show how the knowledge of hegemonic sexuality has the power to subjugate and form subjects. The knowledge of hegemonic sexuality is used as the correct moral way in which to become a man.

This understanding of how knowledge, truth (as imposed by 'experts') and the following entitled rights has implications for how we come to view ourselves (subjectivity) as well as others, is revealed in the study by Sinnikka Aapola (2004), on social adolescent discourses prevalent in Finland. She uses post structuralist critical discourse analyses to understand the manner in which social adolescent discourses construct individuals, and in so doing, legitimate hegemonic discourses whilst silencing or challenging others. The power inherent in hegemonic discourse is legitimated by so called "youth experts," for example, social workers, psychiatrists, researchers and teachers. These experts are positioned at the top hierarchy of institutions or authority. Discourse always requires a legitimate, natural and expert speaking position. Based on this, authority can then be effected and exercised and in so doing a subject is brought into existence through the exercise of this authority (Weedon, 1987). They, that is, the expert and those in authority are thus able to define adolescence within various discourses. What enables discourses to become significant and powerful is that they follow the rules of formation – one being the element of truth. Rules of regulation constrain what can be considered appropriate or not for society.

If we are to understand how knowledge operates to form subjects, then it becomes as previously stated, important to understand the discursive field that operates to uphold this stamp of truth. The media, as a discursive field, plays a role in determining what is the truth for us. The media has the ability to discursively position us within a particular discourse of truth, and in so doing, impacts on the meaning we make of our experiences. Through programmes and adverts, for example, relationships between boys and girls are made known. Usually relationships expressed in the media are based on difference. Girls are portrayed as sweet and neat, whilst boys are adventurous and naughty. The media as an institution becomes a pervayer of truth, and thus a discourse comes into existence. The effect of this, however, is to determine the subjectivity of boys and girls, and it also conceals the unequal power relations that such a discourse creates.

Jane Flax (1995) echoes this understanding of difference and offers explanations about the implications of gender being constructed along the lines of a binary opposition. She indicates that through gender relations, two types of people are created - man and woman. She goes on further to state that these two categories are exclusionary. One can only be one gender never both. Davies (2003) concurs with this idea and reveals that in her study of pre-school children in Australia, these two categories were the only way in which girls and boys made sense of themselves, each other and the world that they occupied. For Flax (1995), gender relations “have been more or less relations of domination. That is gender relations have been (more) defined and (imperfectly) controlled by one of their inter-related aspects – the man” (Flax, 1995: 147). What this means is that gender relations are then structured on difference with males being seen as dominant and powerful and females as the negative opposite. This discourse of difference then assigns power via systems of social practices (Flax, 1995). Differences can then be used to divide people from each other as well as within individuals. Both Flax (1995) and Mills (1997) are in agreement that it is only when we begin to question the origins and legitimacy of the truth around the concept of difference, for example, then our current understanding can be changed. Flax (1995) further indicates that instead we must use difference as a source to resist domination and to explore change.

Discourses can shift and they continually jostle, overlap and give way to each other. This shift entails gaps and contradictions, and has the ability to both maintain the status quo or resist and move towards social transformation. This process of being able to challenge however is not that easy. This fluid nature of discourses is evident in the study by Aapola (2004) who found that sometimes dominant understandings could be difficult to resist and effectively maintains the status of traditional femininity. She found that dominant discourses of female adolescents tended to legitimate or confirm traditional conceptions of femininity such as responsibility and vulnerability whilst male adolescent discourse were antithetical. Attempts to resist and challenge the existing boundaries resulted in girls being seen to be problematic. Girls end up conforming because the pressure exerted on by them by these adult sanctioned discourses is immense. The status quo is then maintained rather than resisted because of its reference to the expert knowledge and truth.

#### 2.2.2. Subjectivity: a dynamic process

In the section above, I have made reference to the concept of subjectivity. Here, I attempt to offer an understanding of 'subjectivity' within post structuralism. Post structuralist theorists such as Weedon and Foucault use the term 'subjectivity' to denote the construction of identity or what psychologists refer to as the individual. Subjectivity within post structuralism refers to who we are and the ways in which we understand ourselves both consciously and unconsciously within discourse and institutional practices. Davies and Banks (1995:46) explain:

“By subjectivity we mean here the particular ways in which a person gives meaning to themselves, others and the world. Subjectivity is largely the product of discursive networks which organize and systematize social and cultural practices.”

In post structuralist theory the individual is made “subject (made knowing) by language (and hence discourse)” (MacNaughton, 2000:97). For researchers such as MacNaughton (2000); Weedon (1987) and Davies (2003) language is pivotal in constructing our subjectivity (our sense of ourselves). Language is important in this process because it

constructs how we think, feel, act, desire and speak, and constitutes what we believe is normal, right and desirable. Following on from MacNaughton, Weedon (1987) indicates that this acceptance of dominant definitions of normality reinforces asymmetrical power relations in society because language represents specific values and interests in society. For feminists then, it becomes imperative not only to understand the power implications found in language but also the discursive construction of subjectivity that occurs within relationships.

MacNaughton (2000), in her research on gender and early childhood or preschool children in Australia, uses Davies and Harre's (1990) understanding of how language constructs our subjectivities. She used it, in particular, to attempt to understand the language used by a girl (Chloe) to make decisions and how it formed her discourses of girlhood and in this her subjectivity – her knowledge about herself in the world. Davies and Harre (1990) have argued that we form our subjectivity in prevailing discourse using 4 processes via:

- a. learning to categorize people, including ourselves, for example, knowing the concepts or categories of a girlfriend or a bossy girl or homosexual and heterosexual. These categories can include or exclude people. We learn these categories in order to be able to interact with others.
- b. Participating in discourses and practices that give meaning to the categories we learn. In MacNaughton's study, Chloe learnt that bossy girls are usually the ones to approach boys but that boys do not usually play with bossy girls
- c. Positioning oneself in relationship to the categories and meanings given to the categories. Chloe makes the decision to position herself as a girlfriend in her relationship with the boy she likes – Henry. She knew about these categories and knew the meaning that the boys attached to them.
- d. Recognizing the positions taken and emotionally investing in the positions taken. We develop moral systems around these understanding, that is, rules of right. But our subject positions are temporary, and so too is our subjectivity; for our subjectivity or ways in which we develop knowledge about ourselves, depends on our ability to negotiate and re-negotiate subject positions. This involves

recognizing, belonging and seeing the world from this position. Chloe recognized that to be ignored by the boys would be emotionally traumatic (MacNaughton, 2000:100-101).

It is through these processes that people begin to understand themselves in the world. These understandings then form the basis for interaction with others. Further, it gives us an indication of who we are and informs us of the appropriate kinds of behaviour. McLeod (2000) worked on the 12 to 18 project in Australia. It was a project aimed at analyzing the construction of subjectivity over time of two, middle class children. She cautions some post structuralists who run the risk of suggesting that subjectivity is merely an effect of discourse. For her, this is discourse determinism. She thus focuses on an individual's subjectivity and life history, and the ways in which broader social, institutional and educational practices contribute to the formation of these subjectivities. Her research is around two adolescents, Marion and Rodney. She showed how at times subjectivity could be understood in terms of class identification experiences as well as subjectivity in relation to dominant and emerging gender discourses. She revealed too how Marion's middle class values of obligation and responsibility impacted on how she constructed her subjectivity as selfless helper. Also McLeod shows how we are producers of our own subjectivity. Marion's commitment to being nice is also strategic. Those are values affirmed by her school in the promotion of 'docile bodies'. It produces a position from where Marion can speak, forge her identity and be happy in a new and difficult environment. Thus whilst she conforms to conventional gender discourses – it tells us that restrictions exist on the number of subject positions she can take up.

Davies and Harre (1990) identify two types of positioning viz:

- interactive positioning – where what a person says positions another,
- reflexive positioning – where a person positions himself/herself.

It is important to note that this positioning is not done intentionally; rather it is done as one continues through the course of life and as an ongoing produced subject. Positioning of subjects enable one to choose a position to occupy and it is dependent on one's own 'subjective lived histories.' With this subjective history, come the emotions and beliefs as

well as the knowledge of social structures (including roles) with their “attendant rights, obligations and expectations” (Davies and Harre, 1990:7). A subject position is made available within a particular discourse. Davies and Harre offer an example of romantic love to demonstrate subject positioning. People’s understanding of romantic love is based on the fairytale notion of a prince who changes the world and saves a princess from harm. In reality, people living out this fantasy will seek positions or will position themselves and each other along these lines made available. They will use the discursive process available to make this a reality (Davies and Harre, 1990). People operate from various sometimes contradictory subject positions, and by “focusing on the fact that the social world is constantly being constituted through the discursive practices in which individual engage, we are able to see individuals not as the unitary beings but as the complex, changing contradictory creatures that we each experience ourselves to be, despite our best efforts at producing a unified, coherent and relatively static self” (Davies, 2003:xiii). This enables us to constantly renegotiate positions. In this manner, people are both producers and manipulators of discourse.

Subjectivity is a process that occurs by consent. This occurs by an individual taking up particular subject positions within discourses. Lee (1992) in her study about how the process of gendering occurs in year 11 geography school students, confirms Davies (2003) understanding. Lee (1992) indicates that one important tenet of post structuralism was evident from her study, that is, that “human subjects are not autonomous, unified, whole, separate or distinct from discourses which regulate social activity” (Lee, 1992:5). She examined the discursive practices that made the gendering process possible and found that her subjects showed clearly how they are constituted and re-constituted in discourses and discursive practices as they take up positions in various ways and how they took up these positions quite actively and by consent. Human subjects identify themselves according to the positions they occupy within discourses. Individuals do not exist outside of discourses or social institutions. But the discursive constitution of subjectivity requires in-depth understanding. It is a process that occurs from birth, and thus has implications for us as conscious beings. Weedon (1987) indicates that

discourses define our identities and the forms of pleasure we derive from them. Our subjectivity is impacted on what we know these positions will mean to us.

Aapola's (2004) study differs from that of Lee (1992). For Aapola (2004:4) adolescent discourses define and constrain adolescents and also define "norms for sexuality, civilization, adulthood and rationality in interwoven ways." It is expected then that these adolescents take up various positions within the prevailing discourse. The subjects of her research, however, did not always take up the expected positions. Her research findings concur with that of Davies and Harre (1990) who indicated that boys and girls took up different positions depending on the context in which they found themselves. For these girls, the choice of how to be positioned was constrained by the rules surrounding adolescence. Thus, one can conclude that subjectivity is a constantly changing process. Having to choose different positions and getting approval from others was not equal but was dependent on their positions within the discourses and categories of gender, race, class, sexuality etc. Aapola (2004) found that those adolescents with more economic and social power had greater access to varied positions within the existing discourse. The ways in which the various existing discourses constitute subjectivity has specific implications for the manner in which people (re) produce or challenge power relations. The social capital one has determines the extent to which one is accepted by others.

In the same vein as Aapola (ibid) Martino's study (1999) in Australia, highlighted how although boys in the secondary school saw discourses of studiousness and intelligence as feminine, white middle class boys who were intelligent were able to use their privilege of having these social identities to maintain their masculinity and negotiated a position of acceptance within the dominant discourse. In the schooling environment, the identities of being white and middle class were valued more. Thus depending on one's subject positions within prevailing dominant discourse, one would have access to what Davies and Harre (1990) refer to as structure of rights. This structure of rights provides opportunities and also limitations on what is possible to do within a particular discourse.

This idea is reiterated by Davies (2003) who states that discourses have a material force that shapes identity, but also constrains and allows individuals to think and act in an ongoing manner. Subjects are located within many interweaving discourses, and these discourses offer various positions to occupy and also various ways of seeing and being individuals. But there are limited spaces offered for subjects to position themselves. The position one can occupy is dependent on the cultural capital one has. We can resist being positioned by others and can re-position ourselves in another way. Interweaving and sometimes, contradictory discourses allow subjects to take up positions that may also seem contradictory. Herbert's paper (1995) on Aboriginal and Torres Straits girls demonstrates this idea. Aboriginal girls here are faced with a dual struggle – trying to understand issues of femininity in an inter-cultural context and trying to take up positions in a cross-cultural environment. Girls were vocal in discussing how boys needed to reform and change their behaviour towards them, but supported behaviour that they saw as part of their culture, even though this behaviour oppressed and marginalized them. Furthermore, having to negotiate their ways around a Western way of understanding the world, for example, with regard to how youth and beauty were valued tended to be in direct opposition to their own indigenous values of age and knowledge. Thus attempts to take up various subject or identity positions proved somewhat difficult. This was further compounded by what they saw as a lack of support from educators.

Mclean (1995) also shows how the discourse of patriarchy and its impact on males is also contradictory. One of the ways in which men constitute their identity and understand and give meaning to themselves and others is through the discourse of the desire for patriarchal power and the fear of failure. Meanings around these discourses have become fixed and accepted. He states that these two discourses are inextricably bound. This attainment of power and being viewed as successful by other males is a way to prove one's manhood. But, "all the major signifiers of manhood are continually under threat or intrinsically transitory – money, political power, physical strength, sexual performance (Mclean, 1995:83-84). The fear of not being man enough is essential to the process of the boy becoming a man. This is learnt through traditional means, for example, physical and emotional abuse, contempt for sensitivity which is then used to ensure the correct

kind of 'manhood.' Whilst all boys may not be subjected to these kinds of practices, they are aware of it. The knowledge of how to be a man is inescapable, and those who do not achieve it have self doubt and feel less than a man. What this does is reinforce the interests and values of patriarchy. Mclean (1995) indicates an analysis of masculinity that enables men to recognize their subjective experience of themselves and their world, as well as the recognition of how these experiences fit into the context of gendered power structures is of vital importance. It means having to recognize:

- the central role that power plays in relationships in our society as a whole and in particular the role of masculine values
- the gendered nature of emotions and its role in maintaining and promoting power differences,
- understanding the implications of being disadvantaged and oppressed.

However, the ways in which individuals experience the world is not homogeneous - the range of discourses available at a specific point in time determines this experience. This discourse will determine how the individual interprets the world. Understanding what it means to be masculine or feminine, for example, is dependent on the power of patriarchy and the ways in which it reinforces hegemonic gender norms. The struggle and the potential for change, occurs at this level of experience, for in so doing, we invest emotionally in that particular understanding and the potential to be a social agent exists.

An individual's access to subjectivity is constrained by historically specific factors and power relations at work in society. As individuals we are constantly subject to discourses and can take up specific subject positions or quite contradictory positions. We cannot avoid these subject positions nor can we avoid the representations of ourselves that a discourse invites (Burr, 1995; 2000). We can, however, choose to accept or reject a position. If we position ourselves or are positioned then we have to follow the rules of regulation implicit in the discourse. The range of subjectivity available is open to certain individuals and is dependent on the social status and power of a particular discourse.

Hollway (1989) in her study of heterosexual couples shows how men and women are positioned within various discourses and the power relations at work. Her study reveals the power of discourse in its ability to position subjects. She identifies three discourses that contain different subject positions for women. Her identified discourse of male sexual drive is based on the scientific truth that male sexuality is biological. A woman is a mere receptacle – an object. She adds that this discourse legitimates many dangerous behaviours on the part of men, for example, rape. Women are positioned as either objects or as entrappers of males. The concept of masculinity and femininity is one of the key areas of contestation, that is, the natural common sense understanding of how girls and boys are expected to behave. Particular versions of masculinity or femininity have to become fixed in order for them to be seen as natural and to cement power relations or promote certain social interests. The authority of significant people in a girl/boy's life, for example, the parents will determine for the child what is normal and natural. Through constant repetition throughout one's life, acceptable socially defined norms are both consciously and unconsciously reinforced. Weedon (1987:113) explains that, "the discursive constitution of subjects both compliant and resistant, is part of a wider social play for power." For feminist post structuralists, these fixed meanings of femininity and masculinity are subject to challenge and are constantly in process. This is not to say that change can be effected solely at the level of language. Discursive practices are implicit in all power relations and it is here that change needs to be effected.

### 2.2.3. Post structuralist understanding of power

Foucault's understanding of how power operates was to a large extent influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, another influential philosopher. Nietzsche's book, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, sought to separate the present from the past, whilst attempting to locate and present the concept of differences (Sarup, 1993). Foucault's most influential work on power is that which arises from his book, *Discipline and Punish*, in which he attempts to explain power in modern society. His study of the prison and the seemingly inconspicuous manner in which it controls individuals is similar to how the modern state is run. The state has managed with extreme efficiency to create "docile bodies and obedient souls, drained of creative energy" (Miller, 1993:15).

Foucault understanding of where power is located differs from that of Marx. Marx and his contemporaries saw power as involving three basic premises viz, that power is something that is possessed usually by the ruling class or capitalists; that power flows from an epicenter i.e. from top to bottom; and that power is repressive and functions in a repressive manner (Sawicki, 1991). Foucault understanding of power is, however, multi-layered and intricate, and is a relation within and between discourses, institutions and people. No one actually owns power. For Foucault, power is exercised by people rather than possessed by them. It is also productive and has the ability to be repressive as well. Power for him is also ascending, that is, it operates from the bottom up.

Foucault (1980:98) states that power is:

“Never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as commodity or a piece of wealth. Power is exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individual circulate between its threads, they are always in the positions of simultaneously undergoing and exerting this power. They are not only its inert and consenting target, they are always also the elements of its articulation.”

Power emanates from ‘local centers’, that is, family groups, organizations and institutions and power relations are inherent in all social relations. Because these relations are hierarchical, they produce relationships that operate on inequality, domination and subordination. Foucault’s focus is on micro power- on the local, everyday and even on the body itself. The body is the crucial receptacle of discursive regulation. Martin (1988) cited in Kenway (1995:134) offers an explanation of how Foucault views power, “power, seeps into the very grain of individuals, what they say, how they learn to live and with other people.” Critics of this Foucauldian view have indicated that this view of power is too non-specific and vague to be of any value. But a Foucauldian view does not “preclude a recognition of the macro structures of state or macro forms of domination” (Kenway, 1995:137). It is in using the concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, regimes of truth that one is able to understand the finer more subtle workings of the state and its

discursive practices. Sawicki (1991) points out that the focus of post structuralists on the micro-physics of power gives clear indication of how power at this level contributes to a more in-depth and widespread understanding of how power works in relationships and vice versa.

Discourses and power are linked and also determine the possibilities for individuals. These possibilities are determined by the discursive practices within institutions. Kim Jones (2000) in her review of Gilbert and Gilbert's book *Masculinity goes to school*, indicates that this book is insightful in that it offers readers ways of recognizing how school practices as part of institutions promote rigid and dominant forms of masculinity, whilst at the same time limiting the spaces boys could occupy and oppressing females and less dominant males. Using schooling discursive practices they determine the range of behaviours that it is possible for boys to use. Reform policies in Australia had focused on improving the life chances of girls in schools, but the authors point to the dominant versions of masculinity that are promoted by society via the media or schools. These work against improving conditions for girls. For them, what this has done is shape the constructions of masculinity for boys by offering various options such as sports, television and toys that depict what a real man should be, that is, emotionless, strong and sporty. This is in direct opposition to how females are constructed. For the authors, 'men's sport is the archetype of institutionalized masculinity and in being successful in sport "boys gain entry into the traditional male network, garner status and prestige and receive acceptance from their fathers" (Jones, 2000:2).

Fraser (1989) in her comparative study of public schools girls and comprehensive school girls in Oxfordshire examines teenage girls discourses of gender in their inter relationships with boys and girls. Her study also explains how the discursive practices evident in the institutional setting promoted inequality and unfairness. She focuses on attempting to understand how these discursive practices work in order to understand how power operates to oppress people. Girls in the study indicated that the schooling system actually treated them unfairly. One of the aspects that Frazer looked at was the disciplinary procedure that operated in the school and she found that the identical action

performed by boys and girls have totally different reactions from schooling personnel with girls being chastised but not boys. For the girls, this tended to perpetuate gender inequality and cement unequal power relations. For the girls, social structures and forces such as the school presented a problem for girls and their femininity. Another discursive practice of labeling girls as 'slags' also reinforced this inequality. Foucault, in his study of archaeologies of knowledge makes note of how knowledge or discourse becomes naturalized and it can remain unacknowledged and invisible through the system of truth (McHoul et al, 1993). By the school authorities not challenging inequality, it has the effect of naturalizing this inequality and also made the inequality invisible.

Asymmetrical power relations exist in society. Some groups of people, such as the girls in this study, do not have equal access to power and will continue to do so unless reform initiatives target discursive practices and make known invisible elements of power.

#### 2.2.4. The effects of disciplinary power

As stated before, Foucault's most influential work arises from his book *Discipline and Punish*. Here he explains how power operates in a modern society. Because of the states wish in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to know about the everyday lives of people, a system, which relies on surveillance and regulation, was implemented. This mode of power is referred to as panopticism (Sarup, 1993, Shumway, 1992). Panopticon was Bentham's model of a tower placed in the center of a prison. From this vantage point, guards were able to observe prisoners without them being completely aware of when they were being observed. The idea was that prisoners would assume that they would be watched at some point. Prisoners then would behave according to standards set out by the prison. Foucault gives examples of what he refers to as disciplinary technologies, which sought to develop a "docile body which may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Rabinow, 1984 cited in Kenway, 1995:135).

Foucault indicates that over time social and cultural practices enable certain discourses to rise to prominence. These discourses are powerful because they have been able to manage and control a society and its people without the use of force. He refers to this phenomenon as "disciplinary power." Disciplinary power ensures acceptability. Foucault

also speaks of 'dividing practices,' which refers to the process where people are controlled by the ways in which they are categorized and classified (Mchoul et al, 1993). This process results in people being seen as different amongst others and within individual themselves. He shows how these dividing practices become so widely used to oppress target identities. Part of society's regulation is the focus on norms – the establishment of what is normal. People are evaluated in terms of these norms. If they deviate from these norms then they have violated social norms and are marginalized, for example, homosexuality, which is perceived as abnormal as people avoid it. These dividing practices categorize people as deviant or normal. These normalizing practices mask underlying power relations. It then becomes imperative that one is able to understand these social relations to recognize the role played by history in the truth telling process and to then imagine the possibility of change.

This understanding of the normative nature of discourses – that they set out norms of behaviours and measure individuals as either normal or not, desirable or undesirable or acceptable or unacceptable is echoed in the study by Martino (1999) and Swain (2003) who show how sport is an integral part of boys social relations with each other and a means of dividing themselves from girls. It was also a way that boys constructed their masculinity. For Martino, violent sports such as wrestling are essential in fulfilling the traditional roles of men as being competitive to win at all costs, even if it means inflicting pain on each other. The ability to perform sport well is the norm and the desired behaviour. As in the case of Gilberts (2000) boys, what this does is toughen boys up so they become emotionless and distinct from girls. One is able to see how prevailing powerful discourses construct social reality for boys and girls and perpetuate gender inequality. The "bookish boys" of the Gilberts' and Martino's "sit and talk boys" draw attention to the binary frames of reference that are implicated in specific regimes of the public and private sphere. "Bookish boys" and "sit and talk boys" are marginalized, and images of boys as aggressive give boys the leeway to then act aggressively towards females and homosexuals or particular groups of boys who do not fit the image. Such normative discourses promote a masculinity that is rational and exclusive to males whilst

discourses around females focus particularly on ways of being essentially female, that is, emotional and intuitive.

Clark and Page (2004) in their study of Australian schools show how the normative values surrounding masculinity are constantly promoted and attest to their powerfulness. They show how differences between the sexes are not equally valued, with associations of anything female being more negative. She gives an example of when girls are seen as tomboys they acquire some power and status because they have acquired what is seen as largely male behaviour. The valuing of male behaviour is evident. However, boys who are introverts or shy (largely female behavior) are seen as having some sort of problem in dire need of solving or fixing. For her participants, the varied ways of being masculine are unacceptable.

Kenway et al (1994) support this understanding of the deeply ingrained normative nature of masculinity in her research into gender reform policies. These policies sought to eradicate traditional ways of thinking about masculinity and femininity and to empower girls into new ways of thinking. Girls, however, were still encouraged unconsciously into taking on roles and work previously done by males, reinforcing the appeal of masculinity. Educators and girls themselves had sometimes, contradictory ways of thinking about femininity and masculinity, often resorting to traditional understandings. Within the prevailing discourses of the school, girls were constantly positioned or positioned themselves a helpless, passive and inherently feminine. What these did was to again reinforce the differences between male and female with the male understanding of the world being validated and the asymmetrical gender relations perpetuated (Kenway et al, 1994, Martino, 1999). Whilst institutions support such powerful discourses of masculinity, these institutions themselves are sites of contestation and thus they can be challenged and resisted. The current educational system in South Africa has within it the promotion of equal rights, and thus educators can through their practices resist and challenge historical ideology.

effects. These are reinforced in schools as well as conscious and unconscious practices. The three discourses evident in the school she researched, that is, the discourse of essential female sexuality, the male sex drive discourse as well as the missing discourse of female desire, normalize and naturalize roles and expectations for the sexes. In this way, the power that is part of the process is masked and rendered invisible. Those girls who recognized the underlying power that was inherent in their positioning within the discourse found it difficult to challenge because of its reference to naturalness and historicity. Ryan reiterates findings from Lees' (1993) study that revealed that girls find themselves in a double bind as a result of the power that is exercised by boys. Boys have the ability to define girls as 'bitches' if they are constantly in relationships with boys and are seen as 'frigid' when they do not accept boys' unwanted overtures.

People are valued according to how well they fit. There is a complex interplay of power here. Understanding would mean, for example, if females were not thin, blonde etc they are not valued. These self-regulation techniques operate through a system of morals or ethics – technologies of the self. This involves power over oneself – regulating oneself according to the ethics one lives by. We can then become self-regulating individuals by our will to knowledge - to be able to read societal rules and to generate and obey them. Thus, a crucial aspect to the value given to females by themselves and society is on how one looks. There is a complex play of visibility and invisibility. This has the effect of normalizing as well as camouflaging how people believe they are able to be individuals, capable of making their own meaning and making sense of themselves, but are subjected to these forms of disciplinary forces of bio-power (Danaher et al, 2000).

Mac an Ghail (1995) in his study on how Afro-Caribbean and Asian gay boys construct their masculinity examined the way in which the institution as well as the male peer group took up the position of surveillance, regulation and control of gender and sexual behaviour. Ryan's (1997) study showed how girls were not only policed by boys but by girls themselves as a means of social control. This all forms what Foucault's refers to as a "web of control" (Foucault, 1980).

Martino (1999) in his study, interviews a boy called Jason who quite clearly indicated how policing and surveillance occurs. Boys, he claims do not express their feelings for fear of having their masculinity questioned and being labeled a “wuss” or ‘poof,’ or ‘wanker’ (Hearn and Morgan, 1995). Hearn and Morgan (ibid) and Martino (1999) point to exclusionary practices such as labeling and the use of derogatory terms such as ‘poof, wanker and wuss,’ that ensures a particular understanding of truth that only certain kinds of masculinity are acceptable. Boys who do not meet the standard of acceptable heterosexuality are marginalized. Here, the discursive practices of labeling is in opposition to anything feminine and ensures adherence to hegemonic forms of masculinity. “A particular truth about masculinity becomes established.... as a means of policing the boundaries of acceptable masculinity” (Martino, 1999:245). Martino uses Foucault’s “polymorphous techniques of power” (ibid) to examine how adolescent boys form their masculinities. Normalizing techniques imbued with power determine an individual’s behaviour. It is the desire to establish their masculinity within the regimes of practices available to them that the boys begin to relate to themselves as gendered subjects and to others. The monitoring and policing practices of their own sexuality prescribes the desired and valued masculinity. “Experts” or disciplines or institutions validate this system and thus their knowledge “authorizes and legitimizes the exercising of power” (Danaher et al: 2000:26).

Power exercised by institutions can be seen to be totalizing and individualizing. These disciplinary techniques are exercised over the body and soul of individuals, and have the effect of rendering them powerful but at the same time more docile. This individualizing power is clearly demonstrated by Mclean (1995) who shows that traditional masculinity controls people through the values it promotes, for example, being emotionally distant. In his analysis of schools, Mclean found that there existed contempt for anything considered feminine in the discourses surrounding masculinity. Being labeled a mummy’s boy is an insult most boys would do anything to try to avoid. But this toughening up of males in school serves a particular social function. Firstly, it excludes females and denies boys the opportunity of developing close relationships with females and with boys themselves. This is because in society men are defined as competitive,

independent and self-sufficient. But even male friendship is very fragile. If unspoken rules are broken then boys and men are subjected to abuse and condemnation. This is a crucial way in which men divided themselves from females and from each other but also has the effect of causing division within themselves.

What this does is preserve and perpetuate an unjust and oppressive system. Those in positions of power subject men to emotional manipulation. Whilst all men do not benefit equally from patriarchy, they do perpetuate patriarchy by their own acceptance and participation in the system. Few men can live up to the standards set by patriarchy but men according to Connell (1995) benefit from the patriarchal dividend by oppressing women. This works to the advantage of masculinity and patriarchy but protects them from dominant hegemonic masculinity even if they cannot meet the standards or criteria set by this masculinity. Thus, one can see that characteristics of modern power structures are its ability to totalize and individualize the individual subject and to some extent constrain individuals and prevent challenge to the status quo.

#### 2.2.5. Resistance – a way forward

Foucault (1980:60) explains that, “one of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn’t localized in the state apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the state apparatuses on a much more minute and everyday level are not also changed.” For Foucault, wherever power is exercised it is possible that an alternative challenging discourse can emerge which can empower different people. Power is relative and not only reserved for particular groups in society. The rise of dominant discourses and knowledge is not through a carefully manipulated plan by people in positions of power. Rather, within a society, certain social conditions exist that are seen as more suitable representations than others. However, the appropriations of particular discourses are not static but rather unpredictable with no concrete way of indicating its future effects. The focus on the archeology of knowledge meant one should revisit issues and uncover the conditions that allow certain discourses or knowledges to emerge. Thus, if we understood the origins of the ways in which we understand ourselves we can then question its legitimacy and

choice either to accept or resist. It is in recognizing the way in which power operates, of being critical of the aberration of absolute truth that we can begin to resist, to refuse to be what we are ascribed to be and to challenge and respond in appropriate ways. This prevents the perception that power has Machiavellian connotations of evil. Power both produces and is produced by regulation and governance and in discursive practices such as those operating in a school. This then allows alternative discourses to emerge - those that have been previously marginalized or disempowered. To allow alternative discourses to emerge, allows us to constantly challenge the legitimacy of the so called truth of existing forms of knowledge and discourse, and thus of ourselves as well.

Furthermore, for Foucault power and resistance are two sides of the same coin. Burr (1995:64) explains, "the power implicit in one discourse is only apparent from the resistance implicit in another." This is because there are a number of discourses available around a particular event and with it an infinite number of ways of acting. Thus dominant or prevailing discourses are constantly subjected to contestation and resistance. Foucault's understanding of power is not one that sees people as being able to force others to do what he or she wants to be done. It is rather as Foucault (1982) cited in Sawicki (1991:25) states, "power is exercised only over free subjects and only insofar as they are free." Because people are free, they have a range of actions open to them. Whilst their actions may not be limitless they are not forced.

Kitzinger (1989) and Burr (1995) indicate that alternative discourses, which threaten dominant ones, are strongly resisted and challenged. This understanding is evident in research conducted by Kenway and Willis (1994) in Australia, who show how the dominant discourse of femininity and beauty continues to weave its way into even reform policies. In her study, girls are taught how to groom, adorn and beautify themselves and constantly seek approval of others usually males. This is different to what boys were made to learn. Thus, even in the context of gender reform policies in Australia, girls in schools are being taught how to gain power in one sense, but have continued to lose it in others. This is in keeping with Clark and Page's (2004) research which show how power operates diversely and that sometimes girls may not be positioned as powerless. The

authors show that in schools, girls may be positioned powerfully as helpers but that this is in fact temporary, for the idea of being helpful is consistent with the broader understanding that girls are meant to be helpful. For them, the fact that being helpful identifies it as an appropriate girlish behavior devalues it (ibid). They have found that it is difficult for girls to resist certain subject positions in schools, especially if educators sanction it. Further, the pressure to conform to particular ways of being is felt strongly by adolescents. The pressure, for example, on girls to be thin often leads to diseases like anorexia and sometimes - even death.

Butler (1990) presents us with a challenge when she says that it is in thinking the unthinkable, the conceptualizable that we can challenge dominant ways of thinking. It becomes imperative then in the fight against gender oppression and towards equality that we continue to think of new ways to resist and to challenge oppressive understanding of gender. Alternative subjectivities, for example, homosexuality can then be the base for resistance or normalization. One of the ways in which this can be done for Butler is through repeat performances or 'iterability' in different contexts. In this way different meanings are then realised, which can challenge and subvert dominant ideas. In Mac an Ghaill's (1995) research, subjects indicated that being homosexual was devalued by the dominant discourse but with this came some positives. Students spoke of the ability to be able to openly express their emotions and to be able to understand their multiple identities. This was exhilarating, in glaring contrast to heterosexuals, who constantly operate within the context of domination and this precludes any real understanding of themselves. However, Kenway (1995) and Cox (1995) caution us on the ability we may possess to subvert dominant ideas as proposed by Butler. For Butler, it is the individual who can create alternative discourses which can influence others and in so doing increase its power base and its social effect. However, wider social interests or groups determine the extent to which alternative discourses can increase their power base. These dominant groups will only allow alternative discourses to gain power if it is not a threat to their power base or a threat to the balance of power in society itself, for example, discourses of equality for women exist in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, but limited equality has been achieved because it is not in the interests of patriarchy for this

to succeed. It is only by looking at a discourse that is currently in place, that is, historically specific that one can see whose interests are being served at that particular time. Kenway (ibid) and Cox (ibid) indicate that the impact this challenge may have on structural power is questionable for subordinate and marginalized identities are unlikely to exert power and influence beyond what is tolerated and allowed by the dominant in society.

### **2.3. A Review of Literature on Cross Gender Friendship**

This section of my work aims to look at what research I have found that has dealt with cross gender friendships. I looked into this as a way of understanding the importance of friendship in the lives of the students I teach.

Understanding the period of adolescence is problematic for there is substantial debate as to when this period begins and ends. The World Health Organisation divides adolescence into two categories viz: early adolescence (10-14 years) and late adolescence (15-19) (Kumar, 2004). During this period, relationships with peers especially with friends are crucial in the lives of adolescents. Dolich (2004) states that this period heralds important changes in peer relations. In this pre-adolescent period, boys tend to have diverse friendships that are based around activities whilst girls tend to prefer exclusive dyadic relationships based on sharing and intimacy (Dolich, 2004). Asher and Coeie (1990:3) points to the idea that “friends are important sources of companionship and recreations, shared advice and valued possessions, serve as trusted confidants and critics, act as loyal allies, provide stability in times of stress and transition.” This period is also marked by friendship with the same sex, although a study by Thorne (1993) of American children’s playground activities reveals that children do have cross gender relationships. In her study she discusses border-work, which she refers to as activities that mark and strengthen the boundaries between male and female. This enhances the awareness of difference between male and female with the balance of power more firmly entrenched in the hands of boys. A crucial aspect in this pre-adolescent stage is the ability of children to reflect and to evaluate the meaning of the world in relation to each other. They are

able to make sense of themselves in this way. Thorne, too, found in her subjects a reluctance to reveal their cross gender friendships based on the fear of it being seen as a boy-girl relationship and being mercilessly teased. I found this to be true amongst my subjects. I invited all grade 7 learners to participate in my research project and many were very willing. However, once I asked if they had cross gender friendships then children became reluctant and chose not to participate.

Psychological perspectives on friendship tend to emphasize that cross-gender friendships are the groundwork for future romantic relationships, or a reinforcement of identity. Friendship is a marker used to determine the normative stages of adolescent social and psychological development. Adolescents can then be measured by the ability/inability to maintain or develop friendships (McLeod, 1998). A study conducted by Adler, Kless, Adler (1992) discusses how the involvement of girls and boys in particular activities determined their popularity, and thus acceptance into particular friendship groups. Their interactions were where they “did their ‘identity work’ learning, and evaluating roles and values for their future adult behaviour of which their gender regimes are an important component”(Adler et al, 1992:169). They constructed ways of being feminine and masculine and modeled their behaviour based on this knowledge. Boys’ activities involved activities that would construct an image of total masculinity, that is, toughness, coolness, athletic ability etc. In contrast, girls activities centered around notions of love, domesticity and intimacy. These findings were in keeping with Gilligan’s (1982) understanding of females operating in a different voice. For Gilligan, girls value relationships, intimacy and caring whilst boys systems of morality are concerned with individual rights and a sense of justice that is based on fairness and equality. Girls become more interested in maintaining close, personal relationships and would choose to avoid conflict situations. In a conflict situation, girls would find ways to indirectly resolve conflicts so as not to lose that friendship. Females thus develop their subjectivity based on the values of intimacy and care and on the need to be seen as cooperative and unselfish. Gilligan’s (ibid) work has contributed to a general acceptance that men and women have different styles of talk and even in the nature of social relationships (Woodhead, Faulkner and Littleton, 1999).

Both McLeod (1998) and Woodhead et al (1999) find this view problematic. McLeod's questioning indicates that Gilligan's understanding and studies dealing with the same concept has revealed very little in the way of groundbreaking information or new insight into attempting to understand friendship or gender difference. Woodhead et al (1999) argues that this view is based on studies of white, upper class, American children and thus cannot be generalized. Further, these authors state that such interpretations suggest that there is "something about the very nature of being male and female which leads to these differing values and social relations by gender" (Woodhead et al, 1999:31), and that there is little evidence that supports this assumption. His understanding is that the world of the adolescent must be seen as socially constructed and is affected by aspects such as cultural beliefs, age etc.

Dolich (2004) in her study around male and female differences in cross sex and same friendships sought to understand the qualities people sought in friendships. She wanted to confirm existing findings that indicated that females develop closer interpersonal relationships than males did. The aim of the study was also to learn why opposite sex friendships become more important in the later stages of adolescents. Results were obtained from an online survey where adolescents from Haverford College in Morocco gave their ideas on issues surrounding friendships. Findings from the study concluded that females tend to talk about themselves and their problems and do develop closer, more intimate relationships than do males. Important too, was the role that the school played into socialising adolescents into young adults. Participants indicated that it was in school that they developed opposite sex friendships. Females in the study saw the development of opposite sex friendships as a stepping-stone towards more romantic relationships. This developmental approach enables researchers to then determine if adolescents are developing according to specific criteria set out with regards to adolescent development. Adolescents who fail to develop according to these criteria would then be regarded as 'abnormal.' People would follow these ideas about adolescents because they have come from the 'experts,' and are therefore the 'truth.' This is what Foucault would regard as truth telling.

In keeping more with the social constructionist and post structuralist understanding, I have found three studies that see adolescents' understanding of friendships as being socially constructed. The first study is by Allard and Yates (2001). My study, to some extent, is a replication of this study by Allard and Yates. Their study was around positive cross gender friendships, and affirms the need to see the world of adolescents as being socially constructed. These researchers look at how students themselves understand their cross gender friendships. They focused on two schools in Australia that had participated in gender reform initiatives. Forty participants between the ages of 15-16 took part in the study. Students were in Year 10 in the secondary school. Findings here reveal that for these students it was because they were from different sexes that friendships were beneficial and thus positive. Same-sex friendships, on the other hand, especially for the girls, proved to be more traumatic and problematic and were fraught with emotional tension. Instead for Allard and Yates' (ibid) participants, gender difference was a source of pleasure. Girls saw friendships with boys as more relaxing and boys found that friendships with girls were much more supportive. The competition that seemed to form the basis of friendship amongst boys was absent and friendship with girls proved more beneficial to them.

Whilst findings from the Allard and Yates study reveal that gender hierarchies are maintained and reinforced and contribute to gender inequality, they indicate that instead of rejecting these understanding, schooling practices might be used so as to enable more positive outcomes. Within the groups themselves stereotypical understandings of gender roles were not challenged and were instead seen as the truth and normal. For the authors (ibid), it becomes imperative that new ways of understanding gender relations be sought that would better understand the complex nature of gendered relationships. They have indicated that reform initiatives may not prove helpful in the fight towards gender equality, and could be met with resistance from students given their understandings. Further, they conclude that any initiative may be seen as yet another way in which adults seek to police and regulate their behaviour and relationships.

Another study on cross gender friendships was conducted by Swain (2005) in his doctoral research of masculinity amongst 10 –11 year old boys in three primary schools in the United Kingdom. Using social constructionism theory, Swain works from the understanding that masculinity is constructed in relation to femininity and vice versa. He argues that, simplistic understandings of group gender difference so prevalent in research, fails to understand the world of children. To see boys and girls as occupying two distinct and separate worlds is to lose out on the complex nature of gendered relationships. His findings reveal that boys and girls occupy two complementary cultures occupying one school space. Often boys and girls preferred their same sex groups but there were occasions when boys and girls did mix and did enjoy the relationships that they formed.

Boys did see girls as different but not as oppositional (Swain, 2005). They showed a lack of interest in girls. He does indicate, however that, boys and girls continually police the world occupied by boys with boys being at risk if they associated too closely with girls. It was easier for girls to cross the gender divide. This new understanding, that boys and girls are not necessarily in opposition to each other, enables fresh insight into thinking about gender that could work towards gender equality. Girls were able at times to dominate and exert power over boys especially when it came to speaking about the physical appearance of boys. Boys felt that negative comments about their physical appearance impacted on their sense of self. Thus Swain alludes to the knowledge that gender is not simplistic. Girls and boys occupy positions of power at various times and in various contexts.

The study by Reay (2001) differs from the two above in that she focused on understanding femininities in the primary school classes. As in the case of Swain (2005), Reay is of the opinion that gender must be understood relationally. Her participants were all middle class children from the London area. Whilst a variety of masculinities and femininities exist, she found that the choice of which variant to select is limited. Class, ethnicity and sexually all impacted and influenced the choices children could make. She concluded that the girls in her study found it difficult to position themselves powerfully

in relation to boys. They did not have the necessary repertoire to deal successfully with the boys in their everyday connections. Transgressive discourses and femininities that were considered abnormal tended to afford girls some power, and they could when they took on these subjectivities, dominate over boys. Relationships between boys and girls were constantly constituted and re-constituted. Both boys and girls believe that being a male was preferable to being a girl. Thus whilst girls may challenge and take on identities like the tomboy, they were rarely successful in challenging the dominant versions of masculinity. Because of their preference for things that were masculine, such as being able to play sport, it had the effect of making masculinity all the more powerful. For her, the gender relations worked against the promotion of gender equality.

The findings from Francis's study in 1997 on how gender oppression or discrimination is practiced and understood in the primary school are in keeping with the understanding by Reay (2001) that gender is understood along the lines of gender as difference. Francis' (1997) study was conducted at three junior primary schools in the United Kingdom, and she concludes that children did understand gender inequality. For her, this gender inequality or gender discrimination was as a result of an over reliance on gender categories. These understandings by the children served to reinforce sexism with the girls gaining very little in terms of power in everyday situations.

The theoretical understandings that are revealed in post structuralist theory as well as the empirical studies have relevance for my research. Understanding how the children I wanted to research, experience their gender in every day social inter relations was imperative. The crucial tenets of post structuralism, that is, power, subjectivity, discourse and meaning allowed one to make sense of the data that was collected. These understandings enabled me as researcher to be reflective about the issue of gender equality within cross gender friendship groups. In the following chapter, I present the research methodology and design of the study I undertook. The data collection tools used were used to facilitate insight into and provide answer to the following research questions:

- How do children understand gender equality within the discourses of cross gender friendship groups?
- How did they take up their positions within the discourses of friendships?
- How did they resist this positioning?
- What impact did this understanding of gender equality and positioning within friendship groups have on the formation of their subjectivities?

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Introduction

My study aimed to explore how children understood gender equality within cross gender friendships. This study included children who indicated that they had cross gender friendships. Understanding the social dynamics of these groups, particularly in relation to the discourses that are revealed within these cross gender friendship groups would help to lend insight into how they see themselves as gendered beings. Resonating with work done by Keddie (2004); Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Martino (1999), this research highlights the impact that friendships or peer groups have on the formation and regulation of gender identity or gender subjectivity. In this chapter, I present and explain the methodological processes I chose in order to generate and analyse data. A post structuralist orientation necessitated the use of qualitative methodology and discourse analysis. The theory of post structuralism with its emphasis on discourse, power and subjectivity are central tenets in my study and has been explained in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I present the data collection techniques and procedures and provide reasons for the choices I have made. Data collection techniques included focus group interviews and individual interviews using scenarios, which were aimed at stimulating responses from children about how they understood themselves and each other as part of a particular gender. Literature relevant to each method is also discussed to substantiate and validate the choices I have made. I also reflect on the effectiveness of the different research techniques.

I have employed a qualitative approach with the understanding that this would be most appropriate in explaining people in a social world. It is an approach that recognises that “life is not a dress rehearsal, it is the real thing” (Sherman and Webb, 1988:4).

Qualitative research is characterized by the following:

- that human behaviour must be seen within a particular context
- that contexts must to be explored in a naturalist setting

- the focus is on the perspectives given by those being researched by giving them ‘voice.’

Much debate surrounds the use of qualitative research. Positivists, for example, question research that falls into this qualitative paradigm citing weakness in reliability, validity and objectivity. True research for positivists is based on the “objective, value free, generalizable and replicable” (Wellington, 2000:23). But, as Kvale (1996:239) has indicated in a post modern world “objective reality has dissolved,” and that a positivist understanding is a “caricature of reality” (Wellington: 2000:17).

As indicated before, my approach is post structuralist in nature. This means that I have to recognize that I as researcher stand as part of the world in which I intend researching. This means that as a researcher one has to become aware reflectively of our own practices of research, recognizing if and when they become a part of perpetuating the dominant discourse and oppression. Thus research is, as Usher and Edwards (1994:153), indicate “more than just finding out about a pre-existing world.” In order to become aware reflectively of how power operates through discourse and in social relationships means having to move beyond just the personal. One has to focus on broader patterns of how power impacts on these relationships and our own use of power. Making readers aware of my subjectivity within this research process is to acknowledge that my values and my own personal power cannot be separated from the research process. It is possible that readers may find validity in my understanding, for as a researcher, I am involved in the creation of a particular knowledge. I do not seek to research a scientific truth but rather my undertaking is to understand meaning in a social world and within a specific historical and cultural context. In doing so, I acknowledge that a mixture of historical and cultural influences shape all knowledge. Post structuralist feminists recognize that one must be self reflective and accountable for one’s own interpretations, acknowledging always the power implication in the research process.

### **3.2. Setting the context**

Data collection took place over a period of about 6 months. The children who participated in the study were drawn from the school at where I am presently an educator.

Their ages ranged from 11-14 years. The school is located in the inner city with a population of about 1200 primary school pupils. 28 children from grade 7 voluntarily participated in the study. 15 girls and 13 boys participated in the study. A case study approach allows for the uniqueness of my 'case' (a group of 28 learners) to be seen, and also to understand my subjective experience of this case. Case studies are not considered to be generalizable because of their extreme contextuality. However, the specificity of a case study offers a "tacit knowledge of human situations central in establishing the basis for naturalist generalization" (Keddie, 2004:37). The rationale behind my choice of school and in particular of Grade 7 children was manifold. Firstly, I am a Grade 7 educator at this particular school and thus access to the children was unproblematic. Secondly, I chose these children because they are I believe at a crucial stage of development. It is at this stage that their subjectivities or ways of seeing the world and themselves are formed and re-formed. Understanding how these children negotiate gender relationships is important for the study. Finally, I needed to examine the impact, if any, of Outcomes Based Education with its emphasis on gender equality, on the children who had passed through the entire primary school phase with this methodology. Thus, findings of this research are expected to influence my future action in relation to the children who would be passing through the doors of my classroom. Findings revealed here would enable me as a social justice educator and agent of change to begin to work towards gender equality.

### **3.3. Negotiating the Research Relationship**

Before the entire process could start, I first explained to children what and why I wished to research them. I asked for volunteers to participate in the study. Permission to engage in this study at the school was obtained from the principal and governing body. I informed them of the nature of my research, and asked for their permission to conduct research with the pupils and within this particular school context (See Appendix 1). Children who had volunteered to be part of my study were then given letters to parents or guardians seeking their consent (See appendix 2). I gave children assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, although some children did indicate that they thought it was 'cool' for their names and ideas to appear in a 'book.'

### 3.4. Ethical Considerations

These ethical considerations stem from feminist understandings about research. Feminists challenge the positivist understandings that lay claim to validity, truth and objectivity and research that must for them include a separation between the researcher and participant (Burr, 1995). Such a view is based on the understanding that the researchers are free of any social, cultural, emotional, historical contexts. Feminists do not see this dichotomy between researcher/objectivity, and researcher/subjectivity as oppositional to each other. This means that a feminist researcher must develop an empathy with participants free from exploitation. This involves mutual respect, the involvement of all in the evaluation, and being open and honest. Whilst this is not unproblematic, we need to develop positive relationships with participants if we wish to interpret what is important in their daily lives. For feminists, it is this understanding which makes the research process valid (Davies, 2003).

Being their educator was helpful. I had built up a relationship that was based on trust and non-judgement. This proved vital for it helped in the children being open in discussion and enabled me to meet the criteria proposed by feminist researchers. The understanding of the extent to which educators have the ability to influence students' responses was uppermost in my mind. This meant constant self-reflection on my role as educator and my role as researcher. To some extent, my understanding of the world may have influenced them. Whilst children might feel more comfortable with and trust a researcher whom they know, with controversial and intimate responses, there could also be a tendency for them to produce specific responses because they may be *au faire* with what the researcher expects and wants them to speak about. Despite this, there does appear to be certain benefits involved in the researcher being acquainted with the children in terms of their feelings of comfort and honesty and openness to express their thoughts and opinions without the fear of being judged or the fear of negative repercussions. I did make the point of telling children that this research in no way impacted on the curriculum of the school as it was not for assessment purposes.

### 3.5. Reliability

I was especially aware of the importance of reliability (the extent to which the findings are replicable) and validity (the credibility of the results). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) indicate that naturalist data collection implies that people's understandings of their world is not static or stable and is ever changing. It was not possible for me to ensure internal reliability because of the time and cost factor required in employing other researchers or validating findings with other educators in the school. However, knowing that reality and knowledge are not stable, presents the possibility that the same results yielded could not be replicated in other studies. Given my own subjectivity and understandings of the social world, this seems highly unlikely. Furthermore, Wellington (2000:99) makes the point that an "instance is likely to be as typical and as atypical as any other." However, to ensure credibility, I have provided rich, detailed descriptions of methods and procedures and my own reflexive understandings throughout the research process.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) suggest that a researcher can use the following strategies to increase validity. Triangulation is one of them. Wellington (2000) and Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) state that there are four types of triangulation viz: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation

I have used methodological triangulation by using more than one method of obtaining information. Wellington (2000) also explains that another way to achieve triangulation is by checking with participants if what was interpreted, written or verbalized accurately reflects their own views, attitudes and perceptions. Miles and Huberman (1984) and Silverman (1993) indicate that an explicit description of the context, methodology and data analysis could ensure validity and transferability. Because of the emphasis in post structuralism, on the use of open-ended qualitative tools, and the emphasis on the collection of data within a context with very little disruption to the natural setting, data collected attempted to satisfy these requirements. What follows is a description of the various data collection methods I employed, and the time frame for each data collection activity.

### **3.6. Data Collection Process**

#### *3.6.1. Focus group interviews*

Focus group interviews are widely used in research and are thought of as an effective method of gauging responses. Researchers are able to probe participant's thoughts, feelings, prejudices or values (Wellington, 2000). There is no search for truth because, as post structuralists indicate, multiple truths exist in social situations (Weedon, 1987). Wellington (2000) is of the view that the interview process is one that allows a person 'voice,' and thus has the function of empowering people because they are able to express themselves for themselves. This is, however, with the proviso that the researcher/researched dichotomy is non-exploitative. The ability to be able to speak for oneself is empowering in that one's own view is heard. Semi-structured focus group interviews enable a researcher to ask open-ended questions and give some sort of structure to the process, but also allow for flexibility. These are important considerations to ensure the smooth flow of ideas and opinions in the focus group (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). The establishment of rapport is extremely important in the interview process. Focus group interviews allow members of the group to feel safe and at ease to interact with people with whom they are familiar. Focus groups allow discussions to flow freely with ideas from one person being able to spark off ideas from another participant (ibid). An advantage of using the focus group was that deeper, more insightful understandings could be realized. Using focus groups enabled me to ask for clarification and also allowed me to ask probing questions. A danger, however, is that a child could dominate the interview. I attempted to circumvent this by asking all children for their views.

These focus group interviews were semi-structured and conducted in small groups ranging from one to six children per group. (See appendix 3) Interviews were conducted in August and September 2004. Most interviews were approximately 40 minutes long depending on the number of children per group. Children formed their groups. The only proviso was that the groups that they formed had to have members who they regarded as good or close friends. This is because "peer networks are tightly organized in the adolescent years, it is important to the success of the focus group to gather informants

together who share the same friendship circles” (Proweller, 1998 cited in Allard, 2002:195). Because of the sensitive nature of the information, I indicated to children that they had the autonomy to withdraw from the project at any point in time. They were also informed that they could refuse to answer particular questions if they chose not to. I did emphasize the need for them to be as open and honest as possible in order for me to gain ‘genuine’ insight into their perceptions and understandings.

I did an initial interview with children of one group to pilot the questions. Thereafter, questions were modified, rephrased and questions were either added on or left out. These focus group interviews were conducted after school hours. At times, interviews took longer than expected and had to be conducted over a few days. This was because children were involved in sports training or drama rehearsals and arrived late for the interviews or had to leave early. This interruption in the interview process may have impacted on the data collection. Two children had to be interviewed individually, that is, without the members of their group because of their involvement in extra-mural activities. All interviews were recorded on audio cassette. Children did initially feel awkward being audio-taped.

Critics of the interview approach indicated that any data collected through this process “involves a complex set of social relations that can contaminate data and that the social dynamic involved may to some extent distort the information supplied” (Verma and Mallick, 1999:128). Care must be taken to ensure reliability and validity. Verma et al (ibid) goes on to indicate that the interview as a research technique allows one to explore people’s feelings and experiences and attitudes like no other investigative technique.

Questions asked in the focus group were on:

- a. What activities they did with each other in and out of school
- b. Leaderships issues within the group
- c. Decision making within the group
- d. Children’s perspectives on whether school practices enabled or constrained the formation of cross gender friendships

Each focus group interview was then transcribed. Following this, transcripts were presented to children to validate their authenticity. Further, they were asked to clarify aspects that may have seemed vague or had gotten lost because of children speaking on top of each other. The research questions underpinning this analysis were:

- A. What are the gender discourses evident in cross gender relationships?
- B. How do children position themselves within these friendship group discourses?
- C. How do they resist this positioning?
- D. What do these discourses reveal about how they construct their identities or subjectivities?

### *3.6.2. Individual interviews using situated scenarios*

I chose vignettes or situated scenarios as a way of better understanding children's perceptions of cross gender friendships. Barter and Renold (1999:3) defines vignettes or scenarios as "stories about individuals, situations and structure which can make reference to important points in the study of perception belief and attitudes." Following the interviews, I wanted to gain greater insight into the children's verbalizations about how they understood themselves as gendered beings but to do so in a non-threatening manner. It is a method used in qualitative research to level the power relations that exist between researcher and participant and educator or pupil. Thus situated scenarios can be used in a manner that would allow participants to define the parameters for themselves (Renold, 2002). Participants can make their own determinations about when they wish to reveal their own personal experiences to lend clarity to otherwise abstract responses. Situated scenarios have been used in research for three main reasons. Firstly, it allows actions in contexts to be explored. Secondly, they are used to clarify people's judgements. Thirdly, to provide less personal, and therefore, less threatening ways of exploring sensitive topics (Barter and Renold, 1999).

Barter and Renold (1999) and Wade (2004) also used scenarios as a multi-method approach. These researchers selected stories or scenarios following interviews they had done with participants. Barter and Renold (1999) used scenarios that covered aspects that were to some extent disclosed in the interview process. I used scenarios as a way to

ensure reliability and validity in the data process. In this way, a comparison could be made between responses given in the focus group interviews with responses given by children from the scenarios.

During the month of October 2004 I wrote up four scenarios (Refer to appendix 4 and below). These scenarios were formulated after identifying common discourses and themes arising out of the focus group interviews. Scenarios that were designed focused on attempting to gain a deeper understanding of children's perceptions about femininity and masculinity, sexuality, compulsory heterosexuality, and how learners are policed or under constant surveillance to ensure normality.

The research question underpinning the scenarios was:

How do children understand gender equality within cross gender friendships?

These scenarios were then presented to children in November for response in individual interviews. Given the proximity of the final examinations, I gave children the option of either being interviewed or they could choose to write their responses to the questions. Most of them (20 children) opted to write their responses to the questions citing their inability to stay in after school because of their need to prepare for the examination. In all, I conducted six individual interviews with children to gain insight into their understandings of the scenarios. These six children agreed to stay in after school and to come in on a Saturday. The rest of the children felt that this time should be spent studying for the final examinations. Data from two participants could not be obtained. Both children were absent, one because of the death of a family member and the other as a result of prolonged illness.

## **TABLE ONE: SITUATED SCENARIOS**

### **SCENARIO ONE:**

Janet is a very pretty and intelligent girl. She wears the latest fashion and her hair is always neatly styled. She is extremely popular with the boys. She has had many boyfriends in the past few months. Whenever you see her she is always surrounded by boys, who keep her entertained and buy her sweets and chocolates. The girls do not like her very much. They think she is a 'bitch' because she is always with the boys. One of the girls, Pam says, "That one thinks she is too clever because she comes out first and the teacher thinks she is so perfect but I know better. I don't trust her and I even told my boyfriend not to hang out with her because she steals boyfriends." Vusi, one of the boys standing nearby overhears and he says, "Me too. She thinks that she is too hot. She said that she doesn't like me. The other boys can hold her hands or touch her face, but the other day I touched her bottom and she swore me. I don't know why she got so angry because the boys are always touching her, so what difference does it make? I told all my friends about her."

1. What do you think of Janet and her behaviour?
2. Do you think it is right for the girls and boys to call her a bitch? Why?
3. Is Pam justified in thinking that Janet is not to be trusted? Why?
4. What is your opinion of Vusi?
5. Do you think Vusi reacted correctly? Why?
6. Do you think the children in the school are justified in thinking these things about Janet?

### **SCENARIO TWO:**

Bob is a thin, slightly built boy. He likes to do 'girls' things instead of the things boys are supposed to do. He likes making dresses, playing with dolls, cooking, making tea, ironing and cleaning the room after people have made a mess. This distresses his father who begs him to do boys things instead. "Bob don't be such a moffie, go out and play with the boys. Play some soccer, cricket, any kind of game with the boys." But Bob says no he does not like games as he finds them tiring and too rough. He prefers being with the girls. A lot of boys and girls give him a really hard time and write on the school toilet that "Bob is a moffie," and "Bob, behave like a man!"

1. Why do you think Bob's father is so upset?
2. Do you think Bob behaves the way boys are supposed to behave? Why?
3. Why do you think the girls and boys give him a rough time?
4. What could the boys do to make him behave like a man?
5. What are some of the games you think Bob should play?

### **SCENARIO THREE**

Tessa and Kate are real go-getters. They do things that are different. You will find them climbing trees, playing soccer etc. But they also like wearing make-up, going shopping, playing netball etc. They are the ones who do things like follow the boys around giving them a score out of ten for being attractive or cute. They are also very strong willed and can also be aggressive. Recently, they got angry with a boy for showing off and irritating them. They grabbed him, swore him and then stuck his head under the tap.

1. What is your opinion of Tessa and Kate?
2. Is it okay for them to behave in this manner? Why?

### **SCENARIO FOUR**

Clint is an intelligent and popular boy. He is well liked by all the pupils. The girls especially find him attractive and charming. The boys like him because he takes part in all the codes of sport done at the school e.g. cricket, swimming, soccer and rugby. He is a natural born leader. One day, Clint is fooling around on the grounds with his friends. They are playing a game of soccer. The ball hits one of the boys called Sam. Sam is bleeding all over and is very angry and embarrassed because all the children are laughing at him. He confronts Clint. Clint looks around and sees all the girls and boys watching and waiting to see how he is going to react. He punches and kicks Sam until Sam is pulled away. The next day everyone was talking about how Clint hit Sam. Some children thought it was cool and that Clint was 'the man.' The girls thought that it is good to have a boyfriend like Clint because he could always protect them. Sam confronted Clint again and Clint hit him again. He felt that he had to do this or Sam would keep on coming and trying him again and again and again.

1. Why do you think Clint is described as a natural born leader?
2. Why do you think Clint hit Sam?
3. Was it right for him to do so? Why?
4. Do you think that Clint is 'the man?' Why?
5. Do you think Sam was looking for a hiding? Why?
6. How do you think boys and girls on the ground would have reacted if Clint had not hit Sam? Why?
7. If you were a girl would you like to have Clint as your boyfriend? Why?

Children were introduced to the idea of scenarios in the Life Orientation learning area. Lessons conducted throughout the year involved the use of scenarios on aspects that

formed part of the Life Orientation Learning Programme. Scenarios dealt with aspects that occurred in reality, for example, scenarios that dealt with values or HIV/AIDS. Thus, the use of scenarios was a familiar concept to children and allowed me to gain greater insight into attitudes, perceptions and understandings. This is in keeping with Barter and Renold (1999) who state that stories must be real and believable. Knowing that scenarios are based on events or people in real life helps bring in reality for children.

There are, however, methodological concerns with using this approach. Faia (1979) has stated that the indeterminate or vague relationship between belief and actions are the biggest dangers and concerns in using this technique in isolation. Barter and Renold (1999) and Faia (1979) indicate that using scenarios as part of a multi method approach may help to show linkages between how one responds or believes, and how one acts in everyday situations. Using situated scenarios as one data collection technique as well as using it to validate previous data collection was one of the ways in which I attempted to respond to these methodological concerns

As with the focus group interviews, after transcribing responses, I went back to children for points of clarity and to check for authenticity. This interactive process enables respondents to also have voice and to take ownership of the research process. I then wrote down children's responses to questions or points of clarification.

This chapter explained the data collection techniques used that enabled me as the researcher to provide insight into the research questions in the study. The next chapter presents the data findings as well as discussion of the findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES - UNDERSTANDING GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN CROSS GENDER FRIENDSHIP GROUPS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter attempted to unravel the data collected in the research. Because of the nature and intensity of data collected, I have divided the analyses into two levels. In this chapter, I attempt to gain insight into how the data illuminates the first critical question that underpins the study viz:

How children understand gender equality within their cross gender friendships.

In attempting to analyse and provide possible explanations to this question, I draw information from the responses to the situated scenarios and the focus group interviews. This first level of data analysis attempts to understand the concept of gender equality. I examine the extent to which the children in the study see each other as equals, and the manner in which they use their gendered positions to disempower and marginalize members on the basis of sex. The second level of data analysis attempts to examine dominant discourses that emerge within their cross gender friendships. This second level of analysis is dealt with in chapter 5.

### **4.2. The Nature of Cross Gender Friendships**

The initial questions in the focus group interview were used to gain deeper insight into how children, firstly, understood friendships, and secondly, how they constructed their understandings of cross gender friendships in relation to the same sex friendship groups. Analysis of data shows that whilst children indicated that they did have cross gender friendships the majority of them preferred the same sex friendship groups. They felt more at ease with members of the same sex when it came to personal matters. They tended for the most part to see each other as opposites and their understandings tended to work against gender equality.

#### 4.3. On the Importance of Friends

The initial questions dealing with friendship were analysed. These questions dealt with issues around the importance of friendship as well as the qualities they expected of a friend. The following themes were revealed in establishing why friends were important. Firstly, friends are those you can trust, and secondly, friends are supportive and loyal. Following Allard and Yates (2001), I too sought to understand how friendship was constructed and to analyse if cross-gender friendship was constructed in the same vein as same sex friendship.

Trust seemed to be an important component of friendship. More often trust revolved around keeping secrets. For the children in the study, trust was of extreme importance and formed the building blocks of a strong friendship. If children failed to keep secrets and instead revealed them to others, then this was a reason cited to exclude a relationship with someone who did that.

*Samantha: A friend is a person who you tell your secrets and everything else you feel.*

*Clinton: A person that you tell your secrets to. Something that you can't tell to someone that you don't trust and who spreads the word around especially things you don't want other to know.*

*Natalie: A friend is someone you can rely on, someone you trust.*

*Zoe: ...You share secrets together, someone you trust and who is always there for you*

*Clinton: I can .. well.. keep secrets in with them and they also confide secrets with me. Ja that's what I call a friend.'*

Being able to be supportive was also another vital characteristic of a good friend.

Children indicated that a supportive friend was someone that they knew they could rely on to help them when they were in trouble or when problems arose. They could also rely on them to offer sound advice that would benefit them in attempting to solve these problems.

*Samantha: Someone who shares your problems, the good and bad things that happen to you.*

*Lionel: A friend is someone you can rely on in the good times and the bad times. They will help you when things go wrong - say at home.*

Examination of this data reveals that friendship is a vital part of the adolescent life and reiterates findings from previous research (Kenway et al, 1998; Dolich, 2004). Most children in my study revealed that to a large extent friendships in school were different to friendship at home. Many of them could not have the same friendships in and out of school because of geographical location. Friendships at school took on a particular form

*Kathy: Friends outside (of school) are much better. Like if they are in the same school you like too close to them and you will get tired of them.*

*Natalie: The friends we have in school and the friends we have outside, we treat them differently.*

These revelations are contrary to studies, which reveal that friendship patterns especially for girls are developed around intimacy. It is obvious that both girls and boys have friendships at school and home which serve different purposes. Friendships at school tended to be conformist. They conformed to school expectations of how friendship should be. Friendship at school was stable and bound up with intimacy and caring. Further, it reveals that sometimes the need for intimacy was not important. In fact, intimacy was seen as something to avoid because you will *grow tired of them*. These narratives are in contrast to Gilligan's (1982) understanding, or public discourses, around traditional understandings of girls and boys friendships based on intimacy. The two girls above seem to be less concerned with being intimate or traditional, and instead focused on the kinds of friendships they wanted – friendship that was to some extent free of 'traditional' intimacy so prevalent in some studies.

#### 4.4. Constructions of Friendships

##### 4.4.1. Introduction

When one examines more closely the vagaries of friendship, the importance of friendship between and amongst the children in the research is clear. Friendship was essential to their lives. It gave them a sense of belonging. There have been many research studies, which have documented the importance of friendship amongst children (Adler et al, 1992; Dolich, 2004; McLeod, 1998). They reveal that friendship took on specific gendered patterns with girls opting for more intimate sharing friendships whilst boys tended to focus on the sharing of activities. These patterns of understanding are evident in my research as well. In examining the extent of their cross gender relationships, it also becomes obvious that same sex relationships gave children more of a sense of comfort. Girls often indicated that they preferred relationships with girls more than with boys. On the other hand, there were girls who indicated that the relationships that they had with the opposite sex provided them with something different. The extent to which their cross gender relationships follows psychological understandings of normative development are unclear. However, to merely dismiss this relationship as normative development, is also I believe, a failure to understand the complexities of the gendered nature of relationships and the inherent power dynamics.

Here, I analysed cross gender friendship focusing specifically on whom, boys and girls go to for advice and the kinds of issues they speak about. At the beginning of this research, my focus was to see whether after 11 years of democracy and the implementation of a new curriculum, patterns of gendered friendship persist, how gender equality is understood within this schooling context and the impact discourses have on the subject positioning of girls and boys.

##### 4.4.2. *Girls on same sex friendships*

In attempting to analyse girls' relationships with each other, two understandings are revealed. Firstly, girls' friendships with each other are related to intimacy, and, secondly, that relationships with girls are also fraught with tensions.

Much of the discussion about why friendship with the same sex is beneficial is because girls found that they could speak about *personal stuff* with and to each other. This *stuff* related mostly to intimate bodily functions, for example, periods, pimples etc, which they felt could only be discussed amongst girls.

*Being friends with girl is that ... easier. When you get your periods it is easier to tell a girl than tell a boy (Zoe).*

Girls too found that they shared the same understanding when it came to *girlie girl stuff* and spoke about things like fashion and shoes or movies, and how to be a 'proper girl.' Their understanding of the 'proper girl' tended to be very traditional. Thus friendship with girls seemed to be based on more positive aspects of helping one deal with the intimate aspects of life. Further, girls found their relationships tended to be around caring and helping. These findings are in keeping with the understandings of Dolich (2004); Thorne (1993) and Gilligan (1982). The girls alluded to the idea that friendships with the same sex helped them because they were able to speak about relationships. Much of this revolved around their need to speak about 'boys they liked,' or had a 'crush' on,

*We talk about boys in the school we have a crush on. (Zoe)*

*We can talk about everything and anything like clothes, movies etc(Samantha)*

Whilst, it does reveal that friendships between and amongst girls is positive, it also reveals that girls in the study have a traditional understanding of what it means to be a girl. Girls tend to follow the stereotypical or classical understandings that girls are bound up with the need to talk about fashion and clothes, and with helping each other deal with aspects closely linked to intimacy. Further, it reveals that they see themselves as a distinct gender category - different and distinct from boys. These findings echo similar understandings by Kenway et al (1994) and Flax (1995) of the effects of gender being constructed as 'difference.' This binary opposition has the effect then of structuring gender relationships based on this distinct difference. This understanding of gender as

different and distinct categories assigns power differently, often with girls being seen negatively. Attempts by any girl to display behaviour or practices not within the category, would divide them and be a source of conflict for it would not be in keeping with their traditional understanding of the category of girl.

Friendship with girls was fraught with emotional tension, with three girls stating that their friendship with girls can be difficult. These tended to be issues surrounding gossip and the hurt that goes with it.

*The girls will eventually go and tell somebody else and it will go from ear to ear. (Kathy)*

*Other girls are jealous of me and they write bad things in the toilet about me (Penny).*

*Girls think they too mature (Sally).*

This contradictory vacillation from the understanding that girls help one through problems and troubles to the understanding that relations with girls is difficult suggests that attention needs to be focused also on the building of stronger relationships between and amongst girls. Further, this understanding of the girls as being gossipers reinforces the thought that girls can only gossip and that most of the gossip is trivial but has the ability or tendency to make conflict even bigger than necessary. To some extent this corroborates findings from Allard and Yates' (2001) study. In their study, same sex friendships tended to be far more harrowing than cross gender friendships. The authors see this as evidence to justify putting back initiatives that develop positive same sex friendships on the agenda of gender reform in Australia. My study, however, reveals that most girls find the same sex friendship more beneficial and preferred it, but it in no way detracts from the idea that same sex friendships were also traumatic. Gender reform policy makers in South Africa do need to focus on this, especially if this is the preferred choice of girls. Gender reformers would have to help girls find ways in which to develop more positive ways of interacting with each other.

#### *4.4.3. Boys on same sex friendships*

Central to boys' friendships with each other was the ability to talk about girls and sex.

Most girls and boys indicated that when it came to asking advice or when speaking about

interests they preferred their same sex friendship groups. More telling, however, is what it reveals about their cross gender groups. Boys did find that sometimes their relationships with each other was beneficial in the sense that they could talk to each other about personal issues such as sex and girlfriends.

*Collin: With Ridge and I, we can confide in more things. It is easier to confide with people of the same sex than people of the opposite sex.*

*Ridge: I think its better with boys. We boys we like homies and best friends.*

Ridge's use of the word 'homies' conjures up an image of a very tight knit family, very similar to that found in gangs. In fact the word 'homies' is a term used by gangsters in the movies. He uses this word to then signify the importance and distinction between same sex friendship and friendships he may have with girls. For him, friendship with his male friends takes on a completely different form – being much closer than anything girls could have. It reveals also that for him same sex friendships are more beneficial than the cross gender friendships.

The findings also reveal and it is in keeping with developmental psychologists view that boys' friendships are activity based (Dolich, 2004). Dolich (ibid) indicated that in primary school, children generally stick to the same sex friendship groups because these groups were based around shared interests and activities. Whilst the participants in my study indicated that they did have cross gender friendships, their same sex friendship groups tended to be close and were based around shared interests, attitudes and behaviour. Here their shared interests were sport and doing other activities like watching movies

*Clinton: We talk about sport. Boys keep you entertained because as boys we like talking about sport. We can get into a group and talk about sport or fighting or wrestling.*

*Brett: With the boys we can talk about sport.*

*Martin: We talk about soccer, wrestling and we go to watch movies.*

#### 4.4.4. Boys on cross gender friendship

Boys saw friendship with girls in somewhat contradictory ways. Firstly, boys believed that girls could give them good advice that would be helpful to them. Secondly, that girls were not trustworthy and could not be relied upon to keep their secrets.

Boys saw girls as being able to provide them with advice about girls. Girls, however, could help them only in certain ways and at certain times.

*Lionel: I ask them how to solve problems with other messes.... About how to solve problems we are having at home.*

*Ricky: You can talk to girls and girls will understand you. Not like boys – they just tell you what to do and they don't try to understand you.*

*Samuel: With my friends that are girls like Penny I only speak about sex.*

*Tom: The boys ..... We play together and play sports. With the girls we ask them advice from Penny. I say I like this girl. What can I do to show her I like her and Penny will tell me. .... I can speak about anything with the girls and boys. But sometimes I can tell the boys about what is happening at home but I can tell Penny and she doesn't judge me.*

*Brett: Right now. I like girls so I ask the girls for advice about how to ask the girls out...Yes that's what you ask the girls. Like what are the soft touching words to use to ask a girl out..*

*Martin: Girls ma'am, have a tender touch. You can tell them your secrets and you know you feel better. But some girls you can't tell them everything..*

*Clinton: Ma'am, I would rather go to the girls because girls, ma'am, are more intelligent than boys ma'am. I just feel if I go to a boy for advice I'm going to get the wrong advice.*

Boys felt that girls would be helpful to them when it came to advice about intimate boy/girl relationships. In this regard, boys asked girls advice about the 'proper' way to *ask girls out* or to help *organize* a girl for them. Most spoke here in particular ways about girls, believing that because girls have a *tender touch*, and girls know *the soft*

*touching words* that could be used in order to begin an intimate relationship. This was a reason to be friends with girls. The traditional understanding boys have about girls and the ways in which girls are is quite evident here. Further, it also reveals that relationships with girls are based along more positive lines with boys believing that girls are much better friends because they did not judge them. Girls could also make them feel better about intimate boy-girl relationships that were important in their lives, and that they could not get this from relationships they had with the boys. The relationship between boys and girls is based on unequal power relations, with boys benefiting more from the relationship than the girls do.

Boys understanding of the relationships with girls seems to focus on the advice girls can give them that would help them to understand the opposite sex better as well as that which could help them to gain access to girls. On the surface, this would be in keeping with the developmental view that cross gender friendships are “crucial at practicing behaviours essential for subsequent opposite sex relationships” (Dolich, 2004:2). Deeper delving, however, reveals that boys tend to reinforce the understanding that asking this sort of advice from boys is not possible, cementing and perpetuating the idea that intimate or emotional discussions are not concepts to be found in the realm of boys friendships. It is precisely this emotional ability, which is absent amongst boys and is to some extent mocked by them, that is needed from their relationships with the girls. Boys’ understandings of how girls are positioned along lines of intimacy, depth, caring and loving are known and have become self evident truths for them (Gilligan, 1982). It is this aspect that they expect in their relationships with girls and also determines the extent of the friendship between the sexes. This is further explained in this incident below in which Clinton’s multiple and contradictory voices is heard.

*Clinton : To the boys we only go and ask advice about girls but when you go and ask advice from the girls you must know that it is about approach and something very important. When you are asking the boys advice it won't be something that you will live with for the rest of your life. It will be about something stupid. Like girlfriends is not so*

*important so you can ask the boys about this because you are not going to spend the rest of your life with the girl.*

*.....No ma'am it is not difficult because sometimes you need the girls advice, you can't keep going to a boy. You will fail in life.*

For Clinton, girls are only useful to him in so far as they can provide him with things to make his life easier and more acceptable. Girls are not important as girlfriends but are important to him when it comes to them giving him advice that would benefit him. His display of macho behaviour typifies traditional masculine behaviour, and the subjection of girls is evident with girls merely being objects for his gratification and not important in his life.

Most boys in discussing friendships with the opposite sex indicated that girls could not be trusted with matters that are supposed to be confidential. They suggested that even whilst they might ask them for advice or they can learn from girls they would not trust them because girls have a tendency to gossip. These stereotypical understandings of girls indicate that friendships with the girls, is based primarily on the exploitation of girls for their own needs. The failure on the part of the boys to distance themselves from stereotypical perceptions prevents them from forming any real or close relationships with girls.

*Ridge: You tell a girl, she spread rumours about you that you do anything*

*Clinton: It is hard to tell something to a girl because they like passing it on and you can't exactly trust them to keep a secret but you like them as a friend*

*Lionel: I don't tell girls because in my mind I think girls are the worst start of gossip in the first place.*

#### *4.4.5. Girls on cross gender friendships*

Girls revealed that their friendships with boys were relaxing and more around being able to have fun and tell each other jokes and to laugh. This understanding confirms the findings that were revealed in the study by Allard and Yates (2001). In my study, their relationships were easy and fun-filled and less tension based. They could relax and have

fun, free from the emotional tension of *girls stuff*. *Girls stuff* for Nancy tended to be about boyfriends and for her constantly talking about a boys was frustrating, especially since it was not something she was presently interested in. Relationships with the boys centered on the girls asking boys advice about other boys as well as needing the boys' protection against other boys and girls.

*Natalie: The boys are like funner – more fun than the girls.*

*Nancy (agreeing) : Yes ma'am – they don't do girl's stuff*

*Mel: What is girls' stuff*

*Nancy: Like having a boyfriend and doing all those silly things.*

Some girls found talking to boys far more interesting than talking to girls because talking to girls meant speaking about *girlie, girl stuff*. For them, girls' talk focused around typically feminine things

*Natalie: If there is a new product or something like that*

*Nancy: Body lotion*

*Natalie: Its so boring*

*Alicia: It so boring. Ja, I feel girls' stuff is boring.*

Penny felt that some boys are helpful because they tell her what other children are saying about her

*Penny: Like Samuel and Rick they help me and tell me what other children talk about me  
Some of the other girls are jealous of me and they write bad things in the toilet about me.*

The contradictory positions of girls are obvious here. Whilst some girls may resist essential feminine behaviour and its associations, their relationships with the boys tend to be a typical feminine response - their need to be protected and defended by boys is in sharp contrast to their need to disassociate themselves from the 'girls stuff.' This is in keeping with Weedon's (1987) understanding that we sometimes take up contradictory subject positions depending on our access to power in a particular context. Here, Penny

reveals that she felt powerless against the children who wrote negative comments about her behaviour. She was able to negotiate herself more positively through her friends, Samuel and Rick against the children who viewed her negatively. She is able to feel better about herself knowing that she has friends who can protect her.

Conversations with boys tended to follow what boys wanted, and girls could not expect to talk about things they wanted to, and more often they could never ask boys for advice because boys did not have the ability to be serious.

*Samantha: We just talk as people. We just talk generally, not anything personal because boys don't like that.... Boys don't understand things that happen to girls. So you cant tell boys what's happening to you cos they don't understand and they not interested.*

*Mel: Why aren't they interested*

*Samantha: Cos boys are not so open and they not so understanding*

*Natalie: I will ask for advice from a girl because girls are much more intelligent than boys and boys never really take things seriously so how can you ask serious advice from them.*

*Samantha: Cant tell them you are having a problem at home or your health cos they don't like to hear your problems. When you talk to them they just want to hear nice things.*

*Penny You only talk about boys and the things they like.*

Relationships with boys could also be helpful in that the opposite sex can give a varied perspective when it came to sharing or solving problems. Girls felt that boys were different and it made their relationships with them enjoyable.

*Precious: Well you share and solve it together. So they can understand you from the opposite sex.*

*Natalie: Most of the girls I know like pink. It is so much more fun and relaxing. With girls you only get to do certain things like girls like to go shopping. I like to play soccer.*

*Sally : The difference is we are made differently... They can help me with a boy problem.*

Natalie's railing against what she regards as *girlie girl stuff* can be viewed as a rejection of traditional notions of femininity. She states that she hates pink and shopping – all the things she associates with femininity and with it the limitations that these values entail. However, her preference to playing soccer points to her contradictory gender positioning. In order for her to show her rejection of femininity, she has to assume a masculine preference for soccer. Her understanding is that a traditional masculine sport like soccer is better and it is thus preferable to be male. This understanding concurs with that of Reay (2001) in her study around the construction of femininity. Her findings revealed that femininity for girls who regard themselves as tomboys is beneficial to the construction of masculinity as being more powerful because girls themselves believe that being a boy is preferable.

#### 4.4.6. Summary

At the outset, I indicated that this chapter sought to understand how children understood gender equality within cross gender friendships. Findings reveal that cross gender relationships seem to be following a developmental path. Boys and girls tended to develop as people of a specific gender category and relationships tended to serve the function for future intimate cross-gender relationships.

Friendships with each other were formed for particular reasons or benefits. Firstly, girls indicated that a relationship with boys was beneficial in that it gave them time out from their relationships with the girls. During this time out period, girls could speak about trivial things that had no bearing on their lives, and was not really important but in the end served the interests of the boys quite well. Further, it revealed too that girls found their relationships with members of the same sex were more rewarding. Even though it was tension filled at times, they still found their friendships beneficial because they were able to speak to each other about various topics. They also found it easier being with members of the same sex and thus preferred the same sex friendship.

Secondly, boys formed their relationships with the girls for a specific purpose, that is, to gain insight from girls on how to succeed later on with girls. Their own interests were seen as paramount and were placed first over building sound, equally based relationships free from the exploitation that seemed to underpin much of their interactions. They were able to learn about the opposite sex and speak about their emotional needs safely and without fear of reprisal. They could not reveal their emotional vulnerability to the boys because being emotional was not an acceptable form of behaviour within their friendships. This to some extent cemented unequal power relationships and reinforced stereotypical understanding of girls and boys' friendships, and attitudes and behaviours with girls seemingly being the losers in the game. Not only do girls lose out in building better relationships with each other, they are exploited by boys for their knowledge (which is not valued) for the better positioning of boys. Boys felt that their friendships with each other were more fun and relaxing, and centered around traditional perceptions of masculine activities like sport.

Thirdly, boys and girls are learning what it is like to be future males and females with the accompanied rules of regulation, roles etc and are doing 'their identity work' (Adler et al, 1992:169), within these cross gender friendship groups. Clearly, then the roles that they are learning are not based on equality. As indicated previously, often girls tended to lose out on gaining any positions of power, and instead deferred to males within their friendship groups.

Finally, MacLeod (1998:2) indicates, "capacities for friendship and intimacy operate discursively as keep markers of gender identity and differences." This perception of difference seems to be in keeping with findings in my study. Female's friendships involve care, intimacy, concern, emotions and that male friendship focuses on autonomy, detachment, rationality and emotional awkwardness (Gilligan, 1982). However, whilst this may be true, it is also evident in my study that even though boys displayed emotional detachment, there existed a need for intimacy. This intimacy is expressed, albeit it awkwardly, in certain contexts and with certain people that they trust completely.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) in their study indicate that boys' inability to resist dominant hegemonic masculinity would actually leave boys "lonely and emotionally bankrupt and violent" (Jones, 2000:3). This, I believe needs to be highlighted in South Africa. Boys, in my study, revealed their need to be able to talk and express themselves openly but ways in which to do this has to be taught to them in order for them to challenge dominant discourses. Gearing programmes at this stage of development would prove important as many subjectivities are formed and internalized. Being able to understand oneself and ones' place in the world is important.

#### **4.5. Interrogating Gender Equality**

##### **4.5.1. Introduction**

The scenarios (see Appendix 4) aimed to provide an in-depth insight into the complexities and contradictions that surround the issue of gender equality. Findings here reveal that unequal power relationships are cemented rather than challenged. Four scenarios were given to children to respond to. These scenarios dealt with issues such as femininity, masculinity, surveillance and contradictory subjectivity that arose out of the focus group interviews. By gender equality, I mean whether children see each other as inferior or superior because they belong to a particular sex. The ways in which they interact with each other as well as members of the opposite sex would lend insight into whether they view one another as equals. I also look into the various ways in which masculinities and femininities are spoken about that may depict and point to gender inequality or discrimination. Findings here reveal that within this context gender inequality must be analysed against an excess of gender category maintenance. This is in keeping with findings from Davies (2003) and Francis (1997). These researchers reveal that because children adhered to the rules and regulations evident in the discourses surrounding masculinity and femininity, they could not see each other as equals. Participants in their studies were unable to make sense of their lives without referring to expected forms of behaviour prevalent in the category of male and female.

#### 4.5.2. Negotiating gendered ways.

Within the discourse of traditional femininity and traditional masculinity, boys and girls are expected to behave in particular gendered ways in keeping with their particular gender category. Girls are positioned or constituted in various ways with individuals tending to negotiate, contest and resist subject positioning or ways of being. The behaviour of the girls is regulated, constrained and controlled whereas the behaviour of boys is tolerated or excused. Clark and Page (2004) and Francis (1997) noted that the behaviour of the two sexes is not equally valued. Often the behaviour of girls is seen negatively.

This understanding was evident in my study of children's responses and opinions of the behaviour of Janet, Kate and Tessa in the situated scenarios. 82% of girls and boys felt that Janet, Kate and Tessa's behaviour was incorrect and that they were not behaving the way normal, traditional, acceptable girls would behave. Tessa and Kate's behaviour was seen as totally unacceptable and likened to that of boys and even animals. The children's traditional understanding of femininity and masculinity set out the norms or criteria against which they viewed their friends. For them the idea that girls could climb trees, hit boys and flirt outrageously was very unlike female behaviour. Such behaviour was regarded as *Not decent and aggressive and they are not real girls.*

*They are wild. They are acting wild. They are acting like dogs who bark at everybody (Lionel)*

*They are wild. Only animals behave this way. (Brett)*

*They are behaving like boys – too terrible. (Victor)*

In my study, the ability of girls to negotiate themselves within intimate relationships was heavily constrained. Only certain behaviour was acceptable. The 'normal' behaviour means that girls who are mostly friends with boys are seen as deviant and abnormal. Their behaviour was therefore closely monitored and regulated. Janet's behaviour was viewed more seriously. This is because her sexuality was closely linked to her identity as a female. For many in the study, Janet's identity and sexuality are seen as essential to

each other. Thus, the consequences for Janet were far more intense and vicious. Girls, as in the case of Janet, would find themselves alienated and marginalized. 76% of children indicated too that being referred to as a 'bitch' was perfectly acceptable because her behaviour is abnormal and warrants being labeled a 'bitch.' Labeling is a disciplinary technique used to ensure the correct behaviour, but is also a resource used by both girls and boys to promote gender inequality and discrimination. Labeling to ensure the correct behaviour was also evident in the research by Hearn and Morgan (1995); Martino (1999) and Mac an Ghail (1995) in their studies into the construction of masculinity amongst boys in secondary schools. Girls who display the incorrect behaviour would, therefore, find that they have been positioned as powerless because they have not learned the rules of regulation governing their gender category. It would mean then, that, they would find themselves in a double bind. This understanding of girls being in a double bind is echoed in studies by Ryan (1997) and Lees (1993). Hanging around with boys would earn Janet and girls similar to Janet the reputation of being a 'bitch' but allowing boys to touch her may also mean that boys would call her a 'bitch.' Therefore, any attempt by Janet to negotiate herself with boys and girls would be unsuccessful and traumatic.

*Nancy: I think that Janet's behaviour is totally unacceptable. She can't be surrounded by them all the time. I find that very unattractive and the boys are gonna find her a cheap girl.*

*Brett: Girls mustn't play with the boys. Girls have knowledge. They know everything about girls – how they must keep themselves*

*Natalie: I'd say Janet is very controlling and manipulative. A normal girl doesn't act like that.*

There were repercussions for Kate and Tessa as well, who were behaving in such an unacceptable manner and not behaving and treating themselves as *ladies*. Some of the consequences for showing a *lack of self control and not being like a real girl* was that girls would be unable to find boyfriends because such behaviour would scare potential

boyfriends off. It could also mean that for these girls they would be completely without friends.

*It might scare off your crushes if you have any. All the boys will mostly avoid you.*

*(Collin)*

*The boys will think bad about them. They won't get boyfriends later on. (Nelly)*

*They won't have any friends because everyone is frightened of them. (Alicia)*

*You are frightened of them. If you want to ask them you think maybe this girl wants to kill you when you are sleeping (Ridge)*

One is able to see the differences in the kinds of marginalization experienced by Janet and that of Tessa and Kate. For Tessa and Kate, if they stopped their behaviour they would not longer suffer the consequences for being different. For Janet, however, the ability for her to redeem her reputation is not a possibility. She thus has no way to recover her social standing. The consequences for Janet seem to be all the more bleak because it results in further harassment.

Some respondents blamed Janet for Vusi's behaviour. They felt that he was right in touching Janet even though she did not want to be touched, and they felt that he could not be blamed for his behaviour. This lack of responsibility on the part of boys, and the greater tolerance of boys behaviour is damaging to girls. The unequal power relations are evident. Boys see girls as objects in this regard and girls must accept the harmful behaviour of boys 'because she asked for it.' The understanding of this kind of violence that is forced onto girls is similar to that of Kenway and Flitzclarence (1997) who indicate that this is an expression of violent masculinity and that this is evident when males feel that their status as dominant male is threatened. Hollway (1989) sees this kind of behaviour as a consequence of the male sex drive discourse which legitimates, exonerates and justifies the behaviour of boys by blaming girls. The understanding is that boys really cannot control their sexual behaviour and should not be blamed as these are normal adolescent urges is also revealed in Ryan's study (1997). The inequality that exists between the sexes is reinforced by males. Cross gender friendships are then based

on unequal power relations with very limited understanding of true friendship based on equals.

Revealed in the examination of the scenarios was also a distinct understanding of the different sexes and the different roles they were to have. Those who do not display these roles are referred to as 'abnormal.' It is clear then that children already have a frame of reference on which to draw. This frame of reference allows them to judge and assess the behaviour of Tessa, Kate and Janet. Normal girls are sensible and quiet, and abnormal girls are like Janet – they hang around with boys too much, or like Tessa and Kate who do *boys things* and are *wild*. This sex stereotyping limits the possibilities for girls. They are only allowed to behave, think and act within the parameters of traditional femininity within their friendship groups. This oppressive understanding is given added support by girls themselves and has the effect of naturalizing and normalizing behaviour. Very few girls would be able to challenge this understanding because of the need they have to belong to a friendship group.

#### 4.5.3. Notions of being male – “Not a real boy.”

The scenarios clearly identified children's understanding of male and female as being two distinct and separate categories. Further, and of importance, is that 89% of children were not able to see that there are many ways of being male. They indicated that Bob failed in the gender category of male and that this was particularly evident in his refusal to be the one thing that classifies boys as being true men, that is, their ability to be sporty. This is evident in the studies by Mclean (1995); Swain (2003); Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) cited in Jones (2000) who indicate that being sporty is a true marker of hegemonic masculinity. The idea that Bob liked doing essentially girl things outraged the boys. There was constant reference to traditional notions of being male as normal. These traditional understandings were made all the more powerful by reference to God - *If God wanted him to be a girl he would not make him a boy (Nancy)*. This is used to justify the treatment of Bob but it also points to the systems of truth around what it means to be a boy that cannot be broken or breached. The historicity associated with the reference to God has the effect that this is truth telling (Kenway, 1997, Foucault, 1980). Aapola

(2004) explains in her study that this reference to truth telling and the 'expert' does not allow for alternative identities to be envisaged because they have been sanctioned by the 'experts.'

People like Bob are regarded as "freaks' and outsiders." Clear too, is the understanding that children have of the roles in society, and that it is based on inequality. For them, there are specific ways of being male and female and these ways of being help one fill future roles such as mother, father etc, and enable one to fit comfortably into society. This is in keeping with the developmental psychological understandings proposed by Dolich (2004). This emotional commitment, that is, having a sense that it is morally right to be masculine in the way traditional masculinity ensures, has the effect of naturalizing traditional masculinity and marginalizing others. Very few children were able to see how these understanding increased oppressive behaviour or attitudes. There was a clear indication of 'boys things' and 'girls things' with the idea that boys doing girls things like cooking, cleaning, making dresses etc clearly is 'abnormal.'

*Kathy: Bobs father wants his son to be just like a normal boy and to do things that normal boys do*

*Nancy: He acts like an 'abnormal brat.*

*Niri: Boys must be rough and fight all the time.*

*Brett: He must treat himself like a man play soccer, be tough. Boys play cars and girls play dolls which means boys and girls are built up in their own way and have their own way of playing.*

*Sally: Girls are supposed to be like the mother of the house and the men are the head of the house to make sure things are going right in the house.*

Children made these deductions following understandings that they already have. Their behaviour is subject to another's gaze. Behaviour deemed to be abnormal means that such a person is open to abuse and ridicule. *He is definitely a moffie in my book (Ridge), or a freak, an outsider (Alicia).* Alternative ways of being masculine are unimaginable for these children. Behaviour of children is regulated according to hegemonic discourses

and anyone found to be abnormal is marginalized and abused. Here, girls position themselves powerfully by being able to ridicule boys who are seen as deviant. They fail, however, to see that this ridicule is also based on the idea that femaleness or femininity is also being ridiculed. Mac an Ghail (1995) and Connell (1995) indicate that hegemonic understandings of masculinity are reinforced by the complete disassociation and contempt for anything female. Hegemonic discourses of masculinity are so insidious that girls also found Bob's behaviour worthy of contempt. One is able to see how the power inherent in this discourse divides people from each other and creates disharmony within ones self. The girls fail to see how power operates. The invisible nature of power is evident, and it is tolerated and accepted because they fail to see its oppressive nature. Their ridicule is based on their understanding that they have got their femaleness right whilst Bob is clueless of the 'correct' male behaviour. Their commitment to the moral order of correct masculine/feminine behaviour ensures its meaning and the desire to achieve the correct behaviour.

*Gosh! how can a boy do ironing, making dresses, playing with dolls. Bob must do some brain checking. That behaviour is totally unacceptable. Bob is just making a fool of himself. Ha! Ha! Ha! (Nancy)*

They also expressed understandings that if Bob does not change his behaviour, he will become a girl instead of a boy or that he would start "*sleeping with boys and react strangely*" (Zoe). The fear of homosexuality was quite evident here with children indicating that homosexuality was wrong. "*The boys don't like playing with moffies. The feeling is that they want to touch you. When they are walking they shake their bodies like girls. I don't like it. It makes me feel funny (Clinton).*

Most children felt that it was because he could not get his gender correct that children treated him with contempt. This reiterates Davies' (2003) understanding that gender categories are like a strait jacket and when people step out of the assigned behaviour then they suffer for this transgression. The implication is that if Bob knew how to behave the

way boys do then he would not be subjected to this ill treatment. Very few children felt that this ill treatment was incorrect.

*Oh Ma'am how could I even talk to a person like that. I accept that he likes girls stuff but he is not to show everybody that (Penny).* For Penny, the repercussions of one's inability to 'do the correct gender' were overwhelming. She felt that he should stop doing what he was doing because it was painful to be treated unfairly. *"Everyone has a problem with Bob being a moffie and the boys have a big problem with his behaviour and Bob should change his ways"* (Penny). Her belief that he should stop his behaviour is evident because she too knows the repercussions of being different and thus finds it safer to live life according to what societal norms prescribe. She is still unable to challenge the existing discourse of inequality and oppression. For her, she would rather have friends than be left alone on the margins of school life and social relations.

Collin spoke with multiple voice and his multiple subjectivities were evident. In the scenarios with Kate and Tessa and Janet he makes judgements about the girls behaviour and the girls are subjected to his 'gaze.' Here, however the contempt he feels for homosexuality is evident. For him, it is morally incorrect. He feels that Bob's behaviour resembles that of girls but that being responsible and affectionate would make him a good father. However, he indicates that if Bob was homosexual, then being a good father was of 'no use.'" For him, homosexuals cannot be fathers because they are not real men who are capable of producing and caring for a child properly. He displays his oppressive understanding of gender. He also indicates that one could change Bob's behaviour by being caring and understanding. Throughout his responses, Collin suggests that traditionally feminine qualities or emotions like caring and understanding would help Bob, but Collin has the understanding that Bob's behaviour is incorrect – referring to the 'girlie girl stuff.' He ridicules Bob for being 'girlie girl' but feels that it is precisely this kind of feminine behaviour that would make Bob change. The positioning is contradictory - whilst for Bob, choice exists, it only exists within the confines of what it means to be traditionally male or female. Bob's behaviour is shameful and is significant of failure.

*Bob's father is probably ashamed of his sons because he son like girls stuff and mostly also be under pressure by other others. He must be thinking that the other fathers think he is a failure.* Two aspects are evident – the recognition that there is pressure to get our gender correct and that it is a father's task to ensure that or else he is a failure both as a father and as a man. The regulatory gaze is always present. Failure to live up to the expectations of hegemonic masculinity results in shame but one that also 'tarnishes' the reputation of all males. There is a constant need to ensure the correct masculinity.

#### 4.5.4. Conflicting voices on femininity – “Useless as a paper safe.”

All the children in the study displayed traditional understandings of femininity and masculinity and could not relate to alternative subjectivities. The failure of Kate, Janet and Tessa to be identified correctly and their inability to follow societal norms of traditional behaviour, made them as 'useless as a paper safe.' For Collin, a paper safe cannot hold things safely and serves no purpose. For him, girls who cannot follow the norm are also of no use to society. Collin, found it difficult to make sense of the disjuncture that was occurring between traditional understandings of femininity and new, more equality based understandings. He indicated that he found it difficult to categorize these girls – were Tessa and Kate 'tomboys' or 'girlie girls'? He did, however, indicate that hitting boys discounts their status as 'girlie girl.' For Reay (2001:163-164) “implicit in the concept of a 'tomboy' is a devaluing of traditional notions of femininity,” and this devaluing can be seen as a way to escape gender subordination. But here alternative understandings of gender were not a possibility and cannot be used to escape from this oppression. The category maintenance work in attempting to ensure correct gendered behaviour is evident and all the more powerful.

Collin admires Tessa and Kate for being sporty but still feminine. He admires Janet who seems to have the qualities he admires – beautiful, smart. Collin admires people who are intelligent because he is very intelligent and this is a value that is important to him and his family. He also indicates that it was not Janet's fault that the boys hang around with her. However, once Tessa and Kate do the aggressive male act of hitting another boy

they become for him and others, in the study, *as useless as a paper safe*. Once Janet does what he regards as undesirable by taking advantage of the males and allowing them to buy her sweets, he then finds Janet's behaviour unacceptable. Their behaviour is questioned and for him they do not fit into his idea of normality and are thus useless. He is unable to understand that there are many ways of being female. His understandings are echoed by findings from Reay's study (2001), where girls were regarded as a 'bad lot,' because they did not behave appropriately. Girls continue to be the objects of another's gaze and their behaviour is constantly monitored and controlled. Attempts by the girls to resist, results in them being treated unfairly. This oppressive understanding of what it means to be a girl is given added support by girls themselves and this has the effect of naturalizing and normalizing behaviour. Very few girls would be able to challenge this understanding because of their need to belong and to be part of a friendship group. He also positions the girls as being powerful in contexts like the school where intelligence is valued and prized but in other contexts he measures their behaviour against his frame of reference – that of traditional feminine norms and their behaviour is found wanting.

92% of boys, however, felt that the girls' behaviour was unacceptable, not only because it was unfeminine but also because the girls were taking advantage of boys and behaving in the manner boys did. When analyzing Tessa and Kate's behaviour boys indicated:  
*It would be okay for boys to do this. We won't judge them because they are boys. With girls when they behave like this you get a shock (Brett).*  
*Boys don't like to be followed. They don't feel comfortable. Boys must follow girls not the other way around. It is not right. They are forward. They are acting wild.*  
*Everything is wild (Lionel).*

Whilst this behaviour is acceptable for boys, it is unacceptable for girls. The behaviour for boys is then seen as natural and normal but the same behaviour by girls is seen as abnormal. There is a very clear distinction between what are acceptable feminine roles and masculine roles. Girls are not able to position themselves in any other way and are positioned by boys.

Four girls, found Kate and Tessa's behaviour acceptable to an extent, and felt that their behaviour meant that non-traditional ways of being were possible and was an aspect of feminine power. *Nobody can take advantage of you. They did cool things like climbing tress and they are fun open and playful and sporty (Samantha).* They did, however, feel that aggressiveness and hitting someone was incorrect. They did not indicate that hitting was only the prerogative of males but found violence per se unacceptable.

*The wrong thing is to put a boys' head under a tap because he could easily break his neck (Zoe).*

For the girls and boys in the study chasing after boys to rate their attractiveness and hitting were not ways of *being cool*. For Samantha, showing off for boys was dangerous and had the potential of being harmful because for her boys would respond violently. Her understanding that females are fragile and not as strong as boys is evident. There are only certain kinds of behaviour, which are characteristically male that she thinks are 'cool' like climbing trees. Penny, however, was one respondent who felt that Tessa and Kate's behaviour was normal and acceptable. For her, most often, girls just want to show boys that they can be ladylike. This was problematic because for her this was dishonest and was not a true reflection of their actual behaviour. Girls did not behave inappropriately in front of boys because they knew this kind of behaviour was unacceptable.

#### 4.5.5. Intersection of power, violence and masculinity- "Violence reigns in our society."

Children's knowledge of violence and the societal pressure to conform to norms of hegemonic masculinity was very evident here and resembled findings from Martino (1999) and Mac an Ghail's (1995) studies. 92% of participants indicated that Clint's behaviour and use of violence was deplorable. However, the reasons cited for beating Sam indicated that this is an inevitable and expected reaction from boys. Whilst violence is objectionable, it seems to be inevitable. The findings of the research here resonate with conclusions from other researchers about the interaction between violence and hegemonic masculinity (ibid). The ability to males to position themselves as powerful and to maintain this positional power was extremely important. Children are aware of the

importance of this power already. They recognize too the reasons why boys feel the need to maintain this power. The tremulous nature of masculinity is evident. Males needed to constantly assert their power in the construction of masculinity. There were two reasons why children felt Clint had to respond in the manner in which he did, namely, because he feared being ridiculed and losing status and also because he felt the need to show off to girls and boys to ensure his status and power

*People will think he can't fight and Clint's stupid and they were going to laugh at him.*

*(Kathy)*

*I think they will think that Clint is a loser with a capital L. (Nancy)*

*The kids might be disappointed with Clint and it would be more macho if he hit Sam and gained more respect. (Collin)*

Children's responses seem to correspond with Francis' (1999) findings into research regarding children's "laddish" behaviour. She points out that masculinity and femininity are positioned as relational to one another and that this ensures the desired behaviour. Strength, bravery and brutality, which are approved patterns of behaviour, are rewarded because girls are attracted to boys who display these behavioural characteristics. This kind of relationship between boys and girls is one that reflects and perpetuates the behaviour of wider society. This is to some extent evident in my study where girls felt that boys' use of violence made them feel protected and safe. It differs in that 92% of girls felt that the use of violence was not the behaviour they desired, and felt that there should be alternative ways of acting and reacting.

*He will protect me when I need help. Maybe someone is worrying me. He would be there to protect me and treat me like a good girl (Netty).*

*He hit him because he saw the girls looking and wanting to see the way he would react.*

*He was showing off for the girls (Lindi).*

*Because all the girls were watching him, so he decided to show off and hit Sam and so they think he is cool (Alicia).*

The recognition by the children of the negative consequences of violence, sexual harassment and the effects of marginalization of subordinate identities is evident. What was important for me was that 92% of them agreed that Clint's kind of behaviour was intolerable. They did not agree that he was *cool* and thought that Clint was *fool, thick-minded and a bully (Nancy)*. Further, their understanding about the unacceptability of Vusi's actions in scenario one is vital. They referred to it as sexual harassment and this alludes to new, more positive understandings about gender. It was at this juncture I think, that the rules of hegemonic masculinity show cracks. The recognition that this kind of behaviour is not appropriate in society is evident and opens up avenues for change. Not only does it herald a change in mindset about gender relations between boys and girls but also about a new understanding of marginalized identities like homosexuals. There were two children who indicated that Bob's behaviour was acceptable pointing to the positive aspects of being of being 'different.' *I think Bob does the right things because he doesn't live in a dirty house and all the things he does keeps him company so he wont get bored. (Samantha). His characteristics make him the Bob they know (Lindi).*

The power of alternative discourses produces knowledge and the possibility of a change in behavioural, social and cultural practices. The recognition that the physical power of boys and its negative consequences, as well as how the marginalization of other subjectivities continue to reproduce inequality is evident. The implicit rules of hegemonic masculinity can now be broken because children recognise that physical brutality and discrimination outweighs any positive outcomes for both boys and girls. This I think is in keeping with the present equal rights discourses in South Africa. This discourse questions the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity and opens up avenues to resist. Boys and girls recognise that there are alternative ways to resolve conflict without having to resort to physical intimidation. This transition to a new understanding however is not so simplistic. Children recognize that there are alternative options to violence but would still want a person like Clint to be either their friends or boyfriends. Five children also believed that it was acceptable to be different but this belief was constrained because they indicated that Bob could correct his behaviour if he went for counselling. The

recognition, however, by many that certain kinds of behaviour are damaging to subordinate identities is positive. The extent to which culture or race, played a role in how children constructed their understanding of homosexuality, violence and sexual harassment was not explored here and is one of the limitations of the study. Understanding the context of race and culture and its impact on the construction of masculinity and femininity would provide a more extensive and meticulous understanding of gender.

#### **4.6. Reflections**

The analysis of the data revealed that relationships within cross gender friendships were based largely on inequality. This was because relationships amongst the children in the study were based on the concept of difference – differences that were not equally valued. They revealed a commitment to traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity. Davies and Harre (1990) explain that this commitment to the maintenance of the gender category they belonged to, translated into them regulating and policing the boundaries of behaviour as set out by the rules inherent in the gender category. They were not able to challenge dominant understandings of femininity and masculinity. Those children that did attempt to challenge or resist still, however, succumbed to traditional understandings pointing to the deeply inscribed and powerful nature of these discourses. Judy's behaviour was constantly monitored and found to be adverse. Even those children who indicated that she did not deserve to be labeled attested to the fact that her behaviour was incorrect. Very few lessons have been learned that alludes to the understanding that children see each other as equals. Stereotypical ideas actually function oppressively and limit and constrain what is possible for girls and boys.

Findings also reveal that the negotiation of gender was an active process with girls and boys occupying and verbalizing contradictory understandings of gender equality. Participants were both active and passive in absorbing messages and correct ways of behaviour in relation to their gender. Sometimes they accepted unquestioningly dominant understandings of femininity and masculinity. This was evident in their verbalizations of gender roles in relation to Bob who did what they referred to as 'girls'

things like ironing or cleaning, or to Kate and Tessa who they believed did not display the correct gendered behaviour because they climbed trees and hit boys. There were occasions when they did challenge and attempt to equalize gender relations. Some of the children in the study felt that Tessa and Kate's behaviour was acceptable because it meant that no one could take advantage of the girls because they had the ability to defend themselves. For them, Kate and Tessa wielded power over boys which was a desirable position for them. They could see the benefits of gaining this power, albeit in ways they did not favour, for example, physical assault.

However, it was this behaviour such as physical violence and climbing trees that was seen as masculine behaviour. It was seen as preferable as it was "fun" because it was a masculine activity that girls wanted to engage in. For some of the girls, the ability to do this meant that you attained power in a traditionally male world and it provided spaces for girls to assume positions of power and to tip the scales of power in favour of females. However, Reay, (2001) indicates that what this does instead is make masculinity more powerful because it reinforces gender inequality – masculine behaviour is seen as being better than feminine behaviour.

Because of the continued support for specific gender categories, alternative subjectivities were resisted. Many indicated that Bob's behaviour was incorrect and that homosexuals made them *'feel funny'* because of the way they *'move their bodies like a girl.'* Even though some children felt that Bob's status as homosexual was normal and acceptable, most felt that it was incorrect and that he needed to change his behaviour if he wanted to be accepted by all in the school. Thus, for them, whilst there is freedom to choose the way they want to be, the reality is that Bob and children who are homosexuals would find it almost impossible to perform their masculinity in the group or school. This is because the choice is confined to their understanding of themselves as masculine and feminine. The constant reference to him changing his behaviour by engaging in typical masculine behaviour or going for counselling prevents the general acceptance of alternative masculinities and femininities. What this does is create and reinforce the gender hierarchy and works against gender equality.

More positive understanding that work towards crossing the gender divide revealed itself when children spoke about violence. For them violence was unacceptable. Here the rules that govern hegemonic masculinity begin to crumble and signal a way forward. This understanding is in keeping with the wider social breakthrough towards woman empowerment and equality. Ways in which this breakthrough came was as a result of political will, widespread media coverage and education to raise awareness of women's rights and ways of empowerment. Gender reformers can take these ideas to continue the fight towards gender equality, to enable for example, children to recognize the more subtle and unconscious ways in which we perform our gender.

Further, more research is needed on how males and females can relate to each other more positively. The analysis of the scenarios and the focus group interviews revealed that relations between the same sex were also hazardous. Boys in the study revealed how they were able to get the emotional support they needed from girls rather than boys. This points to the need for boys to reject traditional understandings of masculinity and embrace characteristics like being emotional in order for them to develop a more positive self-image. Relationships amongst some girls were also traumatic with girls preferring to spend time with boys, as this was far more relaxing. It becomes important then to ensure that gender reform initiatives that occur in school, work in ways that enable girls and boys to manage their relationships with the same sex as well as the opposite sex in more positive ways. Cox (1995) and Kenway (1997) indicate that thinking in this manner alone would not bring about change, and it is viewpoint that I share as well. In order for gender equality to be achieved there has to be broader, more far-reaching, systemic change. For them, it is examining the system and identifying ways in which it reinforces inequality. Cox (ibid) indicates that the schooling experience must be positive for both girls and boys not only on the basis of gender. In South Africa, gender reformers should critically analyze reform initiatives elsewhere to ensure that we do not make the same mistakes and continue to learn the old lessons that work against gender equality. This would call for more widespread support from the government if this change is to be felt at the micro level of schools.

In summary, this chapter aimed at understanding how children understood their cross gender friendship and the impact this had on their understanding of gender equality. Findings reveal that much of their understanding was based on gender inequality because of an emphasis on the maintenance of gender categories. The next chapter explores a post structuralist understanding of discourses, and the manner in which children in the research negotiate and re-negotiate themselves in relation to dominant gender discourses. This all has impact on the construction of their subjectivities.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DECONSTRUCTING GENDER DISCOURSES IN CROSS GENDER FRIENDSHIPS

### 5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on analyzing gender equality within cross gender friendship. In this chapter, I use a post structuralist orientation to examine dominant discourses that emerge in the children's construction of gender equality within cross gender friendships and also to understand how they position themselves in these friendships. This chapter answers the following research questions:

1. How do children position themselves within cross gender friendships?
2. How do children resist this positioning?
3. What impact does this positioning have on their subjectivities?

As explained in Chapter 2, post structuralism allows for a more in-depth analysis of how subjectivities or identities are constructed using the concept of difference as a starting point. The position taken here is that femininities and masculinities can only be understood relationally, that is, in relation to masculinity and vice versa. One of the concepts associated with post structuralism is that of discourse. As stated previously discourses are "practices which form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972:49). We are able to make sense of our world and ourselves (subjectivity) through discourse. What we say, how we behave and act is to some extent governed by prevailing discourses. Within discourses, there exist rules and discursive practices, which allow for the adherence to and continued longevity of these discourses. Discursive practices are those practices, which ensure that particular discourses or world- views become possible, and are then viewed as the truth by people in society – referred to as 'games of truth' by Foucault. Discourses are also intimately bound up with power. I will attempt to analyze how girls and boys relate to each other in relation to dominant discourses. The existence of multiple discourses helps to understand how children come to view themselves, that is, construct their identities or subjectivities.

As stated previously, there exist a variety of competing discourses, some which have more power and influence for particular groups of girls and boys. This is because in society, certain discourses are in circulation at a particular given time. How children will understand themselves, society and each other will be dependent on the access they have to these understandings. Further, particular discourses enable particular groups to exercise power in ways that benefit them. They are able to do this because discourses constitute particular ways of being normal, of being right and therefore desirable. In this way, discourses ensure a particular system of morality, that is, sense of rightness. Because these systems of rightness and morality are sanctioned and supported by institutions such as the church or schools, the power that exists is rendered invisible. Constant reference to the moral, normal, right nature of an understanding precludes resistance. It has the effect of silencing and marginalizing alternatives based on the understanding that everyone in society knows what is right and moral.

In the following section, I will examine key discourses that become evident in the analysis of the data.

## **5.2. The dominant schooling discourse**

This discourse seems to be underpinning much of what occurs in school even in relation to interpersonal relationships children have with each other. 78% of children expressed that certain ways of behaving were inappropriate in school but was quite acceptable out of school.

*Natalie: The friends you have in school you treat them kind and all that stuff. But the friends you have outside you treat them rough. In school you can't be that rough because all the teachers will shout at you. You can't be rough.*

For her “rough” meant that you could talk inappropriately, for example, swear, shout and play with them without fear that this behaviour would be considered improper. It becomes obvious then that much of their response and their behaviour were tempered by what was regarded as appropriate ways of being and behaving in school. “Rough” also

implies a kind of behaviour which is different to the expected behaviour for girls. Connolly (1998) asserts that within the schooling structures girls' behaviour, which is seen as inappropriate or disruptive to schooling agendas are interpreted much more negatively than similar behaviour carried out by boys. Girls like Natalie, have already learnt this. She has already learned that one of the consequences for inappropriate behaviour is being 'shouted' at by teachers. Thus, the far-reaching disciplinary gaze of the schooling system is able to impact on the ways in which (in this case) girls behave. Girls are able to recognize that 'docile bodies' are encouraged and prized. Further, Natalie reveals how she negotiates herself within the school context and in relationships that she has in this context. Her understanding of 'kind' reveals her knowledge of the normative version of femininity within this setting. Girls like Natalie, are unable to resist or challenge this because of the fear of being 'shouted at' or ostracized by pupils and the schooling system. Both the pupils and the school play a vital role in the lives of children. Whilst she acknowledges that she has to change her behaviour in order to be accepted within this discourse, she is unable to challenge it for she is positioned as powerless within the institution. These rules of regulation are ones that girls have learned. This idea is echoed by research done by Clark and Page (2004); MacNaughton (2000) and Mac an Ghaill (1995) who indicate that children are not passive in assimilating information about accepted subjectivities. They actively interpret messages and practices in their daily encounters. As with Natalie, the dominant social order and its privileges and power, is desired, and thus she re-works and re-positions herself in order to fulfill her need to be wanted, accepted and in control.

Children's understanding of what was regarded as proper behaviour in school was well understood. They were very reluctant to indicate that they did have cross gender friendships. This was not so much because they feared the teasing and reactions from their classmates but more so because of the reaction from educators. Children have already learned the importance of an educators' opinion of them in the school environment. If educators' have negative opinions of pupils then this impacts on the kinds of privileges/punishment they receive. Further, an educator's opinion would influence the rest of the learners' perceptions and this may impact on the kinds of

relationships that they have with each other. Their desire to fit into this school environment was paramount, and they felt that negative reactions would mean that they would be positioned in a negative way. Once the interviews got underway and they realised that there were no negative consequences to participation, they wanted to participate but by this time it was way too late as data had already been collected. Thus, one is able to see that even though the impact of the school environment on learners was not important for this study, it certainly had an effect on children in much more covert ways. Their learned behaviour was done unconsciously but they had already become self-regulating subjects according to the ethics of self, where they felt a moral obligation to be seen as acceptable by educators (Danaher et al, 2000).

### **5.3. Discourse of traditional femininity**

Post structuralism sees discourse as including all aspects of our being, that is, our emotional, social, institutional, our practices and behaviours which we engage with, in order to make sense of our live. Gender is one of the ways in which we do this. Children understood gender as belonging to particular categories such as masculinity and femininity, which offered them ways of understanding not only themselves but others as well. This is because discourses construct a person and a person only becomes possible and recognizable if they can be read and understood by themselves and others. Girls and boys expressed and understood themselves in traditionally masculine and feminine ways. Whilst there are many competing discourses, some as Francis (1997) asserts have “more power and potency” than others for particular groups of people. The discourse of femininity tended to be the most powerful and inscribing in terms of ways of understanding and behaving. Girls’ understandings of themselves within this discourse focused on their need to be normal. Their understanding of normality was about being quiet and gentle and lady like, wearing the correct clothes etc. A sense of being female is inscribed in girls’ bodies. How we behave as females is constrained by what we ought to be. In order to be seen as normal or to be accepted by others, we must be able to get our gender correct, we must participate in the practices of our particular gender in order for us to make sense of ourselves and our world, and for others too. Girls expressed the desire not to fight because they saw it was wrong. When asked about the importance of

friendship with the same sex, they indicated that it was important because girls helped them to be girls and to be normal. The recognition of the gender category of male or female is important identity work for children because it helps them to be identifiable in society. Positioning oneself is done through the discursive practices available in society.

*Sandra: Girls help me to keep calm*

*Patty: We play dolls*

*With girls you have to be sensible*

Post structuralists indicate “the differences in what it means to be masculine and feminine are only possible because both exist. To be masculine is not to be feminine and vice versa” (Davies, 2003:16). They form what is called a binary opposition where both are reliant on each other for meaning. In order for these girls to make sense of their world and to be recognizable to each other, the category of ‘girl’ was important. For them, being a girl was different to being a boy. Girls were *calm* and *sensible*, and boys were not.

Natalie presented an interesting picture for me to observe. She was one of the girls who rejected traditional feminine ideas referring to them as ‘girly girl stuff.’ In fact, these ‘girly girl’ tendencies annoyed her tremendously. For her, the gender category of femininity presented a problem. When asked the question of who she would go to for advice, her answer was that she did not seek advice and that instead most other children both girls and boys asked her for advice and not vice versa. For Natalie, being reliant on others for advice was typical feminine behaviour, which she rejected. Her desire to position herself as being independent and emotionally distant (in keeping with her rejection of ‘girly girl stuff’) is thwarted by Clinton.

*Clinton: But Nat sometimes you need advice. You can't do everything right*

*Natalie: Clinton, have I ever asked you for advice. No! No! No! I'm asking – have I ever asked you for anything.*

*Brett: (quickly adds) You won't be right all the time because you will ask us something like when are we writing this test.*

Another incident of a confrontation between Clinton and Natalie is evident in this excerpt from the data.

*Clinton: But with girls like Natalie ma'am, she only thinks about reading Harry Potter.*

*It's not like us. It's not our style. We are more fun and girls are serious*

*Natalie: Why are you saying reading a book – it helps okay Clinton (angry). Ma'am, reading really help, cos ma'am, I do first class work and there's nothing wrong with reading.*

Her need to assert herself and refuse the category of particular versions of femininity, that is, passive, emotional, helpful or intelligent, results in her being ridiculed for thinking she will not need advice or that reading does not help and instead makes her boring. This ridicule is one way of category maintenance – of measuring (in this case girls) as being emotionally dependent and attached as well as studious. Any attempt to move away from this as Natalie attempts to do is seen as deviant. Conformist discourses like traditional femininity have the effect of “exerting more power than transgressive or transformative ones” (Reay, 2001:156). The normative nature of discourses is evident. The knowledge of what is expected – the rules – are imbued with power and are inextricably linked. She is being constrained by her gender and her resistance to being positioned by the boys is met with further opposition when Brett joins the fray. She is outnumbered, not only in terms of the ability to respond effectively because she does not have the necessary repertoire but also because she has to contend with arguing with two boys instead of one. Brett resembled Reay's (2001) working class boys quite closely. These were boys who had subordinate identities but in order to gain acceptance and approval from dominant males like Clinton, would actively deride those who they felt were less powerful like Natalie. This is one of the ways in which Brett attempts to position himself more powerfully in relation to Natalie, and be dominant.

Her conflict is evident where she feels the need to provide evidence of why reading is important. For her reading is important, not because it falls in the category of traditional

female, but because it helps her in her school work which then fits into what is desirable within the school milieu. She finds it difficult to completely reject the positioning as it is sanctioned and affirmed by the schooling environment, and she finds that within this context she has power and is valued because of her intelligence. She is, however, rendered powerless by the hegemonic discourse, which indicates that reading is a typically feminine activity – a category that she attempts to distance herself from. It is important to note that one is able to occupy a variety of subject positions, and to be both powerful and powerless within the particular discourse available. Kenway et al (1998:xvii), explains, “The focus on the inter-connection between multiple subject positions and the various ways in which the social world and the individual are being constituted and re-constituted enable us to see human being as complex, changing and contradictory.”

Evident too, in this exchange is how the discourse of studiousness (that is reading) is seen as distinctly feminine – something that girls do. Further, this derision perpetuates the idea of reading (as being seen by boys) as being a feminine activity. The denial by Clinton of the importance of books reinforces the effects of hegemonic masculinity and is seen as a threat to Clinton’s masculinity. Rejecting what is considered to be essentially feminine is one way in which masculinity is policed and in this case self regulated. Clinton’s somewhat contradictory position is evident. He is a particularly intelligent boy and his reading ability is excellent. However, his derogatory talk about reading and the seriousness of it is an attempt by him to reiterate the understanding within his group that his high academic achievement is exercised with an apparent lack of effort or any visible sign of excessive studying or cognitive labour. This idea is reminiscent in the studies by Martino (1999) and Renold’s (2001) where to be the acceptable male in this context is to show your intelligence as being achieved with ease. In this way, Clinton’s image as a ‘cool boy’ is maintained but is done by devaluing females. This normalizing practice of labeling people allows him to enact his masculinity against girls. The emotional commitment he has to this position is his fear of being labeled ‘other’. It is in his best interests, therefore, to devalue publicly the discourse of studiousness. He is able to actively and consciously construct a variety of ways of being masculine without censure.

#### 5.4. Discourses of essential female sexuality

One of the markers to signify femaleness is through appropriate behaviour. Often behaviour is defined in terms of what we do to or with our bodies. One such discourse, which ensures essential femininity, is the discourse of female sexuality. This discourse has the effect of regulating its subjects. Girls police each other, they police themselves, and are also subject to this surveillance by boys as well. This 'web of control' totalizes and individualises subjects and constrains one's ability to act (Danaher et al, 2000). In this excerpt, Kathy reveals the extent to which her behaviour is policed.

*Kathy: Girls don't like me because I do hang around boys a lot*

Later she adds

*They say like I'm going to take their boyfriends. So they don't trust me with any boys especially if I'm friends with their boyfriends*

Because this discourse is also bound up with the idea of reputation it tends to regulate sexuality and behaviour. When girls spoke about getting a reputation, it invariably meant being labeled a 'bitch' or *someone who likes boys too much*. This regulatory practice of labeling was especially important for two girls – Kathy and Penny. For them, this was the ultimate punishment for failing to behave according to already established norms. Having such a category in place means that girls are able to police each other and determine the correct behaviour for each other. Such category maintenance work ensures that those who behave in ways that do not fit the criteria for femininity are ostracized and alienated. Kathy's relationship with girls was especially poor. She found that she was unable to break down the barriers that existed between them. This was mainly because the girls felt that her behaviour was inappropriate. Friendships with them were emotionally traumatic, which she felt she was unable to handle. We are able to see how she constructs her subjectivity within the discourse of conventional femininity. She had learned what it meant when she was categorized as a 'bitch.' This formed the foundation of how she could interact with the boys.

Not only did girls regulate the sexuality of girls but so too did boys. When asked if there were boys who did not want to be her friend and the reasons therefore, Kathy responds:

*K: Because they say that I hang around with boys too much and they don't like friends like that. I shouldn't be like friends with too many boys cos girls who hang around too many boys are called names and everything.*

*Mel: What names?*

*Kathy: They call me 'bitch' and all those names*

Thus, one is able to see how the platform for unequal gender relations are set. Such positioning is difficult to oppose or even challenge for fear of being labeled or ostracized. This is because certain versions of the world are legitimated whilst others may be silenced or resisted (Weedon, 1987). For Kathy, this dominant discourse of what it means to be feminine and a girl is too naturalized and it is too difficult to negotiate any other way of being. This understanding is similar to that of Aapola (2004) where adolescent girls also find it difficult to challenge the adult or expert understanding of adolescence. For many girls, it is a matter of choosing between being seen as okay and normal than being on the margins.

*Mel: How do you feel about this?*

*Kathy: It makes me feel bad but I don't know what to do, so I just hang around with them.*

This idea of eventually conforming to dominant understandings is also evident in this excerpt:

*Penny: At the beginning of the year I was doing wrong things like drinking and stuff but now I don't do it. The girls and boys used to tease me. Even like Clint who used to drink with me doesn't join me anymore because he says all the children talk about me and say bad things. But now I don't do all those things. I just concentrate on my work, and try hard all the times. So I really don't know*

Even whilst Penny who felt the repercussion of misbehaving, changed her behaviour because of the insults and ostracization she experienced, she could not find the means to express the unfairness of this in a way that could effect some change. Further, to express her need to change her behaviour was based on what is regarded as “proper feminine behaviour’ as enforced by dominant discourse of traditional femininity. Thus within this discourse, Penny understands that the way in which she expresses her sexuality and femininity is incorrect according to these established rules of regulation. She is unable to be powerful in this given situation and the repercussions are too much for her. The discourse of sexuality affords her very little power and she is positioned by the discourse rather than being able to position herself.

A sexual category like the above informs people about inappropriate ways of being female and perpetuates the understanding that female sexuality and female identity are linked. Kathy and Penny in this regard, take up the position of being made to conform. Their desire to be regarded as respectable, a good girl etc resulted in them regulating their behaviour and choosing not to interact with too many boys and to stop drinking. Penny and Kathy understand that the way in which they express their sexuality and femininity is incorrect according to these established rules of regulation. The discourse of sexuality affords them very little power. The effect of this is that they become self-regulating subjects. For Kathy, she does not seem to have much choice but to change her behaviour. She does not have a good relationship with the girls and the boys are her only source of comfort and friendship. For both the girls there are no alternative subject positions to take up. It is easier to take up positions within the prevailing subject positions of traditional femininity. Failing to do this would mean that they would be completely without friends, an alternative they find difficult to accept. For Kathy especially, her relationships with the boys were important for her because she could find a niche here, whereas she could not do that with the girls. It was her desire not to be hurt that prevented any chance for her to challenge the existing discourse

*Netty: Well ma'am they get jealous. They say bad things about the girl. Like you know Penny in your class, ma'am, a lot of boys like her because she is pretty. But when she*

*doesn't say anything to them then they say bad things about her. The other day, Samuel was saying that some boy wrote bad words about Penny in the toilet and he wanted to know who it was because he was angry cos she is his friend.*

Two issues are important here. Firstly, that Penny who showed no interest in the boy in question was subject to being labeled and abused. The ability of the boys to label girls means that girls would find it particularly difficult to negotiate themselves within the peer context. The girls' refusal to respond to boys in the manner boys require, is followed by being labeled. What recourse girls have in such situations becomes important to understand. This does, however, mean that girls walk a very tight rope in negotiating their ways around interpersonal relationships. The fact that her friend Samuel was angry and erased it meant that Penny herself could not challenge and she recognized her lack of power. Further too, it reinforces the idea that girls need to be rescued by males. Secondly, Netty recognized that the boys wrote unfair comments and the reasoning behind it but failed to comment on its unfairness is also important. Her failure to challenge instead reinforces the inequality, nothing changes and power relations between the sexes go unchallenged and uncontested. Ryan (1997) indicates that discourses surrounding essential female sexuality are not usually seen as oppressive. Netty may have recognized it as being unfair but she did not see it as oppressive and neither did she see the consequences of this oppressive practice. Instead, boys understanding of girls who have many male friends are seen to represent reality and are thus the truth, and cannot to be challenged.

This is in sharp contrast to how boys are viewed when they 'hang around' with many girls.

*Nancy: All the girls like Clinton*

*Clinton: Because I'm so cute*

*Collin: Last year Ridge had lots of girlfriends*

*Samuel: We have to talk such things cos if you have lots of girlfriends then boys think you cool.*

Instead of vilifying the boys who have lots of girlfriends, they are instead seen as 'cool.' If anything their reputations are enhanced. Here the girls' unease with being labeled "bitches" for doing exactly what the boys are praised for reveals that they recognize that they are being unfairly labeled. However, they are unable to claim agency within this discourse because the discursive practices serve to enhance the reputation of the boys whilst disempowering girls. They are unable to challenge their subjective positioning and opt to instead change their behaviour to suite the requirements of traditional femininity. Their need to be seen as respectable and to maintain a good reputation is important. They are constrained by disciplinary power.

## **5.5. Girls and crossing borders**

### **5.5.1. Introduction**

The boundaries that form the friendship between and amongst girls and boys is constraining and limiting. Conflict that emerged between boys and girls and within their same sex friendship groups tended to be around gossiping. The manner in which they conducted themselves in a conflict situation was exceptionally important for both boys and girls. Conflict was traumatic for girls. Generally, conflict occurred as a result of a lack of trust and gossiping. In this section, I look at some of the reasons why girls did not confide in boys and then attempt to put forward explanations as to why girls find crossing the gender divide so difficult.

### **5.5.2. Conflict as a result of gossiping.**

Girls indicated that they could not expect the same kind of advice or loyalty from boys when it came to telling secrets. Most girls indicated that they felt helpless when boys gossiped about them because when boys gossiped the entire school found out and that boys *laughed* or *spread rumours* about *girls' weaknesses* (Penny). Whilst girls' gossiping about boys did not emotionally damage the boys, boys gossiping, however, had the capacity to do this. Girls could not challenge and reciprocate in the same vein and were rendered powerless. Boys had an entire repertoire with which to fight back with, for example, physical assault and swearing. Girls did not because they had specific beliefs about behaviour, and instead indicated that rather than being subjected to the

abuse that goes with gossiping, they would chose instead not to reveal their secrets to boys at all.

Natalie revealed that she would prefer to gossip with girls because to gossip with boys, and in particular with Clinton was a painful one.

*Natalie: With girls we can gossip but not with boys. Clinton, ma'am, wants to know about everything and he will make sure that your life is miserable if you tell him any secret. He can blackmail you and ask for things in order to him to keep your secrets.*

It was to her advantage to keep secrets from boys. The cost of revealing secrets to boys was too unbearable and girls felt that they could not openly challenge boys. They instead chose to resist quietly by not revealing anything of a personal nature, which could then be used as a weapon against them. Maintaining silence can be quite a powerful tool in positioning oneself against boys. In this way, boys would not be able to gain dominance because they did not know anything personal about the girls that could be used negatively. It is like "silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance" (Foucault, 1981 cited in Weedon, 1987:111). It could be a means of creating an alternative way of being able to challenge stereotypes such as the idea that girls gossip.

Seven girls did indicate that sometimes revealing secrets to the same sex was not an option because girls tended to "spit it out." They thus preferred to speak to boys not necessarily because they were more trusted but because of the potential consequences of telling a girl a secret and then it being revealed to everyone else. For Zoe, this meant having to explain herself to girls, which she preferred not to do.

*Zoe: Because I trust them more not because I trust them more than girls because girls they could spread it out to other girls. But like boys if they spread it out to other boys,*

*the other boys they don't care about what they saying and girls do care. They (girls) come and ask you a lot of questions. .... So it's better*

Gossiping and telling secrets to members of the same sex, was also determined by the relationship one had with members of the same sex. Kathy's problematic relationship with the girls meant that she could not confide in them. More often she found that she was not able to meet those standards set by the girls. *They (girls) just act like snobs towards me..... don't pay attention to me. Boys keep my secrets...The girls will eventually go and tell somebody else and it will go from ear to ear.*

The boundaries within cross gender friendships is constraining and limiting. Girls and boys are not able to completely trust each other. However, inter-relationships between boys and girls seem to be more negative and traumatic for the girls especially. They revealed that even within the context of their friendship, they could never reveal anything personal. The depth and extent of friendship needs to be examined to fully understand cross gender friendships. But as Davies and Harre (1990) indicate that the continued existence of such perceptions is because we tend as human beings to become emotionally committed to certain categories and understandings evident about these categories, and then we develop moral codes around them. As a result we ensure their perpetuation by constant reference and acknowledgement of it. Such perceptions of females as gossipers can be used to divide people from each other and ensures the understanding that these are self-evident truths.

### 5.5.3. Crossing that divide: A shaky negotiation.

Knowing the expected behaviour then makes it especially difficult for these girls to understand when attempting to cross or challenge the gender divide. In a conflict situation, girls sometimes found it difficult to resist and challenge expected behaviour. Girls indicated that conflict between them could range from little things like clothes to bigger ones like relationships and boys. They generally indicated that arguments with girls tended to last long and were drawn out.

*Netty: Girls fight over little things. They get cross and then fight and fight and fight for a long time. Then they will bring up when you fought the last time and then the problem gets bigger and bigger*

Girls felt that the 'proper way' to respond to arguments or conflict was to talk and cited their ability to handle themselves or the appropriateness of talking as opposed to being violent. 80% of girls indicated that responding violently was not an option as this way went against their understandings of expected behaviour by girls. Their emphatic and distinct understanding reinforces gender as difference. Power relations between boys and girls remain unequal. This expected behaviour is one that is learned through the years and the commitment to ensuring the correct feminine behaviour is evident. The rules that govern their behaviour are clear. Within the traditional feminine discourse, specific gender categories reinforce the roles that one has to take on later in life. Thus, for these girls, in order to be clearly recognized as normal the option of violence is rejected and is seen as boy's behaviour. Instead girls should *be calm and know how to handle oneself as female.*

*Samantha: Sometimes they (girls) fight and hit each other. I don't like that coz girls must not behave like that*

*Mel: Why?*

*Samantha: Girls are not supposed to hit. Only boys do that because boys like to be violent and girls must solve their problem coz when they are old they won't go and fight. It's not right.*

*Lindi: I wasn't brought up like that. We mustn't hit. Can get you into a lot of trouble. If I hit at home they (mother, aunt, gran) will hit me. Only big people and males can hit not girls*

Lindi's response is important in that it reveals that discourses surrounding childhood have a history. She has learned from her parents and through the generations that being violent is inappropriate behaviour for girls. Failing to learn this would result in her being beaten by her elders for being violent herself. When we trace the origins of this knowledge about who can use violence as a deterrent as well as recognize the practices or

mechanism that keep such a 'truth' in place, then we can challenge it. For Lindi and her family being physically abused is sanctioned. It is a practice used by her elders as well as well as by males to ensure the 'correct behaviour.'

There were girls who did express opposing views. They would physically assault another girl if they were able to do so. However, they indicated that they would not hit a boy.

*Penny: If a girl has a fight, says something bad about you, you go straight and hit. With a boy you can't do that*

*Mel: Why?*

*Penny: Boys can hurt you cos they are stronger and know how to fight*

Here Penny's understanding of boys is traditional and this understanding has become the truth and has the effect of determining the subjectivity of boys and girls. Here girls see themselves as passive and reliant on the boys for protection. Boys are powerful and strong. This creates a duality of strong/weak and reinforces the unequal power relations between males and females. This also reveals a sense of naturalness about their understanding that boys are violent and cements it as 'truth.'

53% of girls indicated that conflict with girls takes a long time, and all the girls do is rehash issues and talk incessantly. For four of the girls especially, a better option would be to solve problems the way boys did, that is, by being violent

*Sandra: With a girl I'll prefer fighting because if you fighting its over fast. Because boys when they have a problem, they fight and then after that it is okay.*

*Mel: What do you think of a girl who fights in the same ways as boys?*

*Netty: I think it is good because you can hit and get it over with*

However, these girls, whilst they preferred this form of resolving conflict, did not or could not resort to this form of conflict resolution. They feared being sanctioned by other girls, boys and educators in the school.

*Mel: If you prefer to solve problems like this –do you do this?*

*Sandra: No ma'am! Whooo! The teacher will say we acting like boys and the other girls will say things to us – like we are wild and raw. No you can't do that even if you want to. Those girls that fight like Phumla and them the children think they are too wild and don't want to be near us. Last year even the boys were frightened of them. I don't want that. Ooh! to have all the children talk about me like that ..... no ma'am!*

*Netty: I did it once but I won't do it again because the other girls were saying that I am wild. But I do think it is better to fight. You feel better*

*Mel: What do you think of girls that fight?*

*Natalie: We don't fight but the girls who fight, there is no words to describe them. I have negative ways to describe them*

*Nancy: If I hit a girl what will the boys think of me?*

The four processes suggested by feminist post structuralists Davies and Harre (1990) that people use to position themselves and form their subjectivity is evident here. Firstly, these girls have recognized that the category of violence and of females using violence as an option is unacceptable. Secondly, they participate in the discursive practices that attach meaning to this category. They have learned the consequences of being violent - that is, being labeled and marginalized. Thirdly, positioning themselves in terms of the category that gives them access to some sort of power. Whilst these girls recognize the power associated with being physically violent, they feel that they are unable to express this. It is their understanding that there exists multiple ways of being feminine, a positioning that, however, they are unable to act on because to do so means having to face consequences that are too hazardous. There is a strong desire to be socially suitable and there is the recognition that such 'incorrect' gender behaviour is a sure way to violate this. This gender category is a tight rope they have difficulty negotiating. In stepping outside the correct expected forms of behaviour they experience isolation because they have chosen to defy the category that restricts them. This category maintenance and the commitment of educators and others to it, ensures its longevity, for these girls eventually acquiesce to this control. They experience tension between the way they want to be and the way they ought to be as set out in the unspoken rules that govern feminine behaviour. Lastly, being emotionally committed to the category of traditional femininity

and developing moral codes around them enables them to see that for them to react violently would then mean that they behave in the same manner as boys. This is in opposition to the ways in which females are categorized. The boundaries of the categories are too limited and constraining. They want to position themselves in a variety of ways without privileging one over the other.

Children like Natalie, Nancy and Sandra who presented themselves as tough, assertive individuals are to some extent powerful in certain contexts against the boys. They have access to a discourse where individuality and freedom are important, and so experience much of their lives as having control. However, in some of their responses they show a commitment to traditional views of femininity and a lack of power. They despise the way girls physically assault each other. Nancy, for example, indicates that she would assault a boy if he assaulted her and Sandra shows a preference to physically fighting but the pressure to conform prevents them from doing so. Thus, whilst they have access to a discourse where they have domination over others especially intellectually, they still adhere to the privileging of male power. Their occupation of different positions and its varying contradictions is evident.

Interestingly, Natalie, whose responses thus far have often indicated her refusal to be traditionally feminine, responds in this way about conflict with boys. Here she recognizes that in society and in inter-relationships between boys and girls, boys have more access to power than girls do. This recognition is important, for with recognition comes the ability to effect change. The tensions created between what she now knows and what is acceptable conventional knowledge can create a schism and open up avenues for resistance. Often subjects who have subordinate identities do not recognise the inherent nature of power and power is rendered invisible. They continue to be oppressed because "Power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanism" (Foucault, 1976 cited in Weedon, 1987:121).

*Natalie: With boys you get control over the boys because their whole lives they got control. If you fight with boys you always having the upper hand because when you shout you lose your temper. Boys like shrink when you lose your temper.*

*Ridge: Natalie, you lying....Boys always have the upper hand.*

However, the extent to which the possibility for change can be achieved, may not be fully realized for in this encounter with Ridge she chooses to keep quiet and not to respond to Ridge. What occurs here then is that Ridge's standpoint about boys having the upper hand and being in control over girls continues. One of the limitations of the study arises here, for the budding knowledge by Natalie may have materialized. I would never know this for my study did not include tracking subjectivity over a period of time. This is a concern expressed by McLeod (2000) and to which I concur. Tracking the subjectivity of students over a period of time and in other contexts would lead to fuller understandings and explanations of how subjectivity is formed. These understandings would take into account other material conditions and practices that may not be present in this study but would lead to a more in-depth understanding of the formation of subjectivity for people.

This understanding of tracking subjectivity over a period of time becomes clearer in attempting to analyze the same learner in another one of her friendship groups. How she negotiates and forms her subjectivity is important to note. The following extract involved children speaking about physical violence and if boys in the group can hit girls.

*Alicia: He is lying ma'am because sometimes Clinton really hits us.....*

*Nancy: Clinton said is very hard to hit a girl but he pulls our hair and kicks us and does everything.*

*Natalie: I don't understand Clinton like what Nancy is saying. I don't think Clinton pulls our hair. The only time I got really angry with Clinton was when he lost my juice bottle and I kicked his bag and I also kicked his butt but he didn't kick me back. So, I think Clinton is a real gentleman*

*Nancy: Maybe that day Clinton was in a good mood*

*Martin; Ja, you don't know Clinton*

The girls attempt to have Clinton own up to his lying is thwarted by Natalie. Throughout the focus group interview Clinton and Natalie seemed to be a logger-heads with both of them resisting and challenging their subjection. Here, however, she seems to be accommodating Clinton and his behaviour, which means too that she reinforces the existing gender hierarchical order. Her general thought and behaviour suggests that she has attempted to prevent herself from being subordinated by the boys. However, here she is acquiescent. By absolving Clinton from blame, she has allowed and maintained the social superiority of masculinity and devalued or has failed to endorse the position from which she has been speaking previously- thus the female world is also devalued. Her previous attempts at gaining power are nullified and instead have bolstered the power of the boys at her own expense. One can also note how deeply inscribed and powerful discourses tend to be. On the other hand, this excerpt could be analysed where Natalie attempts to re-position herself powerfully in relation to Clinton. She has worked out the benefits of being friends with Clinton because of his positional power. Any clearer understanding I believe is not possible. As she matures, she may work out more effective means of recognizing how power operates in the relationships she has.

The following is a further example of how girls claim responsibility for the actions of boys. Girls to some extent felt that when having conflict with girls they could accept partial responsibility for the conflict. However, they felt completely responsible for any argument they may have had with boys even if they were physically violated

*Sally: I was responsible. I did the wrong thing. I did go and hug him because she saw me and that's how the fight started.*

*Kathy: I mustn't join his girlfriend and then he slapped me. Maybe it's me (being responsible) because he already told me I mustn't join his girlfriend. So I didn't take it and still used to hang around with her.*

All three girls Kathy, Natalie and Sally absolve boys from being responsible for their aggressive behaviour. This is in keeping with the essential male aggression discourse or boys will be boys discourse proposed by Hollway (1989), and revealed in the studies by

Ryan (1997) and Francis (1999). What this discourse does is insist that girls should be held responsible for dealing with the kind of behaviour as it is within the natural psyche of the girls. It follows the idea that girls have a greater capacity for emotional and moral thought processes – girls speak as Gilligan (1982) indicates with a different voice and should thus take the moral high ground. It represents the accepted natural view that boys develop slower and are much more immature than girls and therefore cannot be held responsible for their behaviour. The understanding is that as boys grow older and mature their once immature aggressive nature will dissipate. Research, however, shows that all that occurs later on in life is that this “aggressive behaviour continues or becomes more sophisticated, subtle and all the more damaging” (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie, 1998:109). It follows then that the boys that Sally and Kathy join, resolve their arguments through violence and will continue to do so in later life.

Boys in the study were asked for their opinions on the concept of girls using violence as a way of resolving conflict. Their responses about the behaviour of girls can be deemed traditional and do have the effect of ensuring the correct behaviour.

*Clinton: I don't care what they do. It's just a matter of them solving their own problems.*

*I don't know what they are fighting about and maybe it is really important.*

*Martin: Me too I can watch them fight. You know with the boys they can watch two girls fight and they won't stop the fight.*

Both these boys espoused the understanding that it was acceptable for girls to be violent because it was a way to resolve conflict and that girls have conflict for the same reasons as boys, that is, to solve problems. However, for the boys, watching girls physically assault each other provided them with a source of pleasure or entertainment, something they can watch either because it fulfills their need for violence or because for them girls fighting is a novelty.

Brett however indicates that *It's not good – they must treat themselves like ladies.*

Thus the spaces available for girls to challenge ideas about how to solve conflict are limited, for both girls and boys control the way in which girls can behave. Girls must behave like ladies in order to be considered suitable. This denigration of girls who stand up for themselves serves to separate girls from each other and limits what is possible for them in relationships. Their understanding of traditional femininity serves to subordinate the girls in relation to the boys. The understanding is that girls who do not act like ladies act like men.

## **5.6. Discourses of Masculinity**

### **5.6.1. Introduction**

Researchers like Connell (1995) and Mac an Ghail (1995) argue that masculinity is a social construction, one that is taught and learnt by males and females throughout life. There exists a variety of meanings of what it means to be a boy and with it constant pressure to live up to these expectations of the norms. Whilst a variety of ways of being masculine exists, however, not all masculinities are acceptable. There exists a differential access to power and one's ability to effect power. These differences would depend on where one is positioned in the gender hierarchy, the extent to which one is excluded or included. Dominant understandings of masculinity determine acceptable masculine behaviour. Connell's (1995) understandings of hegemonic masculinity indicated that hegemonic masculinity is the ability by males to dominate and control the lives of females but more especially to control those less respected or subordinate or marginalized forms of masculinity. What is important here is that this masculinity is in a constant state of flux and has to be constantly negotiated and re-negotiated in order to ensure its dominance. This discourse puts forward a definition of what it means to be a man. Rules that govern hegemonic masculinity are implicit in institutional life. "It is not too strong to say that masculinity is an aspect of institutions, and is produced in institutional life, as much as it is an aspect of personality or produced in interpersonal transactions" (Connell, 1997 cited in Skelton, 2001:51). This ensures that rules become the 'truth.' These 'regimes of truth' of what it is to be masculine is practiced discursively.

Dominant forms of masculinity centred around, violence, sporting prowess and the need to be intensely competitive. It follows then that the need to understand one's own subjectivity within this framework involves confrontation and challenge between the boys and girls. Where one is positioned within the male hierarchy, would be of paramount significance for the boys in the study. This positioning becomes evident in examining the interpersonal relations between the boys and girls in the study. One of these discursive practices is through the need to be popular and to achieve status and is usually defined in terms of what boys do with or to their bodies. Swain (2003) indicates that for boys the body is a commodity that is valued in particular settings. In order to achieve popularity or status the physical ability and in particular the sporting prowess of boys determines the extent of this popularity. Often sport, other physical movement, and being competitive was regarded as the most acceptable and desirable way to achieve masculinity

#### 5.6.2. Boys as competitors

Clinton's achievement of popularity was done with apparent ease and whilst this was done in competition with other boys, it was not recognized as being competitive. Within his peer group of both males and females and in the school in general Clinton was regarded as very popular and was well liked. This achievement of status and popularity is also an achievement of an accepted form of masculinity. The girls in his group *liked hanging around* with him.

*Natalie: All the girls get jealous and all the girls like Clinton.*

Many girls did indicate that they did like him and the fact that so many girls liked him added to his popularity amongst the boys too. His friends in the groups overlooked many of his shortcomings. If at any point he upset them it was over quickly. His position within the group was dependent on his ability to manipulate and negotiate his way through his daily interactions. He was also a particularly intelligent boy. His group valued this and he was able to position himself powerfully. His apparent nonchalance and indifference to his popular status is one of the ways in which he performs his masculinity. When asked what is special about being friends with girls his comment was

that there *is nothing special about girls only if she is my girlfriend*. He is able to defend his contempt for girls, for example, by maintaining a cool self-assurance that is acceptable to his male friends.

He is able to defend himself against his female friends for his exploitation of females by the understanding that he is rational and therefore right. Being emotionally distant is one of the ways in which he demonstrates his independence and this is a highly prized commodity within traditional masculine discourse. The ability to be independent fulfils the criteria set down by experts and implies as Aapola (2004) indicates the capacity to be knowledgeable and rational. Clinton here is promoting the idea that such knowledge is exclusive to males because it is based on rationality and is thus the 'truth.' Not only is this discursive practice a way of ensuring him a secure place within the realm of masculinity but it also allows the practise of emotional and distant behaviour favoured in the masculine world. This is then normalized. Being emotionally distant or neutral is a powerful way of exerting control over others and a means to define the self. This discursive practice has the effect of regulating masculinity.

Lionel and Brett were not so successful at being able to position themselves as successfully as Clinton was. The following extract forwards Lionel's understanding of why he cannot make friends outside of school.

*Mel: Are there any boys or girls who do not want to be your friend but who you want to be friends with?*

*Lionel: Yes I want to be friend with them because they live closer to me and they know things that my friends at school don't know. They don't want to be my friends because I am different from them like more clever than them. They don't like that. They call me names and tell me I think I too good for them.*

Here, the value of being intelligent is not valued and Lionel is measured against this value and found to be 'abnormal' and thus he is alienated. He is unable to challenge his positioning by them even though he expressed a need to be their friend. He has nothing

else to offer to compensate for his lack of acceptable forms of masculinity. This reinforces the understanding that certain groups have more power and can influence and regulate as well as make life choices for others. Lionel has no power in this context and the manner in which he views himself has been determined by the boys at home.

Boys often compared themselves with each other and assessed their masculinity. One of the ways in which they competed with each other was through having many girlfriends and being socially accepted. This is in keeping with studies by Skelton (2001) and Swain (2005). These authors research into children have concluded that romantic relationships accorded boys' high individual status as well as group status. Boys with 'girlfriends' occupied the top end of the gender hierarchical organization. Displaying the correct socially defined masculine behaviour ensured acceptance and enabled some boys to win the contest against other boys and also to prove their masculinity

*Samuel: We only speak about girls ma'am and how we come to town to look at the 'cherries.' We have to talk such things cos if you have lots of girlfriends then boys think you cool.*

Often being unsuccessful in an arena regarded as the ultimate expression of manliness meant suffering the consequences by being laughed at and mocked. There is a strong hierarchy of masculinity and dominance. Further, objectifying females as prizes and 'cherries' are used as tools to bargain with, in order to gain popularity and acceptance. This objectification reinforces the control they assert over females. However, boys here need girls in order to be able to define who they are. This may not necessarily mean that girls are in a powerful position.

The boys in the study indicated that they had to prove themselves to other boys as well as to the girls. The inability to successfully challenge girls meant that for some boys, and in particular Collin, they saw themselves as failures. The failure to 'beat' the girls was seen as hurt pride and one that had to be regained in order to retain this male pride

*Collin: She (Britney) thinks she is it It's like kind of like the old days you had queens. Like people used to hold their noses up in the air when you see someone that's lower than you. She gives you that look that describes it and then I also hate her because she beat me. I don't like girls beating me. If it's a boys its okay but a girl no... .... Well ma'am I don't mean to be sexist but I think that males are just letting us down. Like if you think ma'am, rapists, most of them are men, kidnappers- men. When you see those people go to jail when you look on the news you see its men that are hiding their faces. It makes me so disgusted to be like a male. I want some pride. I want them to like you know like – all the girls are winning the dux awards and its not right. It should be just one time when a boy wins it.*

Collin is able to identify negative aspects with regard to male behaviour, that is, rapists and kidnappers, and is able to show disgust for it but his ability to relate this to himself is limited. He does not see his behaviour as inappropriate. Rather, he sees himself as the saviour of male pride. This tirade against Britney is one that is shared by most of the members of the group both male and female. This vocabulary of abuse with terms such as *witch, queen, arrogant, little tokolosh*, continued with all the children being unaware of the consequences of their behaviour on Britney. Words such as *queen* and *tokolosh* are used to define her in a derogatory way. This concurs with Sarup's (1993) understanding that having the ability to define someone is an exercise in power. This again points to the idea that those who feel they are in a subordinate position – here they feel this because Britney is valued in the school and by the teachers, tend to devalue others in an attempt to regain personal positional power.

### 5.6.3. Boys and sport

Many writers, for example, Renold (2001); Skelton (1997) and Swain (2003) have researched the role of sport in the production of dominant forms of masculinity. They indicated that one of the resources that many boys called upon in order to achieve accepted versions of masculinity was through sport. Sport was one of the ways of male bonding and echoes research done by Dolich (2004) that boys' friendships were activity based. For 92% of boys in my study, sport was used to define masculinity usually in

opposition to femininity. Sport offered them particular ways of being a macho-male – active, tough, rough and exciting. Not only did sport offer acceptable ways of being normal but was also effective in helping boys to gain popularity and to exercise their power in highly physical ways. Many of the boys in the study were popular because they participated in all codes of sport. Not only did it allow boys to compete and measure themselves as masculine but also reinforced the understanding that masculinity is more valued than femininity where girls were derided because they showed no interest in sport. Skelton (2001) indicates that sport and in particular, football or soccer, informs males about how to use and achieve power. Soccer is a territorial or invasion sport, and it requires the use of force and skill in order to dominate over others. It is also a source of camaraderie between boys of similar interests. Constant reference to sports such as wrestling as one that boys participate in or should participate in, is a way for boys to fulfill their traditional masculine roles of being competitive – even if a sport like wrestling meant inflicting intense pain on each other. Further, this sport for the boys totally excluded the girls and promoted a masculinity exclusive to only certain males

*Samuel: Girls are boring .... Talk, talk, talk*

*Clinton: They kept on talking girls stuff over and over again.*

It is clear that hegemonic masculinity is produced through particular understanding of themselves, it is sustained by continued commitment to these ideals and is regulated through citing the inappropriateness of the feminine or through other subordinate identities.

#### 5.6.4. Boys and Conflict

Boys saw that one way to resolve conflict amongst boys was through physically fighting and went out deliberately to cultivate aggressive macho forms of behaviour because they saw this as a way of maintaining their masculinity, establishing their authority and ensuring a position of power (Mac an Ghail, 1995). Being tough and violent was a key signifier in establishing who was ‘top dog’ in the masculine world. It was a strategy used to gain peer acceptance and also to prove their “macho credentials” (Swain, 2003). The

following excerpts reveal how boys jockey for positions and the reasons why they feel fighting helps maintain their status as leader, defender, protector etc, “turning them into ‘real men,’ that is, silent, physically combative, often violent” (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998 cited in Jones, 2000:3). For the majority of boys in their study as well as in this study, being able to physically overpower another was one way to gain status and maintain their position as *top dog* or *leader of the pack*. Failing to be the ‘top dog’ resulted in boys being judged, bullied and mocked. The following narrative reveals how boys prove their manhood.

*Clinton: We hit them. They hit back and if you win, they respect you. You will have the last laugh or the last word and they won't back chat. They know that if they back chat you will give them again.*

*Collin: They (boys) fight about 'I'm the leader of the pack – the toughest things of all. The first- to be the first in all. It gives them (boys) a sense of pride. It's just like within the animals they want to be leader of the pack. There's always challenges – they'll come I want to be the leader now. With animals it's the same story.*

*Ridge: They fight because they want people to recognize them. They want girls to say oh that boy is strong. If any boy comes and tries to abuse me, he can defend me.*

*Boys also fought to show off for girls or because they feel the need to protect girls*

*Collin: I don't think you actually think about the consequence of a fight. Its one minute they like trying to knock each other out. They don't think if this boy hits me I could also be physically injured – to showoff to the girls to say I hit or I knocked him silly. I can protect you now.*

*Harry: They (boys) think you afraid of the boys and won't be your friend. They will take advantage of you and judge and bully you*

*Tom: With the boys we won't talk we just hit*

*Lionel: Sometimes you have to show that boy you not scared of them*

*Mel: Why?*

*Lionel: So that they don't try you again and you don't have to prove yourself – like you a strong boy and can fight all the time.*

This obviously means that positions within this hierarchy are precarious. Boys have to constantly prove their manhood and that they are 'macho.' For These boys, this was a way to ensure that male pride was not damaged. However, sex boys did feel that hurting a boy's pride or insulting a boy takes longer to get over and was more damaging to their sense of masculine pride. This is, according to McLean (1995), as a result of the fear of failure – the failure of being seen as not 'man enough' and not achieving or meeting the criteria surrounding manhood. Failure to achieve this results in self-doubt. What this self-doubt does is reinforce discourses of patriarchy and forms the subjectivities of the boys who have these ideals in mind. Weedon (1987:80) has indicated that these common sense ideas have the ability to fix meaning and to force individuals to comply with it, creating the impression that we are "unified, rational beings, able to perceive the truth of reality." It is this perception that ensures individuals do not see anything beyond this and the power of patriarchy and inequality is reinforced. This inequality causes division amongst males themselves.

The vast majority of boys (92%) in this study and in that of Swain's (2003) indicated that boys should not hit girls. Arguments with girls had to be solved by talking. Again boys' traditional understandings of femininity became evident. Girls are seen as passive, fragile and in need of protection. Alternative positions for girls are not envisaged. These 'truths' have the effect of positioning girls in a subordinate position. These regulatory rules constrain the various ways in which girls can respond to physical intimidation.

*Harry: You won't swear or you won't hit, you talk to her. A girl won't hit back. You can't pick up a leg or hit a girl because she is of the opposite sex to me ... ma'am*

*Mel: How do you solve conflict?*

*Harry: Ask them if what they said is true*

*Trevor: You hit that boys but if it is a girl – for me it is very hard.*

However, this is not the same in relation to males where in fact it seems almost incumbent on them to respond violently. This discourses of masculinity shows the normative nature of discourses. The discursive practices inherent in hegemonic

masculinity such as, being violent, protecting and defending girls, sets the standards against which boys measure themselves, their behaviour and each other. They are then able to make decisions about the desirability of their behaviour, using this frame of reference. Even though boys indicated that sometimes they did not want to physically fight, it was almost impossible for them not to. Failing to engage in violent behaviour would result in victimization. Further, these narratives show how regimes of truth naturalizes practices of violence. Boys speak about violence quite flippantly, accepting this as given and normal. Unless alternative ways of solving conflict are envisaged, boys here would continue to resolve conflict through the discursive practices of physical violence. The complex nature of people is evident where they occupy somewhat contradictory positions, being both protectors of females and defenders of masculinity. The power of masculinity maintains inequality because of its focus on what seems natural and normal and therefore true. This forces people to comply with this idea.

Not all boys indicated this and instead some used their physical strength as a way to dominate and intimidate girls.

*Tom: With the girls you'll just slap*

*Mel: What do the girls do?*

*Tom: They can't do nothing – they frightened.*

The ethos of physical and symbolic intimidation was not always accepted. It certainly was a way, however, to establish gender hierarchy. Whilst the school might indicate that physically hitting girls is forbidden, Tom however did not comply with this rule and instead use force to dominate girls. Some boys did voice their inability to be violent with girls they were not vociferous or vocal in verbalizing this to boys who did use force. In this way, physical abuse by males over females continues. Tom, does not have positional power but he uses violence as a way to regain this power. This is because he knows that girls cannot respond in the same manner. Connell (1995), explains this phenomena in terms of 'shock troops' i.e. those boys who have subordinate identities use violence as a means to compensate for being marginalized.

#### 5.6.5. Boys and Sexuality - negotiating the minefield of power

Within the context of cross gender friendship, boys did not want to accept responsibility for their own sexuality and tended to hold girls responsible for their sexual behaviour.

*Tom: I don't like talking to the girls because they are not so nice. I don't like girls*

*Mel: Why don't you like the girls?*

*Tom: Sometimes I get a feeling and sometimes I don't know*

*Mel: What feeling?*

*Tom: Temptation*

His feelings of discomfort or the lack of confidence he has in relation to girls is problematic. He tends to blame girls for his feelings of temptation. His understanding of sexuality resembles that of the experts on adolescence that Aapola's (2004) examines. Experts here indicated that boys could not be held responsible for their desires because they are at the mercy of their natural bodily functions. The danger of this perception here lies in Tom's refusal to accept responsibility for his own emotional or bodily functions and instead wants others to accept this responsibility. Girls can then be held responsible for the actions of boys. It follows then that boys cannot be held responsible for rape simply because they were following their natural bodily functions.

In the interviews 76% indicated that a great deal of time was spent talking about sex. This male sexual drive discourse espoused by Hollway (1989), promotes acceptance that boys in this adolescent stage are naturally obsessed with sex and in many instances this discourse is used by boys to make sense of and justify abuse of girls. In the following incident, boys complained of unfair treatment by educators. They indicated that the punishment meted out to boys was different and advantaged girls. Boys were threatened with suspension or expulsion if they physically or sexually harassed girls. However, boys complained that this schooling disciplinary technique was used to exploit them. Girls used this knowledge to wield power over boys. Often, the manner in which this power was used was in the form of blackmail.

*Brett: You get other type of girls like when you touch them, they wanna go tell the teachers and then they blackmail you. Buy me sweets or take a slap.*

Sexual harassment makes girls feel like objects and the unwanted sexual advances of boys degrade them. In such circumstances, boys wield more power and position girls as powerless. Here, however, we note that girls have taken their once powerless position and used it to their advantage. They blackmail the boys indicating that in order for their unwanted overtures not to be reported to educators they could either be slapped or the boys could buy them sweets. Here, they are negotiating their own demands knowing that the rules in school protect them. By negotiating their own demands, they are able to hold the boys accountable for violating their bodies. They are powerful here because they are negotiating their own terms. Boys, however, responded by saying this was blackmail and that girls took advantage of this protection offered by the school. Skelton (2001) also shows how college girls refuse to be rendered powerless and tackled masculine heterosexual strategies used by boys to instead negotiate a degree of power for themselves. They refused to be the objects of the 'male gaze.' This incident, however, shows how the school positions girls in my study as powerless. Instead of empowering girls to tackle issues of sexual harassment, girls are rendered victims with no personal capacity or ability to defend themselves for themselves. Any attempt at reform would need to take this into account.

Boys' aggressive displays of masculinity are produced in relation to female passivity where girls cannot stop or prevent boys from touching them, even though, boys know the consequences of this kind of sexual assault by the school. Thus, whilst girls used their momentary powerful position to negotiate themselves, they are still rendered passive by boys continued assault on them. They are further rendered powerless by society because public discourse indicates that girls 'tread a very thin line between sexuality and decency' by using their bodies as a bargaining chip (Ryan, 1997). Amongst the same group of friends this kind of aggressive sexual behaviour was sanctioned by the dominant discourse of society. However, Clinton, who was powerful in this group, felt this was wrong and indicated:

*Clinton: Brett and Martin they irritate me when they move like that in the air (indicating a sexual gesture). They go like that by the girls without the girls permission. I don't like that. It is like assault.*

He is able to resist and challenge the dominant discourse and, as Hoy (1986) cited in Ryan (2004:5) indicates “change does not occur by transforming the whole at once but by resisting injustices at the particular points where they manifest themselves.”

One of the reasons why Clinton was able to successfully challenge these boys was because of his powerful status within the group and the school at large. It is an instance where the promise, ability and capacity for change is evident. Clinton is able to take up a subject position that is available and in so doing declines the power and pleasure on offer within the prevailing gender order. He is able to realise alternative ways of behaving – a way to relate to girls on a more equal footing within an alternative discourse to harassment.

However, Clinton is only able to do this because within the schooling context harassment of girls is forbidden and not tolerated. His awareness of this and of changing male – female relations enable him to occupy a place or position that is acceptable within the broader context. This is an important source, for it is his willingness to use the power available to him as male to act and to change. No longer is power being used over another but instead to change. Aapola (2004) indicates that because discourses are contradictory and unstable they have the effect of creating tension and different understandings for the world in accordance with the context. Clinton's understanding or knowledge of harassment within the South African context enhances his ability to change his world, “to affirm his individuality rather than commonality” (Burr,1995:73).

Evident here as well is the understanding that discourses are historically specific. Previous to the human rights discourse, patriarchal discourse reinforced the abuse of women through its networks of power. The knowledge and its inherent power because of its reference to truth defined how women could and should act. This ability to define and

regulate behaviour served particular interests in society at the time. This is not to say that patriarchal discourses no longer exist, but it does specify that the totalizing nature of it be no longer assumed. The constitution of South Africa recognizes the rights and dignity of women and to some extent this has had an impact on Clinton in this study. This understanding reiterates what McHoul and Grace (1993) and Sawicki (1991) reveal about Foucault's perceptions of the nature of power at the micro level of society. For them it is at this level, that is, the daily interactions between people that resistance to power occurs.

#### 5.6.6. Compulsory heterosexuality

Within the peer context, there would be a particular way of thinking about what it means to be 'male' and this would become dominant. This meaning is rigid and makes it impossible for boys to imagine anything else. Whilst this may be contested or challenged the dominant discourse has the ability to influence and enable one to measure themselves and others against an already established norm. These unspoken rules would generally coerce boys to conform to these rules. Amongst the children in this study, the dominant understanding of masculinity was that it was constructed as different - in opposition to femininity and those feminine boys were often positioned and controlled through homophobic abuse.

*Mel: What might cause you to be upset with someone who is your friend?*

*Lionel: When they talk about you behind your back or when they laugh and mock you. The boys do that especially. Like if they think you acted funny like a girl. If a teacher scolded you or hit you and you cried then they all laugh and mock you.*

For Lionel, the fear was to be seen and positioned as a girl. His reference to crying indicates that these are qualities he associates with girls. If one reacted in this 'girlish' way then there were direct consequences – alienation, being mocked and laughed at. These 'dividing practices' are, according to Foucault, a technique used to categorize and classify people and has the effect of dividing men from men. This understanding was also evident in the study by Martino (1999), Mac an Ghail, (1994, 1995). Their studies, as well as this study, showed that even when violence or emotional abuse was not overt,

boys did indicate their fear of being thought of as 'gay', 'lesbian', or 'moffie.' To be seen in this manner would be to be awarded the status of inferiority. Boys feared being labeled a girl and felt that this was insulting. Labeling was a "mechanism used to police gender and sexual boundaries" (Mac an Ghail, 1995:250).

Boys' relationships with each other tended to be precarious and any deviation from the rules of masculinity were questioned. They were policed by the boys themselves as well as by girls. It would seem that the boundaries of masculinity are continually defined and monitored and the risk of being associated with anything remotely considered feminine was risky

*Mel: Why would a boy not want to be your friend?*

*Ridge: Maybe they'll think I'm a lesbian and that maybe I want to kiss them or something*

*Mel: And a girl?*

*Ridge: Maybe they'll think I only hang around with boys that maybe I'm gay and they don't wanna come near me because they want boys who are straight*

The fear of being labeled homosexual was so intense that sometimes boys could not confide in each other. This is reiterated by findings from Martino's study (1999). In my study, Trevor felt that even confiding in boys about traumatic things was not possible for he feared being seen as homosexual. This prevented him from being able to express his emotions and there were very few people that he could confide in about personal issues. Whilst, he was not able to confide in the boys he was able to tell Penny, his close female friend, all his secrets because she did not judge him.

*Mel: Why can't you talk to the boys about this issue?*

*Trevor: I don't think the boys will understand. I think they will think I am gay. You can't talk to boys about that sort of thing because they don't understand. It is too bad*  
Two issues are important here. Firstly, that certain behaviour like crying and being supportive was unacceptable behaviour in boys' friendships. Secondly, that these boys

had a clear understanding of the unspoken rules that regulated their behaviour. These rules of formation have become the truth and commitment and responsibility for it is essential. In this way the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality remains unchallenged.

The boys in my study already have an understanding that to be different is wrong. Rejecting homosexuality gives them the opportunity to express their own sense of 'morality,' which is gleaned from the discourses surrounding heterosexuality and homosexuality. Because homosexuality is for them morally incorrect and precludes normal ways of being, they are thus rejected. This moral system of truth about homosexuality has constituted their subjectivities – their understanding of the world and their place in it. The power of this discourse is explicit with Ridge clearly recognizing that the 'other' is powerless.

Ridge finds it difficult to negotiate himself around the minefield of interpersonal relationships. He fears being positioned and labeled as homosexual. When he joins boys then the girls think that he is homosexual, but when he is with the girls all the time then the boys think he is 'gay.' He had difficulty is trying to decide the position to take up and is thus rendered powerless in these relationships. Thus, whilst the 'other' (the disciplinary force of bio-power) may not have been physically present, 'it' (the understanding of homosexuality) still existed and was always present. The fear of homosexuality had the ability to control the behaviour of the boys who were ever mindful of it. These findings about surveillance are reminiscent of Bentham's 'panopticon,' where the behaviour of children is constantly being monitored and regulated and this ensures the correct behaviour. The end result is a self-regulating subject. One of the ways in which Ridge attempts to re-position himself as powerful and to challenge the fear that controls him, is to regulate his behaviour and to become popular with the girls. He is then seen as acceptable – being one of the 'homies' and 'best friends' by boys. In so doing, the dominant versions of heterosexual masculinity is reinforced but it also has the effect of ensuring that boys have to continually prove their masculinity.

*Collin: Last year Ridge had a lot of girlfriends.*

*Ridge: I was upset with him (Collin) ma'am because he used to go spread rumours about me that I had 28 girlfriends and this and that.*

Whilst the spreading of rumours may have caused a slight rift in their friendship it had no negative consequences for him as a boy. Instead this boosted his popularity amongst both girls and boys. His reputation as being 'cool' was enhanced.

### **5.7. Reflections**

In this section, I present the findings from the data to explain how the children in the study position themselves within the discourses of friendships. I also reflect on how their subjectivities are constructed and re-constructed as they negotiate and position and re-position themselves in their interactions with their friends.

Firstly, findings reveal that even though children indicated that they had cross gender friendships, these friendships took on a particular form. Both boys and girls revealed that they had traditional understandings of femininity and masculinity. The discourses of essential femininity and masculinity ensured that both sexes adhered quite strictly to the rules surrounding femininity and masculinity. For most of them, in order for them to be recognisable to each other and society, they had to display the correct feminine and masculine behaviour. This binary construction of gender as difference had the effect of ensuring differential access to power. In their interactions, boys wielded more power and often girls were powerless.

Secondly, children who attempted to resist being positioned within a particular discourse often revealed their quite contradictory positioning, seizing power in one context but losing it in another. Within the school context, Natalie for example was powerful because she was intelligent and this was valued. However, in her interactions with Ridge and Clinton, she positioned herself as subordinate to them. The complex nature of gender was evident. Further, children could not recognize when they colluded with their oppression rather than challenging it. Those who recognized the unequal power relationships within their friendships groups felt that they were not powerful enough to challenge this inequality or because they had felt the repercussions for being different and

going against the norms and this proved too traumatic. The relationships between boys and girls tended to be unequal. Often, the girls felt powerless and lost out on opportunities to assert themselves.

It became quite clear that even within their groups, children had little understanding of gender equality and instead displayed a deep moral commitment to maintaining the categories of traditional masculinity and femininity and followed the rules of formation. They often saw each other in opposition and in so doing formed their subjectivities based on these lines. They were thus not able to recognise one another if they did not display the behaviour that such traditional categories ensured. However, not all relationships with the opposite sex were negative. Some girls did feel more comfortable with their relationships with boys than with girls. However, their relationships tended to be unequal because often girls deferred to the power of the boys without much questioning. Whilst girls enjoyed their relationships with the boys and even though it was an unequal one, they preferred it because their relationships with girls tended to be emotionally traumatic and they found boys less judgemental of their behaviour.

Findings revealed are in keeping with Bentham's panopticon. Children were subjected to the disciplinary gaze of each other. Very often girls and boys changed their behaviour or prevented themselves from acting in particular ways because they knew that their behaviour was being policed by their friends. Here the gaze worked to monitor and control and ensure the correct behaviour. Very often this was through the concept of normalisation.

Amongst boys, the commitment to dominant hegemonic understandings of masculinity was evident. Boys and girls had little understanding that there were many masculinities. The boys' fear of homosexuality revealed itself as a fear of that which is also feminine. Within this discourse boys ensured that they continued the stereotypes of being emotionally distant and focused on proving their masculinity in terms of traditionally held beliefs about masculinity, for example, sport, violence. The fear of homosexuality was so prevalent and even though there were no known homosexuals present in the

school the very idea of homosexuality was enough to ensure the correct type of masculine behaviour.

Attempts by children to challenge the constraints of their gender categories revealed that their traditional understandings were far too powerful to be successful. This study reveals the need for far reaching and in-depth gender equality programmes within schools. This study was conducted amongst children who indicated that they did have cross gender friendships and that they liked their friends from the opposite sex. However, even in this positive context, gender inequality exists. This inequality prevents real meaningful relationship from being formed. Participants were active in positioning themselves and each other and some were positioned by the dominant discourse, which worked against the promotion of gender equality.

The study does reveal that there is a starting point which reformers and in particular myself can use in order to try to effect change. Boys and girls are interacting and in these interactions there are times when they have challenged the existing status quo because of the new knowledge that they have gained about equality, rights and empowerment. Also they have recognized the power dynamics within their relationships and have seen the inequality. This I believe is a positive starting point. Whilst this is a small-scale research project, these findings are of importance for me in my role as social justice educator and social change agent. I now have the knowledge to begin implementation of gender equality initiatives within my classroom.

This chapter analysed the discourses evident in the research and the impact this had on the manner in which children relate to each other. The following chapter focuses on the limitations evident in the study and well as on recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER SIX: FINAL REFLECTIONS

In this chapter, I reflect on the limitations that I have found in the study. I also reflect on ways forward that would entail further research in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of cross gender friendships.

This has been a small-scale research project. Exploration of the gendered world is very complex and intricate. My research spanned a period of approximately 6 months. During these months, one of the issues I sought to understand was how children position and construct their subjectivities within cross gender friendships. However, because of the intricate world of children, this time span was inadequate. McLeod (2000) indicates that in order to fully understand the nuances of subjectivity, subjectivity must be seen as a process over time. It becomes imperative, therefore, to conduct longitudinal studies to fully understand subjectivity and its complexities. McLeod's, seven longitudinal study revealed that subjectivities are always in process, interacting with institutions and structural processes, and constantly being constituted and re-constituted. Over time one is better able to examine the changes because as children mature, they begin to relate to the world in different ways and they see it through different and varied lenses. This would impact on the manner in which subjectivity is understood and explained. Children would interact with the material conditions of their world, with institutions and with multiple discourses that would constantly change. This would then enable us to see human beings not as unified, rational beings but as contradictory and dynamic. Understanding the processes involved in this would prove vital.

My study focused on understanding children within a particular context, and within cross gender friendship groups. Undoubtedly, their construction of gender would be influenced by interactions that occur between and amongst friends in different contexts. Subjects would display varying and contradictory subject positions within discourses surrounding these friendships. This would impact on their ways of seeing, being, and being seen. However, in my study I did not focus on the intersections of race, class and culture and the impact this may have had on their constructions of self. There are a variety of

discourses within each identity groups, each with their set of practices and understandings. Within these discourses complex relations occur, vacillating between co-operation, tension and resistance. Thus understanding the wider context from which children operate and the various discourses inherent in this context would no doubt impact on the findings. New and different understandings would be possible taking the dynamics of race, class and culture into account. Examining the emerging dynamics that play a part in the construction and limitations of an individual are important. Pyke (1996) cited in Reay (2001:163) indicates:

“Hierarchies of social class, race and sexuality provide additional layers of complication. They form the structural and cultural contexts in which gender is enacted in everyday life, thereby fragmenting gender into multiple masculinities and femininities.”

The rationale behind my study was to explore whether the new curriculum may have had an impact on children’s understanding of gender equality. This was with the assumption that children understood and had learned about gender equality in the curriculum. This was a naive assumption. In attempting to explore this impact, I focused solely on the children. However, understanding the role of the educators, the school and schooling practices would also have impacted on how children understand gender equality within the cross gender friendship context. At the outset, the schooling discourse to some extent forced children to comply with rules of regulation. This is not to say that they were passive but rather they actively took up positions that made them feel powerful and valued. Deeper delving into the educators and the school’s role in the construction and perpetuation of particular discourses would prove insightful and would provide a more holistic picture.

Issues that arise from the study indicate the urgent need to put gender reform policies into place in schools. Despite constitutional support for gender equality within education, there exists little evident of actual implementation of gender equality initiatives. Initiatives that exist are limited and do not focus on wide spread understanding of gender

dynamics. Children in the study remain firmly embedded within traditional histories of gender. Researchers Morrell (1998) and Moletsane (2005) have stated that limited change has occurred on a structural level – change that has occurred has tended to focus on educator equality issues (Chisholm and Napa, 1999). Understanding structural change, however, has not been the focus of my study. I mention this solely for the purpose of trying to envisage change, even on a small scale, without the support of the government or the Education Department. This apparent lack of meaningful transformation and the absence of far reaching gender equality programmes are causes for concern and raises questions about the will to transform (Moletsane et al, 2002). How are we to understand the lack of governmental and departmental support and restraint in bringing gender equality issues to the fore? Further, how can gender equality initiatives be successfully implemented in the face of limited governmental and departmental support? It is only with the support of the government and the Education Department that gender equality could be a reality in the classroom.

This need for widespread governmental and departmental support is realized in examining the findings in my research and in examining the deeply entrenched nature of inequality based on gender. After 11 years of democracy, children in my study seem to construct gender as difference. Kenway (1994, 1997) examined gender reform initiatives that have occurred in Australia over the past two decades, and she still found that gender as ‘difference’ has been one of the most difficult to tackle by feminists. This idea of gender as ‘difference’ is revealed in my study in present day South Africa. Research is needed to understand why this is. Why is it that for children there are only two recognisable gender categories? Children take up these categories as though it were an inevitable and fixed element in their lives. Swain (2005) cautions about gender as difference because it creates dualism usually based on inequality. For him and arising out of his study in the United Kingdom on boys and girls in relation to each other, he concluded that rather than seeing gender as two separate and distinct worlds, we should see them as complementary cultures sharing the same space. Kenway et al (1994), however, indicates to the contrary pointing out that the understanding of gender as difference is important. Findings from my study concur with this and reveal that for boys

and girls gender is constructed as oppositional. It becomes imperative to then examine the discursive practices that constitute and maintain difference. In this way we can use difference as a “multi-source both for resistance to various modes of domination and change” (Kenway et al, 1994:23). Furthermore, understanding that gender is a social construction allows us to be able to reflect and then re-think and re-make our understanding of gender (Swain, 2005).

Research in South Africa has often focused on inter-personal relationships between the same sex groups. As yet I have not come across research that focuses on friendship, neither have I found studies relating to cross gender friendships. This is the gap that I had hoped my study would fill. However, more research needs to be done. In this way a body of research can be developed and more adequate explanations offered. Whilst the findings in my study are contextually bound and the dynamics evident in this school may differ from other schools, it is hoped that this research would contribute to the body of research around cross gender friendships. In this way, research that delves into initiatives may impact and help develop ways of improving the relationship between the same sex groups as well as with the opposite sex. This would lead to children forging more positive perceptions of themselves and each other.

Finally, these understandings have important implications for researchers and for gender reform initiatives in South Africa. One of the most important areas to start with, would be to develop educators professionally. Educators need to be educated about gender so as to fully understand how gender is discursively produced. Failing to start with this would inevitably lead to a failure of initiatives. Further, they need to be able to develop and produce a curriculum and pedagogy that is infused with gender equality issues. I wish to emphasize that understanding the gendered world of children is important for those working to address the issue of gender equality. It is evident from my study that much work needs to be done so that a time when males and females can relate to each other as equals can be envisaged and realized. Thus, this research suggests that the issue of gender equality needs to be addressed in schools. It also provides for me, as researcher

and educator, knowledge of a starting point to address the issue of gender equality within the confines of my classroom.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**LETTER OF CONSENT: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL GOVERNING  
BODY**

The Governing Body/Principal  
Berg Street Primary School  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

Dear Sir/Madam

As you know, at present, I am studying towards a Masters Degree in Social Justice Education. As part of my course I have to complete a research project. My research is around the issue of gender equality within cross gender friendship groups. I need the permission of both the principal and governing body to complete my research at the school, using Grade 7 learners. The reason for the choice of both the school and participants is because of accessibility. As you know I do teach grade 7. During the research process, I will not use any teaching time and if this occurs I shall endeavour to make up the time lost. This would be done with your permission. Further in order to collect data I will make use of the afternoons to collect the data from the children.

I wish to make it known that participation in this project is voluntary with participants being free to leave the project at any time they wish to. At all times, I will try to protect the anonymity of the children participating in the project.

This project is being done with the knowledge of my lecturer and supervisor – Prof. A. Muthikrishna. I look forward to your favourable response.

Yours in education

---

Miss Martin

**APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM TO PARENTS**

Date:

Dear Parent

I, Miss Martin, am presently conducting research as part of my Masters Degree in Social Justice. My research focuses on how grade 7 learners understand gender equality in the context of cross gender peer relations. In order for me to get this information I will be asking pupils questions around their friendships. I therefore require your permission to allow your child to participate in this study. Please complete the form below and return it to the school.

This study is being conducted with the permission of the governing body and the principal.

Thanking you

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher  
Miss M.Y. Martin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

.....  
Consent Form:

I \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ in Grade 7  
\_\_\_\_\_ will/will not allow my child/ward to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Appendix 3: Focus Group Interview Schedule

1. How would you describe a friend?
2. Do you have friends outside of school?
3. Are they the same friends you have in school?
4. If no, why do you have different friends in school and different friends at home
5. With the friends you have in school what are some of the things you do with them
6. How many hours do you spend with you friends in school?
7. Do you have friends from the opposite sex i.e. if you are female do you have friends who are male and if you are male do you have friends who are female
8. What is special about being friends with boys
9. What is special about being friends with girls?
10. How is your friendship with members from the opposite sex different to that of the same sex
11. How alike are you to your girl friends?
12. How alike are you to your boy friends?
13. What are some of the things you like to talk about?
14. Are you able to talk about the same things that you do with friends from the same sex than you do with the opposite sex? Why?
15. If you need advice who would you go to – the boys or the girls? Why?
16. What sort of advice do you ask your girl friends
17. What sort of advice do you ask your boy friends?
18. Do you share secrets with your friends from the opposite sex? Why?
19. Are there boys or girls who you want to be friends with but they don't want to be friends with you?
20. What kinds of arguments do you have with the people in your friendship group
21. Is there a difference in the fights that you have with the boys and in the fights that you have with the boys? Why?
22. How do you solve fights in the group? Why?
23. What are some of the reasons you think that boys would fight with boys?
24. What are some of the reasons why girls fight
25. Is it a good way to solve problems? Why?
26. Give me an example of a fight that you had with a member of your group
27. Who do you think is responsible for the fight? Why?
28. What might cause you to be upset with your friend?
29. Is the issue of friendship covered in any of the subjects that you do
30. Name them
31. Does this benefit your relationships with friends in any way? Why?
32. Do you get enjoyment out of discussing relationships in class
33. Is it difficult being friends with someone from the opposite sex? Why?

## **APPENDIX 4: SITUATED SCENARIOS**

### **SCENARIO ONE:**

Janet is a very pretty and intelligent girl. She wears the latest fashion and her hair is always neatly styled. She is extremely popular with the boys. She has had many boyfriends in the past few months. Whenever you see her she is always surrounded by boys, who keep her entertained and buy her sweets and chocolates. The girls do not like her very much. They think she is a 'bitch' because she is always with the boys. One of the girls, Pam says, "That one thinks she is too clever because she comes out first and the teacher thinks she is so perfect but I know better. I don't trust her and I even told my boyfriend not to hang out with her because she steals boyfriends." Vusi, one of the boys standing nearby overhears and he says, "Me too. She thinks that she is too hot. She said that she doesn't like me. The other boys can hold her hands or touch her face, but the other day I touched her bottom and she swore me. I don't know why she got so angry because the boys are always touching her, so what difference does it make?" I told all my friends about her."

1. What do you think of Janet and her behaviour?
2. Do you think it is right for the girls and boys to call her a bitch? Why?
3. Is Pam justified in thinking that Janet is not to be trusted? Why?
4. What is your opinion of Vusi?
5. Do you think Vusi reacted correctly? Why?
6. Do you think the children in the school are justified in thinking these things about Janet?

### **SCENARIO TWO:**

Bob is a thin, slightly built boy. He likes to do 'girls' things instead of the things boys are supposed to do. He likes making dresses, playing with dolls, cooking, making tea, ironing and cleaning the room after people have made a mess. This distresses his father who begs him to do boys things instead. "Bob don't be such a moffie, go out and play with the boys. Play some soccer, cricket, any kind of game with the boys." But Bob says

no he does not like games as he finds them tiring and too rough. He prefers being with the girls. A lot of boys and girls give him a really hard time and write on the school toilet that "Bob is a moffie," and "Bob, behave like a man!"

1. Why do you think Bob's father is so upset?
2. Do you think Bob behaves the way boys are supposed to behave? Why?
3. Why do you think the girls and boys give him a rough time?
4. What could the boys do to make him behave like a man?
5. What are some of the games you think Bob should play?

### **SCENARIO THREE**

Tessa and Kate are real go-getters. They do things that are different. You will find them climbing trees, playing soccer etc. But they also like wearing make-up, going shopping, playing netball etc. They are the ones who do things like follow the boys around giving them a score out of ten for being attractive or cute. They are also very strong willed and can also be aggressive. Recently, they got angry with a boy for showing off and irritating them. They grabbed him, swore him and then stuck his head under the tap.

1. What is your opinion of Tessa and Kate?
2. Is it okay for them to behave in this manner? Why?

### **SCENARIO FOUR**

Clint is an intelligent and popular boy. He is well liked by all the pupils. The girls especially find him attractive and charming. The boys like him because he takes part in all the codes of sport done at the school e.g. cricket, swimming, soccer and rugby. He is a natural born leader. One day, Clint is fooling around on the grounds with his friends. They are playing a game of soccer. The ball hits one of the boys called Sam. Sam is bleeding all over and is very angry and embarrassed because all the children are laughing at him. He confronts Clint. Clint looks around and sees all the girls and boys watching and waiting for how he is going to react. He punches and kicks Sam until Sam is pulled

away. The next day everyone was talking about how Clint hit Sam. Some children thought it was cool and that Clint was 'the man.' The girls thought that it is good to have a boyfriend like Clint because he could always protect them. Sam confronted Clint again and Clint hit him again. He felt that he had to do this or Sam would keep on coming and trying him again and again and again.

1. Why do you think Clint is described as a natural born leader?
2. Why do you think Clint hit Sam?
3. Was it right for him to do so? Why?
4. Do you think that Clint is 'the man?' Why?
5. Do you think Sam was looking for a hiding? Why?
6. How do you think boys and girls on the ground would have reacted if Clint had not hit Sam? Why?
7. If you were a girl would you like to have Clint as your boyfriend? Why?

