<u>"Man, your penis is ashamed of you":</u>

Discursive constructions of young South African men's ideal masculine body-images.

By:

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Dissertation in the Discipline of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 7 January 2013.

<u>Declaration</u>

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Dissertation in the Discipline of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 7 January 2013.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other University.

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Simóne Plüg

7 January 2013

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Dr. Anthony Collins

Supervisor

7 January 2013

"Being a man is hard work. This has always been true in the Western tradition. The work in question involves education, training, and, especially, selection. Because in this tradition not all human beings are men, not even all those of the male gender. Humanity, that is the masculine quality of being a man, was characterized by opposition right from the start."

(Volli, 2000, p 114)

i.   <u>Acknowledgements</u>

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ii. <u>Abstract</u>

Socio-cultural constructions of the way in which individuals perceive their own bodies are a fundamental aspect of personal identity, and how people view and pursue their relations with others, and how they determine their position and role in society. Contemporary South African consumer culture, facilitated by globalisation, has promoted increasingly homogenous, unrealistic norms regarding what constitutes a "desirable" person. The aim of this study is to explore young men's accounts of ideal masculine body-image and discuss the implications that these constructions have on their identities. It aims to provide an account of the discourses participants use when discussing their own and other male bodies, explore the ways in which consumerism and the media facilitate certain constructions of body-image amongst young South African men and forefront particular practices, and to highlight the social dynamics which facilitate emphasis on some discourses around the desirable ideal male body and the silencing of others. This study uses a qualitative research design and a social constructionist theoretical framework. Data was collected using semi-structured, individual interviews with 12 young men between the ages of 18 and 26 from Durban, South Africa and the data collected was analysed using discourse analysis. The results discussed six main discourses evident amongst the texts, namely, *the natural body, functionality over form, the necessity of progression, the body for self and others, the body is secondary* and *the homosexual aversion.*

<u>Keywords</u>

Male body, Ideal body-images, Masculinity, Identity, Discourse, Consumer Culture.

iii. <u>**Table of Contents**</u>

1. INTRODUCTION

"The rise of individualism and consumerism … ensures the body is no longer viewed as a biological entity. Rather it becomes a sociocultural construct—a medium of self-expression open to investment and consumption … that is also shaped by structural dynamics that contour the conditions under which such beauty work takes place".

(Ricciardelli, 2011, p. 184)

The body is the means through which all individuals physically encounter and interact with the environment every day. Yet the functions of the body, now more than ever, extend beyond the mere biological boundaries they maintain. Social and cultural constructions of male and female bodies, and the way in which specific individuals perceive their own bodies, have come to present a fundamental way in which individuals negotiate their identities, view and pursue their relations with others, and determine their position and role in society. The body can be viewed as both the vehicle for achieving and the symbol representing all that is pleasurable, powerful and prestigious. It is simultaneously "desirable and desiring" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 177).

Due to rapid technological developments and globalisation over the past few years, almost every country worldwide is exposed to increasingly homogenous sets of cultural norms which portray only the trim and toned young people as "attractive". The consumer culture "uses images, signs and symbolic goods which summon up dreams, desires and fantasies which suggest romantic authenticity and emotional fulfilment in narcissistically pleasing oneself, instead of others" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 19). Using the media as its main medium, it establishes a problematic status quo of what constitutes a beautiful person which leaves many individuals feeling isolated, insecure and inadequate (James, 2007) by highlighting the usually vast gap between their self-perception and these ideals. The media, furthermore, provides the costly solution and escape from these feelings by encouraging the use of a variety of cosmetic products and procedures and even promotes and glamorises serious psychological disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa (Wolf, 2002). This can have a decided impact on self-esteem and self-identity, and cause psychological distress. This is particularly pertinent in a South African context. Not only do the majority of individuals lack the resources needed to achieve these ideals in a constructive or adaptive manner, but South

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Africa's unique socio-cultural milieu may itself foster these ideals, in particular, especially with regard to strong and masculine male body images.

This study uses a social constructionist approach and discourse analytic method to challenge consumerist constructions of masculinity by exploring young male South Africans' personal accounts of media depictions of ideal looking men, paying particular attention to the ways in which young men construct their own bodies. In doing so, it aims to provide an account of the ways in which young men explain and manage the conflicting notions of their own desirability they may encounter in their daily lives. This is particularly relevant in an African context where the Western notions of desirability, as depicted in the media, are often in direct contrast with the traditionally valued ideas in the African culture (Swartz, 1998). For example, body maintenance behaviours and the use of cosmetic products are strongly associated with feminine qualities and, therefore, rejected as an acceptable part of a masculine identity. In addition, attention to aesthetic qualities of the male body is traditionally frowned upon in most indigenous African cultures and the male body is seen to be used purely functionally and economically. Individuals, however, are seldom passive recipients of cultural and social norms. They are active agents who dynamically grapple with ambiguity and contested meanings within their different contexts and, in turn, construct and reconstruct their personal narratives accordingly (Burr, 1995).

This study would be a useful addition to the literature as it aims to provide in-depth insight into and critical understandings of two under-researched groups in this field, namely South Africans and young men. One of the main concerns in research on body dissatisfaction has been its correlation with supposedly unhealthy body-maintenance behaviours such as excessive dieting, cosmetic surgery and steroid use. Due to the quantitative emphasis amongst this body of work, these studies tend to strongly focus on this aspect. This thesis, however, will attempt to look beyond the unhealthy body-maintenance behaviours associated with cultural body-image ideals and also examine the anxiety and insecurity that these images produce in masculine subjectivity using an exploratory qualitative approach. In addition, this research is contextualised within contemporary consumer culture, which focuses on the effects of globalisation, and constitutes an important area of enquiry. It highlights the changes in the construction of the different genders and, in turn, influences their prospective roles in society. In other words, when particular aspects of the male or female identity are forefronted as essential, their roles as providers or carers are created and reinforced. Through the written

thesis, this study attempts to uncover disempowering popular narratives, and the political and social mechanisms which reinforce them, potentially allowing for active engagement in consciousness raising and perhaps promoting insight and emancipatory change through this awareness (Burr, 1995).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The self: Identity

Developmental and Social psychology provides several theories that facilitate understandings around gender and identity. These theories tend to focus on group dynamics and the influence of social references on an individual's self-concept as well as their behaviour. Wade's (1998) Theory of Male Reference Group Identity Dependence is particularly relevant in this study as it can be used to direct understanding on male identity development. This theory constructs male identity around reference group dependence which refers to the degree to which men rely on reference groups in order to negotiate their gender role self-concepts (Wade, 1998, 2008; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). According to Wade (2008) "the male reference group is conceptualised as the purveyor of masculine culture, underlying differences in men's self-definitions of masculinity" (p. 6). Three different male reference group identity dependence statuses have been posited which suggest the level of psychological relatedness that a male individual experiences with other men and in turn the degree or type of masculinity they portray (Wade, 1998, 2008; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). The three reference group types are no reference group status; reference group dependent and reference group nondependent.

With the first group, no reference group status, men tend to believe that there are no other men with whom they relate or identify hence the gender role self-concept is thought to be "relatively undefined or fragmented" (Wade, 2008, p. 7). The reference group dependence status suggests that men identify easily with some men but not with others. Wade (2008) posits that the "gender role self-concept is dependent on a male reference group and therefore externally defined, stereotyped, conformist, and rigid" (p. 7). The last group, reference group nondependent, refers to men who acknowledge differences between other men but still experience a degree of identification and connectedness with all or several different types of men (Wade, 1998, 2008; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). This suggests that the individual's gender role self-concept is "internally defined, pluralistic, flexible, and autonomous" (Wade, 2008, p. 7).

Furthermore, Bulhan's (1985) modes of psychological defences theory is particularly useful in a South African context because it highlights the ways in which exposure to changes in culture, and experiences of conflicting cultures, can influence individuals' identity formation.

Bulhan (1985) asserts that there are three different stages of defences. The first stage is referred to as capitulation and involves the process whereby individuals simultaneously reject their own traditional cultures and actively incorporate or integrate into the dominant culture of society (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). In this case the individuals, for example, may distance themselves from traditional African dress, norms and practices and become increasingly involved in Westernised popular culture. Although this stage may assist to a degree in that it allows them to manage their new social environment more effectively, it inevitably leads them to feelings of alienation and exclusion from their authentic social realities (Bulhan, 1985; Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). Revitalisation is the term that is used to describe the second stage. This refers to "a reactive disavowal of the dominant culture and a concurrent romanticism of the indigenous culture" (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003, p. 137). For example, black South Africans may begin to reject or deny aspects of the "Coca-Cola Culture" such as pop music and urban style and long for their African homeland traditions. Finally, radicalisation refers to individuals' unequivocal dedication to creating social change. In particular, it involves excluding all the "choices" provided by oppressors and a formation of identity beyond these limitations (Bulhan, 1985). This is deemed essential for "reclaiming" of identity after long exposure to oppressive conditions (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003).

Critical Psychology has extended these concepts and ideas posited by Social Psychology by emphasising the role that language and power play with regard to gender and identity (Burr, 1995). Critical Psychology criticises traditional psychology for being too essentialist, individualistic and intrapersonal. It is argued that traditional psychology theories tend to victim blame as they locate all psychological issues within the individual themselves. In other words, these theories ignore historical context and fail to address the role that political, social and cultural factors play in shaping reality. Traditional psychology, therefore, promotes reactive interventions aimed at treating individual problems without fully acknowledging the social and political structures which need to be altered if effective social change is to occur (Beyer, Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland, 2007). The main theoretical underpinning of this study, which will guide the research questions, methodology and data analysis, will be social constructionism. Social constructionism is an approach that stems from a postmodernist attitude and directly challenges positivistic notions of empiricism and objectivity. It emphasises language and the individual's own stories or narratives and focuses specifically on the way in which meaning and reality are socially-created through interaction. In addition,

power relations are forefronted and attempts are made to uncover concealed structures which maintain an oppressive status quo.

Beyer et al. (2007) suggest that there are several basic assumptions of social constructionist theory. Social constructionism suggests that people use language to construct both personal and collective versions of reality. This highlights that there is no single, external real truth, but rather that each society and culture develops their own variety of truths based on the language and socio-cultural context. Burr (1995) emphasises this point by suggesting that researchers working from this perspective challenge commonly accepted knowledge and view the world with a critical outlook which involves challenging conventional ways in which the world can be understood. For example, stereotypical aspects of masculinity (men as being strong, aggressive and virile beings) constitute a conventional way of thinking and understanding the world. She argues that truth cannot be merely observed from an objective and unbiased standpoint, instead we create truth from reflecting what we perceive to be real when observing the world around us (Burr, 1995). Great importance is given to the different words that we use to describe our experiences and the "guiding metaphors" we develop which simultaneously emphasise and conceal various aspects of experience and, in turn, create a particular picture of truth (Beyer et al., 2007).

A second assumption of social constructionism is that the process of social interaction is a key means of facilitating the creation or fabrication of reality and sustainment of knowledge. Particular versions of the truth only become meaningful when they are created and used by individuals within their social relationships. Social constructionists, therefore, emphasise various types of social interactions, with particular attention being given to the language used within these interactions (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism places relationships as the primary and paramount source of "truth" and embeds all understandings of reality within social, historical and cultural contexts (Beyer et al., 2007). Burr (1995) takes this a step further by arguing that understandings of truth and reality are not only specific to particular historical and cultural contexts, but are also created and produced by these factors. In other words, understanding and knowledge is "dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time" (Burr, 1995, p. 3).

Furthermore, social constructionism suggests that communities combine and connect life experiences through the use of stories and narratives (Beyer et al., 2007). Dominant stories

within a society are referred to as grand narratives. These stories are the most prominent narratives and, hence, the most frequently told stories in a particular society. These grand narratives also tend to be totalising in that they attempt to group a vast range of social behaviour using one single, uniform explanation. All communities, however, contain multiple narratives and very often the minority groups have their stories silenced or overlooked in favour of the majority's overriding narrative. An important aspect of social constructionism involves discovering and recognising the silenced stories and highlighting their concealed meanings (Beyer et al., 2007). In addition, examining collective social practices are seen as tantamount to developing understandings of particular cultural and time bound social and psychological realities (Burr, 1995; de la Rey & Duncan, 2003).

Finally, social constructionism asserts that as individuals are actively involved in creating their own realities, they too have a role to play in moulding their own future. It emphasises language and individuals' own stories or narratives and focuses specifically on the way in which meaning and reality are socially-created through interaction (Burr, 1995). Individuals do not develop one fixed and constant identity. Rather, identity is viewed as fluid and dynamic, it can be constructed and reconstructed in different social and historical environments (Beyer et al., 2007; de la Rey & Duncan, 2003). Burr (1995) so aptly describes this view of identity from a social constructionist perspective when she asserts that:

> *Instead, then, of people having single, unified and fixed selves, perhaps we are fragmented, having a multiplicity of potential selves which are not necessarily consistent with each other. The self which is constantly on the move, changing from situation to situation, is contrasted with the traditional view of the stable, unchanging personality. And our view of 'human nature' becomes historically and culturally bound rather than fixed for all time. What we have traditionally called 'personality' begins to look more like a theory that we are using to try to make sense of the patterns we see in our experience rather than a fact of human nature* (p. 20).

This is potentially a very empowering assumption because it suggests that as authors of their own narratives, people have the potential to alter the way in which they represent and describe their experiences in more liberating terms and in turn shape more emancipatory futures (Beyer et al*.,* 2007; Burr, 1995; de la Rey & Duncan, 2003). This is supported by Burr (1995) who argues that one of the main aspects of social constructionism is its focus on social

action. This is similar to Butler's (1990) notion of performativity which is discussed below. If the world can be perceived and created in various different ways using language as the tool for construction, then language itself can be used as a means by which action and social change can occur. Burr (1995) argues that if "language is indeed the place where identities are built, maintained and challenged, then this also means that language is the crucible of change, both personal and social" (p. 29).

Feminism supports the tenets of social constructionism but, in particular, highlights gendered identity and the way in which an individual's gender influences the way in which they are positioned in society and hence their constructions of reality. Neuman (2011) notes that "feminist research assumes that the subjective experience of women differs from that of men" (p.116). Feminists argue that gender is not an innate and inevitable categorisation of individuals but rather something that is constructed in different social, cultural and political environments. hooks (2000) argues that "challenging sexist thinking about the female body was one of the most powerful interventions made by contemporary feminist movement" (p. 31). With regard to the body, feminists posit that women can never experience true liberation if they are unable to reject sexist notions, which value a woman solely on her physical appearance (hooks, 2002), by becoming aware of the power and gender relations that permeate all social life (Neuman, 2011). Although early feminist theory did focus primarily on emancipation of women, contemporary feminism has extended its scope to include all forms of social suffering and domination. If feminism argues that femininity is socially constructed, then so too are notions of masculinity. With regard to men, there is an emphasis on the way in which dominant ideals of sexuality, gender and power advantage as well as oppress and constrain men and boys (MacMullan, 2002). It suggests that an alternative version of patriarchal masculinity is required, yet this must not merely resemble that which is "feminine" as this, too, is sexist. This vision of masculinity should reject militaristic notions such as domination and discipline (hooks, 2000).

Butler (1990, 1993) espouses a radical feminist social constructionist view and suggests that both gender and sex are socially constructed and, hence, identity cannot be understood as a single, stable, personal attribute but rather should be viewed as discursively constituted amongst discourse and law in various cultures over time. Subjecthood is therefore fluid and dynamic in nature and can be repeated and altered in differing ways (Butler, 1990; Salih, 2002). Butler (1990) asserts that subjects are effects of institutions and social forces and

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individuals cannot be understood outside of language. In addition, gendered and sexualised identities are performative. In other words, individuals do not exist naturally preceding social behaviour; their identities are formed through performative actions. This is not to suggest that identities are performed, as this implies that there is an actor behind the action. Performativity involves an action which pre-exists a subject which performs such action. The subject is formed and created through the actions and the sequence of these performative acts come to be perceived as a stable, fixed and consistent individual (Butler, 1990). This view has been criticised for "killing off" the subject and hence undermining the potential for political action. Butler, however, argues that the process by which we deconstruct and destabilise commonly accepted natural and inevitable notions, by uncovering their socially constructed and historical origins, is in itself a form of agency and provides great potential for altering and reconstructing these ideas in new and liberating ways and in turn subverting the current power structures we perceive as natural and inevitable (Butler, 1990; Salih, 2002).

2.2. The gendered self: Masculinity

"Even though male identity... [is] not immediately in danger of collapse, the cost of maintaining the façade runs high. The price the men pay is anxiety: fear of their own sexual impulse and fear of women".

(Gregor, 1986, p. 115)

An integral part of constructing (and reconstructing) identity in general involves identification with a particular gender. It is a common social practice to differentiate individuals according to sex and therefore identify children from birth as either male or female. In most societies, including our own, it is widely accepted that society will assign the different sexes various qualities and sets of behaviours which are deemed appropriate and socially acceptable for each. Individuals are hence required to conform to these standards in order to uphold culturally created notions of masculinity and femininity of that particular society in that particular time. Furthermore, in many societies there appears to be a taboo against "sameness" and hence clearly demarcated roles exist for each of the genders. In order to maintain a distinct system of differentiation, societies appear to reward individuals for clearly upholding the definition of "real" men or women (MacKinnon, 2003).

Masculinity is both a contextual and historical construct which is subject to change depending on the socio-cultural factors (Carniel, 2009). Although masculinity is a complex and variable construct, it is often most commonly understood as hegemonic masculinity which refers to dominance and power, especially with regard to control and subordination of men over women and other males (hooks, 2004; Nikkelen, Anschutz, Ha & Engels, 2011; Ricciardelli, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity is said to be enacted through displays of heterosexuality, aggression and competiveness (Galli & Reel, 2009). The other masculinities often develop in relation to and interacting with hegemonic masculinity present in a particular society at a particular time (Carniel, 2009; Ricciardelli, 2011). It has been argued that the emerging styles of masculinity do not present themselves as separate substitutes of the traditional hegemonic masculinity form. Instead, they represent an alternate expression, the pliant medium which hegemonic masculinity subtly adapts, of hegemony which still retains its position as the ultimate masculine ideal which is nearly impossible to achieve by most men (Carniel, 2009).

Several social occurrences (including war, the industrial revolution, imperialism, capitalism, feminist movements as well as the gay liberation) have led to what has been termed the "crisis in masculinity" and in turn have influenced the changing understandings of masculinity in today's societies (Carniel, 2009; Connell, 1995; Ricciardelli, 2011). This supposed "crisis in masculinity" has been said to result in men experiencing vulnerability and insecurity as they are no longer experiencing themselves as holding exclusive positions of power in the workforce, nor are they responsible for solely maintaining the economic stability of the household. It has been suggested that one of the ways in which men combat this sense of loss or emasculation is by what is termed "compensatory consumption" (Dunne, Freeman & Sherlock, 2006). This involves developing aspects of themselves, for example through body-focused behaviours, which allow them to create a sense of autonomy. Dunne et al. (2006) suggest that research indicates an increasing belief amongst men that one of the few ways in which they can now experience and create divergence from women is through the use of their bodies. In other words, it can be said that for "many men, masculinity is a hard-won, yet precarious and brittle psychological achievement that must be constantly proven and defended" (Ducat 2004, p.1) and one of the predominant means of achieving this occurs through differentiating themselves from women.

Similarly, it can be suggested that parents respond to their young male children, from a very early age, in a manner that suggests that they are inherently independent or confident. This tends to overemphasise their external action orientation. Furthermore, it simultaneously maintains their dependence on women with regard to internal emotional understanding and functioning due to underdeveloped emotional skills. Giddens (as cited in Barker & Galasinski, 2001) argues that it is this social construction of men as being more rational and reasoning than women in conjunction with their predominance in the public sphere, possibly due to their traditional and unquestionable role as a worker, has resulted in their exclusion from an experience of intimacy. Once again, men are positioned as lacking autonomy which is a necessary requirement for establishing and maintaining emotional connections and closeness with others. In other words, men are socialised in ways that deny the opportunity to develop a competent emotional vocabulary and hence many men find it difficult to express and own their own emotions. As a result, "they seek to uphold the basic trust that forestalls anxiety and sustains ontological security through mastery and control of themselves, others (particularly women) and their environment" (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 93).

2.3. The body, media and body dissatisfaction

*"Average weight statistics and medical charts are irrelevant. What matters is the gap between the self and the cultural images. We measure ourselves not against an ideal of health, not even usually (although sometimes) against each other, but against created icons, fantasies-made-flesh. Flesh **designed** to arouse admiration, envy, desire"*.

(Bordo, 2002, p.19)

The media is particularly pertinent in this study as it is a key social force responsible for constructing and shaping the notions of masculinity and femininity, and in particular masculine and feminine bodies. Many studies have examined the association between the mass media and body image and body dissatisfaction. Mass media includes a wide range of different technologies such as radio and newspapers, however, the visual mediums such as television and magazines appear to have a greater influence on one's body dissatisfaction as they have the added impact of being eye-catching (Groesz, Levine & Murnen, 2002). Most images portrayed in the media tend to describe the ideal desirable women as being tall and slender, with fine facial features, long legs and hair and well-developed breasts (Groesz et al.,

2002). The ideal desirable man is commonly depicted as being toned, muscular and powerful (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). These ideals are not fixed concepts but rather fluid and dynamic socially constructed historical depictions which differ depending on the social and cultural context and alter over time (Mennell, 1987). In the Middle Ages it was viewed as both desirable and prestigious for women to be plump, in fact, thin women were deemed to make unsuitable wives. Even the men were encouraged to be stout as thinness was associated with poverty (Mennell, 1987). Similarly, the African ideal is also one which values fuller-figured woman and bulkier men. It is interesting to highlight how the "perfect" body is most regularly depicted as the "desirable" sexualised body, one which is sexually appealing to others (Ratele, 2003). Even children's toys such as Barbie Dolls and male Action Figures perpetuate the idea that the perfect person should resemble this stereotype. It has been argued that this stereotype is not merely socially constructed but that individuals desire these ideal bodies due to an evolutionary mate preference (Weeks, 2003). Although this appears consistent with the appeal of the strong, muscular man who can protect and perform, the ideal woman body tends to directly contradict this preference as it is usually too thin to biologically enable fertility (Malson, 1998).

Stereotypes of gendered bodies have influence on other discourses or conceptualisations of what constitutes being a person. Wienke (1998) argues that the cultural ideals of beauty and muscularity hold such importance as those individuals in society who can most closely resemble these ideals occupy a particular privilege in society. They are, therefore, able to benefit from various social and cultural opportunities which are not available to those individuals who are completely unable to meet the ideal. It has been suggested that attractiveness enables individuals to be perceived as more intelligent, popular and personable and hence they are responded to more favourably than unattractive individuals. In addition, they receive more attention from others, are able to easily access assistance and produce co-operation in acrimonious situations and are more likely to be offered employment opportunities quickly with high wages (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1987; Wienke, 1998). Individuals who are less attractive, as defined by adherence to social and cultural ideals of physicality, are said to be deprived of readily attaining these benefits. More specifically, according to Wienke (1998) males with muscular figures are positively stereotyped as being cheerful, courteous, helpful, courageous, healthy and self-reliant. On the other hand, overweight males are commonly perceived to be slack, unclean, dependent,

indolent and lonely, whereas very thin males tend to be readily described as subdued, anxious, devious, frail, and sickly (Wienke, 1998).

With emerging consumer culture in South Africa, it can be argued that these ideals are becoming increasingly more Westernised and their enculturation appears to be rapidly facilitated by the media, in particular advertising. The potency of advertising images rests on several factors. Firstly, they are so frequently displayed in almost every social space we reside in (including restrooms, bus stops and even school sports fields) that exposure to a concentrated diet of advertising images in today's urban environment is almost inevitable (Berger, 1972; Klein, 2005). Secondly, they work using an immediate stimulation technique in that they are usually not deliberately considered or questioned but rather are used to momentarily produce imaginative responses either by evoking past memories or by producing an expectation for the future (Berger, 1972). Advertising has such a significant influence because it is not a random ensemble of images that are all providing conflicting messages. Advertising has its own language with a unifying overall message. Berger (1972) argues that advertising, or publicity as he referred to it, suggests that even though we will be financially poorer by spending our money on material goods, we will be richer in some other way because by purchasing such a good, we will actively transform our lives and ourselves in the process. Most importantly, it can be argued, advertising does this by creating anxiety and fear. In particular it produces the anxiety that one's present state is not good enough to be either admired or envied and, furthermore, it manipulates the fear that in order to be something, or someone, in society you have to have "things". In other words, "the publicity image steals her love for herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product" (Berger, 1972, p. 132). This, therefore, stresses how gender stereotypes and ideals can lead to personal experiences of dissatisfaction.

Within the positivist literature body dissatisfaction can be defined as an inconsistency between one's ideal self-image and perceived self-image (Wykes & Gunter, 2005) and it includes "dysfunctional, negative beliefs and feelings about one's weight and shape" (Myers & Crowther, 2009, p. 683). It is a complex concept which is closely related to negative body-image which usually is presented as having two components, namely, appearance evaluation and appearance investment. Appearance evaluation refers to the thoughts and beliefs, often judgemental, used by the individual when describing and assessing their own body (Groesz et al., 2002; Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010). Body dissatisfaction is the most common indicator of

this component. Conversely, appearance investment, refers to the degree to which an individual's self-worth depends on their physical appearance or how preoccupied an individual is with their looks when defining themselves or forming their identity (Groesz et al., 2002; Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010). Appearance investment can be linked to a similar construct, the physical attractiveness or appearance factor described in the "Contingencies of Self-Worth Model" proposed by Crocker and Wolfe (2001, p. 594) which will be discussed later.

Body dissatisfaction exists on a continuum ranging from overall body satisfaction to body-image disturbance (Sarweq, Wadden, Pertschuk & Whitaker, 1998). Individuals with body satisfaction exhibit a generally positive view of their appearance and although they may dislike some aspects of their body, this does not cause the individual to experience psychological distress (Sarweq et al., 1998). Body-image disturbance refers to cases where individuals experience considerable distress over disliked aspects of their physical appearance. These individuals often actively conceal the offending body parts or engage in behaviours which attempt to alter them (Sarweq et al., 1998). It has been found that when evaluating their own bodies, individuals tend to be most visually attentive to the aspect of their body that they find least appealing. On the other hand, when individuals are presented with a picture of another's body, they tend to pay most visual attention to the aspects of that body that they find to be most appealing (Nikkelen et al., 2011). In addition, it has been suggested that those individuals who strongly value slender figures and actively aim to achieve them, are more likely to give most attention to the aspects of the body (such as the waist or hips) which are alterable, especially in terms of weight or size (Nikkelen et al., 2011).

This tendency for people to evaluate bodies in portions is utilised in consumer culture where the body is broken into pieces or fragments and it is suggested that each part can be improved or developed individually using whatever product is being promoted (Featherstone, 1991; Ricciardelli, 2011). It is suggested that this may compound the problem as the "process may result in people feeling detached from their body or objectifying their body parts as commodities" (Ricciardelli, 2011, p. 184). In addition, consumer culture has altered the social space in which individuals are now expected to present themselves. Shopping is no longer a quick and easy trip to a local café with the intention of obtaining the necessary items, but a long and extended opportunity for individuals to browse through numerous exhibits

whilst simultaneously being required to flaunt themselves "as exhibits" as they are now present in the social arena for increasingly long periods of time (Featherstone, 1991).

The correlation between media and body dissatisfaction is not straightforward and many interrelated and mediating variables have been established. These include social factors, such as influences from peers, friends and family (Dalley, Buunk & Umit, 2009; Groesz et al., 2002; Sarweq et al., 1998; Xiaoyan, Mellor, Kiehne, Ricciardelli, McCabe & Xu, 2010), cultural factors (Xiaoyan, et al., 2010), neuroticism and other personality factors (Dalley et al., 2009; Groesz et al., 2002; Roberts & Good, 2010) as well as an individuals' Body Mass Index, age and gender (Dalley et al., 2009; Groesz et al., 2002; Roberts & Good, 2010; Sarweq et al., 1998; Xiaoyan, et al., 2010). From these studies it has been suggested that it is likely that a combination of factors, for example, appearance, teasing from peers or criticism from a spouse, accompanied by a low self-esteem and high weight status, may act together to exacerbate body dissatisfaction that arises from comparison with media ideals (Markey & Markey, 2009; Sarweq et al., 1998).

Initially most research was conducted amongst young or adolescent female samples as, traditionally, it has been suggested that young women are more vulnerable to media influences for various reasons. The focus on young individuals stems from the fact that young individuals (especially adolescents) are still in the process of developing their self-identities. They are, therefore, more susceptible to social influence from both the media and from others, as reference groups can be utilised to explain or improve the sense of role confusion that they may be experiencing (Erikson, 1968; Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). In addition, puberty is also the period in which individuals undergo dramatic physical changes and these bodily alterations often occur inconsistently. This tends to leave individuals looking and feeling awkward and different. Adolescence is, therefore, often said to be the origin or initiation of self-image (in particular body-image) inadequacies (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). It can be argued, however, that identities and self-concepts are dynamic and fluid and hence various life-stages may potentially present problems with regard to body-image.

The focus on women samples can be attributed to the fact that initially women were more frequently presented in media images and their bodies tended to be, and continue to be, scantily clad. The women's bodies are also usually only displayed in fractions or portions which makes the depiction of the ideal body more effective as it disguises or camouflages

any flaws the photographed women possess (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn & Twenge, 1998; Groesz et al., 2002). Feminist writers highlight this objectification of the woman body and, in addition, stress the ambiguous messages presented in modern media as it simultaneously critiques and promotes the thin ideal. hooks (2000) illustrates this point by mentioning that "today's fashion magazines may carry an article about the dangers of anorexia while bombarding its readers with images of emaciated young bodies representing the height of beauty and desirability" (p. 34). Images of the male body, on the other hand, traditionally were often fully clothed and tended to focus on the face or body in its entirety (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Groesz et al., 2002). In recent times, however, there appears to be a shift in this trend and the male body is now more frequently being depicted in parts and increasingly more naked images of men are displayed in media images. In addition, media depictions of male bodies appear to be increasingly more muscular, especially with regard to abdomens, broad chests, and broad shoulders (McFarland & Petrie, 2012; Morry & Staska, 2001; Nikkelen et al., 2011; Shilling, 1993; Tager, Good & Morrison, 2006).

Ridgeway and Tylka (2005) found that muscularity can be conceptualised as multi-dimensional and suggest that five facets of muscularity can be described namely having defined muscles, being large in size, having large (but not excessively large) muscles, being strong, and being athletic (cited in Galli & Reel, 2009). Leanness was also seen as an essential part of the ideal male body, however, leanness without muscularity was futile (Galli & Reel, 2009; Watt & Ricciardelli, 2012). Sheldon (1954) claims that the male physique can be categorised in one of three ways depending on the physical features that are present. Firstly, endomorphy can be identified as a physique with a plump torso where the muscles appear soft and the body is rounded. Mesomorphy, alternatively, is described as a physique which is firm, displays hard muscles and prevalent bone structure and is rectangular in shape. Finally, ectomorphy is defined as a physique which is narrow and straight with a weak and slight body (Montemayor, 1978; Sheldon, 1954; as cited in Wienke, 1998). It is interesting to note that for most men over-developed muscles have very little practical use in their day-to-day lives, unless one is a manual labourer, engaging in constant physical activity and hence developed muscles are key to the requirements of the job. Service and management positions, however, require very little brute power. In essence then, "the potency of muscles resides largely in their cultural meaning" (Bordo, 2002, p.31).

In addition, it is argued that traditionally women have been socialised to believe that their bodies are their most important asset and should be used as a source to attract others. This has been termed the objectification function of the body (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007, hooks, 2000). Hence, increased focus has been placed on girls' physical appearance as opposed to their performance or achievements and they are more likely to feel anxious and ashamed if they fail to adhere to the perfect ideal (Groesz et al., 2002). Conversely, boys tended to be socialised to believe that their bodies could be used to control their environments and focus is placed on their ability to manipulate their surroundings and produce good achievements (Groesz et al., 2002). This has been referred to as the body fulfilling an instrumentality function (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). With the recent changes in media representations of the male form it can be argued that boys too, to a certain degree, are now also socialised to view their bodies as an important asset of attraction in addition to its instrumentality function. Furthermore, it could be suggested that body dissatisfaction is equally prevalent amongst men and is merely underreported by those men who suffer from it. This is due to the fact that admitting to experiencing such emotions is frowned upon or perceived as weak in many cultures as it contradicts the socially-constructed notion of masculinity. hooks (2004) highlights this silence around men's emotional experiences when she posits that "patriarchal mores teach a form of emotional stoicism to men that says that they are more manly if they do not feel, but if by chance they should feel and the feelings hurt, the manly response is to stuff them down, to forget about them. To hope they go away" (p. 5-6).

Recent research indicates that both men and older individuals are also influenced by the images depicted in the media, albeit in different ways (Groesz et al., 2002; Tager et al., 2006). Great majority of this research uses a quantitative methodology and is conducted in developed nations. Over the past ten years there has been an increasing interest in the male body and body-image (Dunne et al., 2006; Jonason, Krcmar & Sohn, 2009; McFarland & Petrie, 2012; Morry & Staska, 2001; Nikkelen et al., 2011) with particular focus being placed on unhealthy body modification behaviours especially amongst specific male samples such as sportsmen (Carniel, 2009; Galli & Reel, 2009; Hallsworth, Wade & Tiggemann, 2005) and homosexual men. More specifically, men from adolescence upward, tend to "experience pressures regarding the need to be muscular and that these pressures often are internalised, lead to feelings of dissatisfaction with body size and shape, and promote weight loss and muscle gain strategies" (McFarland & Petrie, 2012, p. 329) as a strong, muscular and well-defined body provides the means for males to create a false sense of self-assurance and

hardiness that they present to the world despite their subjective experiences of inadequacy and vulnerability (Galli & Reel, 2009; Klein, 1993). Morry and Staska (2001) suggested that, in males, self-objectification may not be directly related to fitness magazines, however, it is strongly associated with internalisation of societal ideals. Alternatively, Jonason et al. (2009) suggest that body satisfaction amongst men is more strongly influenced by exposure to muscular media ideals as opposed to actual body size. Furthermore, research in this area suggests a link between male body dissatisfaction and experiences of masculinity and men strongly committed to muscular enhancement tend to more readily "endorse more conventional ideas of masculinity" such as hegemonic masculinity (Kanayama, Barry, Hudson, & Pope, 2006; Nikkelen et al., 2011, p. 2). This is particularly relevant amongst sportsmen as the "institution of sport tends to not only 'reflect', but also to *amplify* everything about masculinity" (Messner & Stevens, 2002, p. 226, cited in Galli & Reel, 2009). It has been suggested that masculinity and the muscular male body are intimately intertwined as strong bodies are seen as a reflection of masculinity and in turn men tend to "evaluate their masculinity using their body size and shape as a reference" (Nikkelen et al., 2011, p. 2).

2.4. Theorising media influence on body dissatisfaction and body modification behaviours

"Advertising thus helped to create a world in which individuals are made to become emotionally vulnerable, constantly monitoring themselves for bodily imperfections which could no longer be regarded as natural".

(Featherstone, 1991, p.175)

Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) are both used to understand the link between the mass media, body dissatisfaction and body-change behaviours. Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954) is most commonly used to explain the relationship between the media and body dissatisfaction. He proposed that individuals aim to maintain a feeling of accuracy and consistency with their surroundings and consequently, they evaluate their own personal opinions and abilities by assessing them against those held by similar or significant others in their social environment (Ebren, 2009). This theory emphasises the fact that all individuals are social beings that depend, to some degree, on the beliefs and behaviours, as well as the recognition, of others to confirm their own beliefs (Bruce, 2007; Ebren, 2009). The comparison target is of particular importance. If

individuals compare themselves to others considered to be superior to themselves in the relevant characteristics being evaluated (upward social comparison), they are more likely to experience dissatisfaction and poor self-esteem (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Myers & Crowther, 2009; Nabi, 2010). When individuals compare themselves to others who are considered to be inferior regarding a particular domain (downward social comparison), they are more likely to experience satisfaction and increased self-esteem (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Myers & Crowther, 2009; Nabi, 2010). This theory can be extended using the negative contrast theory which highlights that the "exposure to ideal media images leads to negative feelings toward one's own body because individuals tend to compare themselves to these images and perceive a discrepancy … between their own body shape and the ideal bodies depicted in the media" (Thornton & Maurice, 1999 cited in Nikkelen et al., 2011, p. 2).

The Social Comparison Theory does, however, have some limitations for application in this area. Firstly, Festinger (1954) argued that individuals compare themselves to similar others. It has been established that the images depicted in the media are neither accurate nor similar to most of the individuals who view them. It can, hence, be questioned why one would compare themselves to these ideal images rather than using a peer or other relevant comparison target (Myers & Crowther, 2009). Furthermore, the Social Comparison Theory indicates that individuals tend to immediately change their comparison target when negative consequences such as dissatisfaction and poor self-esteem result (Myers & Crowther, 2009) however, the thin or muscular ideals seems to religiously remain the significant other against which individuals evaluate themselves regardless of the psychological effect. It may be argued that because almost all young individuals are striving to meet beauty ideals as depicted in the media, there is a lack of similar or suitable target comparisons. In addition, it can also be argued that these specific images are already deliberately associated with desirability in their presentation.

A significant concern with the increasing depiction of the unrealistic body ideals in media images lies not only in the psychological insecurity and inadequacy it causes individuals to experience, but also in the resultant behaviour it promotes. Body dissatisfaction is strongly associated with many supposedly unhealthy, and even harmful, behaviours or actions which vary according to age and gender (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Myers & Crowther, 2009). Women tend to initiate dieting programmes, use cosmetic products and engage in cosmetic surgery procedures, whereas men are more likely to consume anabolic steroids and weight-

gain supplements as well as partake in excessive physical exercise and engage in restrictive dieting. Although eating disorders are a commonly accepted consequence of body dissatisfaction amongst young females; they are becoming increasingly more prevalent amongst males as well (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Myers & Crowther, 2009).

Many of these negative behaviours have been legitimised in society, predominantly through the media, using the maxim that suggests that beauty and desirability can only be achieved through pain and suffering. As Wolf (2002) so aptly describes:

> *If a woman's sexual sense of self has centred on pain as far back as the record goes, who is she without it? If suffering is beauty and beauty is love, she cannot be sure she will be loved if she does not suffer. It is hard, because of such conditioning, to envisage a female body free of pain and still desirable (p. 219).*

It has been suggested that the media has had both a direct and indirect effect on the increasing engagement in body modification, especially amongst older individuals (Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010). Indirectly, the mass media has promoted the (inaccurate) message that aging is both unhealthy and unattractive (Wolf, 2002). Modern media has made the differentiation between beauty and health almost indistinguishable. An individual cannot be healthy unless they are attractive which can only be measured by comparison to the young and flawless beauty ideal. This notion is reminiscent of the Victorian Age where "the tubercular woman—with her glittering eyes, pearly skin, and fevered lips" (Wolf, 2002, p. 224) was deemed to be an extraordinary beauty worth admiring and desiring. Today, saddle bags, sagging skin and cellulite have all been constructed, not as part of the natural and inevitable process of maturation, but rather as a concerning "disease-like" occurrence that requires immediate attention and "cure" (Wolf, 2002). This belief is clearly disseminated through media messages. It is most evident in advertisements placed in women's magazines. Browsing through any *Fairlady* Magazine one is bound to encounter a number of cosmetic products claiming to be "scientifically proven" to cure wrinkles without "relapse" (Wolf, 2002, p. 226). The diction and terminology used clearly emphasise the idea that aging holds no natural appeal and thereby undermines one's body-image.

Directly, the media has actively encouraged engagement in body modification in various ways. There are now a number of reality television programmes illustrating the cosmetic

surgery process and fitness and dieting regimes. This increases individuals' exposure to and awareness of these body modification options (Nabi, 2010; Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010). Furthermore, these make-over programmes have been criticised for glamorising these behaviours by overemphasising the desirable effects of the procedures and understating the risks involved in such treatment (Nabi, 2010; Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010). These factors are accentuated by the "instant gratification" belief that persuades individuals not to wait or work hard for the results they desire, but rather to act immediately and gain what they want with relative ease, irrespective of the consequences.

The media also tends to highlight the many actors, models and celebrities that have engaged in a variety of body modification behaviours. In this respect, Social Learning Theory, posited by Bandura (1968) can be used to explain the media's influence on individuals' decisions to engage in body modification behaviours. This theory is based on the concepts of modelling or observational learning wherein an individual learns by watching the actions of others and by recognising the consequences of the model's behaviour (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Nabi, 2010). The reward or consequence of the model's behaviour is of utmost importance. If the model receives a desirable reward, the likelihood that the behaviour will be imitated by the observing individual is high. Attractive, powerful, admired and popular models are most frequently imitated (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Nabi, 2010).

2.5. Status anxiety, self-esteem and self-worth

"Unfortunately for our self-esteem, societies of the West are not known for their conduciveness to the surrender of pretensions, to the acceptance of age or fat, let alone poverty or obscurity. Their mood urges us to invest ourselves in activities and belongings that our predecessors would have had no thought of".

(de Botton, 2004, p. 56)

de Botton (2004) argues that when searching for status, individuals are not just seeking the fame, wealth and influence that positions of privilege may bring, but are predominantly looking for love. What de Botton (2004) is referring to is not sexual love from a romantic partner, but rather a sense of acknowledgement and acceptance from the world in general. An individual's status can be defined as their position and standing in society and is determined

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by numerous different factors (for example profession, wealth, bloodline) which each hold various importance depending on the society in question (Bruce, 2006; de Botton, 2004). Broadly, status refers to an individual's relative worth or importance as determined by the society in which they live. Occupying high status in society brings with it numerous positive inferences. For example, those who hold a high position may have access to resources, experience comfort and receive more attention than those who have not acquired the same status (de Botton, 2004). Status anxiety, therefore, refers to the dread and fear that individuals experience when they perceive that they may not be able to attain success as defined by their societal norms. In other words, individuals become worried or anxious when they feel that they are not worthy of dignity and respect due to their current position in society's hierarchy or the fear that they may not be able to maintain their current position of privilege (de Botton, 2004).

Status anxiety is similar to a concept suggested by Bruce (2006) called status insecurity. Bruce (2006) describes status insecurity as an experience of uncertainty about whether or not an individual is capable of acquiring a sense of social acceptance. This is emphasised by the saying "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" which can be translated to mean "a person is a person because of other people" (Bruce, 2007, p. 57). It is suggested that a person's actions are highly influenced by the views and expectations of those in their social environment, as the desire to belong and receive approval from significant others is said to be a key human necessity (Park & Crocker, 2008). Social approval in today's society tends to be closely linked to one's possessions and appearance. Thus, it can be argued that one's self-worth in South Africa's emerging consumer culture is shaped by consumerism due to an individual's need to "fit in". Consequently, one's self-esteem, which is generally defined as an individual's overall feeling of worthiness including a generally positive or negative view of oneself (Rosenberg, 1965; Schmitt & Allik, 2005), is strongly reliant on attaining approval of important others in the social environment. This is reflected in individuals' desires to, for example, have and wear fashionable or socially acceptable items (Rose & Orr, 2007; Sato, 2011; Zhang, 2009) and to construct their appearance in particular ways.

This highlights the argument that our position in society not only determines how much love and acceptance we can expect from those around us, but it also, in turn, influences the way in which we may value our own worth. The concepts of self-worth and self-esteem, which have been extensively researched and theorised by James (1890), are closely linked to body

dissatisfaction. James (1890) believed that an individual's self-esteem is dependent on them achieving success in particular domains and not in others (Park & Crocker, 2008). In other words, we will only experience shame and humiliation when we fail at things that we have decided are importance to us. If we have not invested our pride or sense of self-worth in a particular activity or aspect of life, failing to attain or succeed in this area would not result in envy or excessive concern (de Botton, 2004). James (as cited in de Botton, 2004) stresses this point by saying he, as a renowned psychologist, would feel shame and envy if he encountered another who displayed superior knowledge in his field. His inability to translate a Symposium into Greek, however, caused him no humiliation because he had never devoted any time or personal investment into studying the language (de Botton, 2004). Crocker and Wolfe (2001) used this idea to conceptualise the "Contingencies of Self-Worth" (p. 594). They suggested that a person's self-esteem stems from different factors and is influenced by their beliefs about what constitutes a worthwhile human.

Seven domains were postulated by Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper and Bouvrette (2003), used by individuals to varying degrees, when evaluating their self-worth, namely virtue, God's love, family support, academic competence, physical attractiveness, competition (being superior to others) and gaining others approval. Individuals may use several of these domains, in differing proportions, when establishing their self-worth. The contingencies used will also depend on their accessibility which is influenced or activated by environmental cues or triggers (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Park & Crocker, 2008). The literature suggests that individuals that base their self-esteem on contingencies which rely on others or on relatively superficial aspects of the self (for example on physical appearance or approval of others) may experience a lower level of psychological well-being than those who base their self-esteem on contingencies that encompass a more intrinsic part of the self (Crocker et al., 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001, Park & Crocker, 2008).

The domain or contingency called "physical attractiveness" (Crocker et al., 2003, p. 895) is particularly pertinent when considering body dissatisfaction. Self-esteem, in this instance, rests strongly on the way in which the individual evaluates themselves with regard to how they appear physically. It is asserted that individuals learn to assess themselves based on this physical attractiveness because they are often initially assessed by others on this basis (Crocker et al., 2003). This aspect appears to be especially strongly relied on by young individuals and, in fact, is said to be the "strongest predictor of global self-esteem" (Crocker

et al., 2003, p. 895) amongst adolescent individuals, irrespective of their gender. It can be argued that this contingency is closely related to the "approval from others" contingency as people often attempt to enhance their physical appearance in order to make favourable impressions on others as a means of gaining their approval. This highlights the importance of body dissatisfaction as it not only forms a primary contingency by which individuals evaluate their value but also influences other sources of self-esteem.

The degree to which one is generally sensitive to positive self-relevant information is called self-enhancement (de Mooij, 2004). Self-enhancement is believed to lead to self-esteem which has been found to be a good indicator of one's self-worth. Self-esteem is one part of an individual's self-concept. It refers to the evaluative component of self-concept and encompasses how worthwhile and confident one feels about oneself (de Mooij, 2004). It is widely accepted in psychology that most individuals engage in particular activities in order to "maintain, enhance and protect their self-esteem" (Crocker et al., 2003, p. 894; Edson Escalas & Bettman, 2003). This is relevant to the present study because it can be suggested that individuals may engage in body change behaviour or partake in particular practices, such as exercising, dieting or supplement use, in order to combat assaults to their self-esteem. Theories which provide useful explanations of both body dissatisfaction and implementation of body-maintenance techniques were discussed in the previous section.

One of the implications of James' (1890) conceptualisation of self-esteem is that in modern times acquiring self-esteem appears to become increasingly more difficult to achieve because it is continually stressed that individuals should "dream big", have high expectations and set particularly unrealistic goals. With rapid globalisation, it can be argued that South Africa has become considerably more influenced by Westernised norms and values. One of the popular Western notions that appears to have become a prominent idea in South Africa is that of "the self-made man". This idea seems to have coincided or been facilitated by the introduction of Democracy in South Africa. During Apartheid, individuals' expectations of success were kept to a minimum due to structural and political limitations (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). After Apartheid came to an end, however, there was a perceived increase in opportunity. Theoretically, everyone shared equal rights and hence it was suggested that all South Africans had the chance to achieve a particular version of success. The problem, however, was that this supposed equality existed in conjunction with grave actual inequality as many individuals still were severely limited in terms of access to education, resources and wealth

(Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). The combination of drastically inflated pretensions and lack of pragmatic available resources in reality "render[s] adequate self-esteem almost impossible to secure" (de Botton, 2004, p. 56).

2.6. The embodied self: Conceptions of the body

The body has received a great deal of attention in literature for many years from a wide variety of fields including anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychiatry, cognitive science and psychology. Frank (1991) suggests that publications on the body can be categorised into different areas of interest such as the sexualised body, the medicalised body and the talking body with each discipline traditionally contributing to a number of the categories. A great deal of focus has also been given to the discipline of the body and the necessity to control and manage particularly unruly bodies within a social space (Turner, 1982).

The panopticon model (Foucault, 1979), for instance, is a good example of how criminal bodies were subject to systematic surveillance and rigorous rule. This model suggested the necessity of a circular, radial prison design with two sections. The inner section, where the guards were positioned, was entirely surrounded or encapsulated by the outer portion where the prisoners were held. This model created the impression that the prisoners could be monitored by the authorities at all times, even though they could not see the guards from their position. It was found that the prisoners began to behave in a self-disciplined manner at all times. In other words, the criminals acted as if they were being constantly observed even in the absence of such scrutiny. This system became the control method of choice in a number of other institutions such as schools and medical facilities (Turner, 1982). In the book *Revealing Male Bodies* (Tuana, Cowling, Hamington, Johnson & MacMullan, 2002) there is renewed interest in social space and a focus on how various bodies interact with various social spaces. The interactions are suggested to vary both according to the intended use of the social space as well as the type of racialised and sexualised body. Due to social, political and historical factors which determine the nature of social areas, the purpose of the space is said to dramatically impact the legitimacy of different bodies to occupy that space freely without surveillance or constant monitoring (MacMullan, 2002).

Many conceptualisations of the body have been posited by several theorists and, as with most theorisations, there are often conflicting and contrasting accounts. What is particularly interesting with regard to this study is that, the body, with its very real material constitution, can, in some ways, be seen to challenge notions of social construction. This section will explore some theoretical understandings of the body and show how, ultimately, it can be understood as a socially constructed entity.

An interesting analysis of the way in which the body is explored and exploited within the consumer culture, which links back to the exploration of body dissatisfaction discussed earlier, is provided by Featherstone (1991). It is suggested that within the consumer culture the self-preservationist notion of the body is fostered where the body is viewed as a machine that requires time and service in order to maintain its efficiency. Attempts to overcome deterioration and decay of the body are deemed essential if one is to avoid being accused of "physical self-neglect" and individuals are, therefore, encouraged to engage in instrumental activities to combat the process of aging (Featherstone, 1991; Wolf, 2002). This notion is simultaneously paired with hedonism and self-expression which will be released or produced through discipline and self-maintenance. In other words, the "reward for ascetic body work ceases to be spiritual salvation or even improved health, but becomes an enhanced appearance and more marketable self" (Featherstone, 1991, p.170-171). From this perspective the body is argued to have two aspects: the inner body (which requires maintenance in response to disease and aging as a means of achieving sustained optimal functioning) and the outer body (which includes maintenance of one's physical appearance and presentation and, additionally, the way in which it is managed and manoeuvred in the social arena (Featherstone, 1991). According to Featherstone (1991), aspects of the consumer culture encourage the inner and the outer body to become intertwined in that "the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body" (p. 171). This reflects notions of the objectified body, where parts of the individual's bodies are viewed in isolation and merely as instruments that exist for the sole use and pleasure of other individuals (Fredrickson et al., 1998).

Goffman (1959) similarly suggests that the main aim of individuals' bodies is to ensure that they present themselves socially in a favourable light and therefore are able to maintain a "positive and convincing self-image" (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003, p. 2). It is suggested that people are involved in on-going performances with the intention of pursuing their own

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interests to achieve optimal personal outcomes and simultaneously managing what is termed "loss of face" or minimising embarrassment, shame or inferiority in the light of others (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003). Goffman (1959) constructs his discussion of bodies around three key tenets. Firstly, it is suggested that the body is a physical entity belonging to the individual which is then controlled and monitored by the individual to allow for suitable interaction with others. Secondly, the ways in which individuals present their bodies does not occur in isolation or on an intrapsychic level. There is a set of hierarchically produced commonly-held and shared vocabularies or symbolic idioms relating to bodies which guide and prescribe the ways in which individuals manage their bodies. Thirdly, it is suggested that an individual's sense of self-worth is strongly derived from the various "social meanings attached to bodily display and expression" (Shilling, 1993, p. 83) and hence the body provides a fundamental means by which the relationship between self and social identities is mediated (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003). Goffman highlights the necessity of upholding positive "face" as well as the appropriate use of body gestures, eye contact and touch in order to facilitate successful interactions, especially in terms of fulfilling social roles (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003).

Coupland & Gwyn (2003) pertinently remark that "the body is under a dual scrutiny, observed both by others and with its 'own' eyes" (p.3). The significant "other" to which they are referring for many years was considered to be the "clinical gaze" of medical professionals who defined and assessed what the "normal" body should present as and it's various functional perimeters. It has been argued, however, that Modern Times with its ever-present visual saturation and the prolific stream of images provided by films, magazines and television, the "clinical gaze" is no longer owned by the clinicians themselves. Within the consumer culture, each and every one of us become qualified to peruse the bodies around us and assess them against the visual culture benchmark, yet simultaneously, this process accentuates the necessity to constantly scrutinise your own body and determine its relative standing. As Coupland & Gwyn (2003) so aptly comment:

> *Voyeurs all, we necessarily turn our gaze upon ourselves, and it is this introspection that informs a perpetual striving to meet an ideal configuration of body and selfhood, which might express itself in countless ways, but each dedicated to rooting out and banishing signs of waywardness or defect, variance from prescribed norms of weight or shape, deformity or disfiguration; all of which, under the scrutiny of the gaze, are indicative of a marked and a lesser humanity (p. 4).*

Not only does consumer culture facilitate the production of an unrealistic status quo of how a satisfactory body should appear and operate, it has also fundamentally altered the arrangement of social space creating increasingly more opportunities for this "dual scrutiny" to occur. Individuals are now encouraged to spend a considerable amount of their leisure time consuming products in order to achieve and maintain a favourable self and social image. This very image is especially required for the long periods in which people are visible in the public sphere. In other words, the desirable male is required to attend a public gym several times a week to maintain his desirable body, yet the time he spends at the gym merely becomes an extended arena in which his body is displayed and hence open to inspection by others (Featherstone, 1991).

Frank (1991) modifies and extends the work of Giddens (1984) in his essay "For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytic Review" and provides a comprehensive theoretical discussion on bodies and the actions in which bodies are engaged. In this discussion he presents four typical styles of "how the body is experienced and deployed" (Frank, 1991, p. 53) and in practice individuals are argued to transition between these types freely. There is little concern of the order in which this occurs; the only concern is that of action problems which the body then attempts to address using a medium or mode of action related to the particular body style. The four body styles that are described are: the disciplined body, the mirroring body, the dominating body and the communicative body (Frank, 1991).

He describes each body style along several axes or dimensions of action, namely, *control*, *desire*, *relation to others* and *self-relatedness*. Firstly, the predictability of the body, which is referred to as *control*, considers whether the individual experiences their body as consistent or contingent and their responses to the possibly changing nature of their bodies. *Desire* refers to the desirability of the body in terms of whether it lacks or produces desire. It is argued that individuals will behave in differing ways depending on whether it "automatically" or "naturally" produces or lacks desire, with the main aim of acquiring and maintaining a satisfactory level of desirability. The axis *relation to others* refers to the way in which a body interacts with other bodies. It is suggested that individuals can either be described as being monadic or dyadic. Monadic bodies are said to be bodies that are closed toward itself, or tend to remain isolated or distanced from others. Dyadic bodies are those which exist within interactions with other bodies. In other words they are mutually constituted in relation to other individuals. Finally, *self-relatedness* emphasises the body

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consciousness' tendency to associate or dissociate from itself (Frank, 1991). In other words, whether the individual feels related to or united with their own body. Once again, the degree to which an individual feels close or connected with their own body will influence the different actions or behaviours that body will display.

The disciplined body uses regimentation to ensure that it remains predictable. This is suggested to be a response to an unconscious fear that "the body's real contingency is probable" (Frank, 1991, p. 55). In other words, there is anxiety that the body is not predictable or consistent and therefore needs to be controlled. A good example of this is the conscientious gym-goer or dieter who fears changes in weight or stature and behaviourally tries to account for this by exercising or eating in particularly controlled ways. Furthermore, the army or military foster this type of body style by stressing the need for consistency through scrupulous scheduling to ensure not only optimal functioning but survival. In order to experience a sense of control or predictability the individual engages in rigorous routine to enforce predictability. Sometimes the disciplined body is unable to overcome this threat (as many biological process and environmental factors, such as hormonal changes or economic fluctuations, lie outside of individuals' control) and maintain predictability through regimentation. In these instances, it is said to turn to the domination of other bodies in order to exercise the control that it can no longer properly maintain over itself. When this occurs, according to this typology the individual will shift to the dominating body style (Frank, 1991). This type of body views itself as lacking in desire as it requires a conscious sense of lack in order to maintain a sense of discipline. One of the primary means of achieving this conscious sense of lack is to subordinate itself within a hierarchy (Frank, 1991). An excellent example of how regimentation can rectify this sense of lack is illustrated by the use of dieting or fitness programmes promoted by consumer culture to produce a more desirable body and thereby overcoming the sense of lack or subordination. When this occurs, the body style tends to transfer to the mirroring body type (Frank, 1991).

According to Frank (1991) the disciplined body can be said to be monadic in its relatedness to others in that the body tends to perform in isolation amongst others as opposed to being integrated and acting with them. On the rare occasions that the disciplined body does interact with others, the relation usually takes the form of force or domination whereby it attempts to project their own regimen onto the other. Lastly, the disciplined body is described as dissociated from itself with regard to self-relatedness axis. This can be explained by the way

in which regimentation and discipline are used to separate the feelings of pain and hunger from the body itself in order to enhance the body's instrumentality or functionality (Frank, 1991). This too, is strongly seen amongst the military. In combat natural biological experiences, like pain and fatigue, are viewed as hindering an individual's physical effectiveness and hence part of army training is designed to encourage individuals to distance themselves from their bodily experiences and numb their emotional responses. More locally this can also be illustrated by the obsessive dieter who ignores hunger pangs to reduce their pant size to a 34 or the religious gymnasium attendee who overlooks strained muscles in order to attain the much sought after 120 kilogram bench press.

One of the main theorists interested in the disciplined body is Foucault who has refined his theories about domination, knowledge and power over many years. Foucault (1981) paid great attention to both the regulation of the body on a micro-political level and the surveillance of populations on a macro-political level as these two areas were subject to power and control (Turner, 1991). Foucault, as cited in Turner (1991), suggests that "scientific advances do not liberate the body from external control, but rather intensify the means of social regulation" (p.157). In other words the body, from a Foucauldian perspective, is firstly governed by multiple institutions and these governing forces need to be carefully examined, and secondly, bodies are both created and exist only within a framework of discourses (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003).

Like the disciplined body, the mirroring body also maintains predictability and is monadic with regard to its relatedness to others. It differs; however, by using the medium of consumption to produce a reflection of the objects that surround it in order to maintain a sense of consistency and predictability. A good example of this would be the "hipsters" or "fashionistas" who buy in order to be. They use their body as a manikin on which the latest fashion and popular accessories can be displayed to create the effect of status. In this sense, consumption does not refer to the traditional idea of use or purchasing, but rather to an alignment or assimilation of the world's objects to the body and vice versa (Frank, 1991). This can be illustrated by sports fans who associate themselves with a particular team or club. Although they, themselves, have not achieved success by winning a race or defeating another team, the individuals still receive the same status by supporting them. The individual need not purchase an object in order to consume it; the desire for the object is enough for consummation to occur. The mirroring body is therefore engaged in a constant process of

producing and reproducing desires as a means of remaining unconscious to the sense of lack it experiences (Frank, 1991). This is epitomised by the idea of "buying happiness" or the notion that an abundance of material wealth will provide emotional satisfaction. In addition, the mirroring body is monadic as it recognises no external reality beyond the reflection of the body itself and is thereby associated with itself by a "mythological sense of Narcissism" (Frank, 1991, p. 63) in which love of the body facilitates an attempt to connect and unify with it. In other words, in this body style state individuals tend to be almost obsessed with their own bodies and it is this self-centredness that encourages them to feel a closeness or connectedness with their own bodies.

Baudrillard and Bourdieu are two theorists that have written about the mirroring body at length. Baudrillard (1988) asserts that bodies reproduce themselves by internalising objects in order to produce desires evoked in the form of signs. These signs are more real than the commodity objects themselves as it is these symbols which the individual desires (Frank, 1991). For example, a Mercedes motor vehicle is desired not for functional use, transportation, but rather for the status it provides the individual who drives it. Those who can afford to wear Armani suits and carry Louis Vuitton accessories are immediately positioned as occupying an upper class status and are seen to be more accepted and approved of socially. This is reflective of de Botton's (2004) status anxiety discussed earlier. Similarly, Bourdieu (1984) discusses the mirroring body by suggesting the body is one that reflects or mirrors a certain class status. The dominant class maintains its privileged position by influencing and determining what that society will recognise as "distinction" and these values become internalised as normal and natural (Frank, 1991). Individuals will attempt to mirror the dominant class body in order to either maintain a position of privilege or to produce mobility and progression up the class rank. The unemployed man who wears Nike sneakers to create the impression of occupying a higher rung in the social status hierarchy is a good example of this argument.

Dominating bodies have been predominantly described as the male, masculine, "warrior" bodies in the literature and one of the most prominent theorists in this area is Theweleit, in particular his two volumes on "Male Fantasies" (1987, 1989). With regard to desire, the dominating body is seen to be in lack. In particular, it is viewed as being one subject to anxiety and fear. This lack fosters the dominating body to experience a dissociated self-relatedness and a dyadic other-relatedness. This combination results in the dominating body

engaging in a search for an enemy or other who they can distance or differentiate from themselves by regarding them as "subhuman". They then proceed to fight or dominate this other to experience a sense of living themselves (Frank, 1991). In other words, the dominating body needs interaction with others in order to construct a sense of being within themselves. This type of body style can be illustrated by bullies and abusers. Those who have an unstable and insecure sense of self tend to punish others in order to achieve a sense of security from the social acceptance they receive from displaying violent behaviour or disciplining others (Collins, 2013, in press).

Furthermore, the dominating body has a contingent sense of control as they are simultaneously a threat and threatened by both themselves and others. This process is perpetual and repetitive and, hence, the reason why predictability seems impossible to the dominating body. There is always a new enemy or subhuman that requires defeating in order to feel alive (Theweleit, 1987, 1989). The medium of choice in this body style is the use of force and domination and is a response to their contingency. It is, therefore, only logical that the dominating body is dissociated from itself as it requires an unfamiliar and prohibited sense of self if it is to both inflict and endure pain and punishment successfully (Frank, 1991; Theweleit, 1987, 1989). In other words, the dominating body needs to distance itself from emotional experiences of guilt or regret in order to dominate others. Furthermore, the repression of their own personal experiences of pain is facilitated when assuming the role of the aggressor (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950; Miller, 1990). This notion suggests that dominating bodies identify with the aggressor role in order to avoid experiencing themselves as helpless victims. They replace some of their own experiences with those of their abusers and then, in turn, become abusive themselves by imitating or acting out this introjected hostility (Adorno et al., 1950; Collins, 2013, in press; Miller, 1990). In this sense they are dissociated from their own experiences and sense of selves by a substitution of a persona which allows them to feel real.

Finally, the communicative body is said to be most aptly described as "a body in process of creating itself" (Frank, 1991, p.79). With regard to the dimension of control, the communicative body is contingent, yet this contingency is not perceived as threatening or disenabling but rather as a source of potential allowing the body to flourish. The communicative body produces desire and uses this desire as a means of achieving dyadic expression. It aims not to merely reflect the world around it but to creatively express the

world of which it considers itself an integral component (Frank, 1991). In other words, irrespective of the different emotions that the body produces, they are all used as a potential for expression through sharing and interacting with others (Frank, 1991). This body type is viewed as being associated with itself in that it requires close self-understanding in order to express and produce itself amongst discourses and institutions and this process is facilitated through the medium of realisation (Frank, 1991). This body can be viewed as the "dancing body", one that performs as a means of expressing themselves and achieving closeness with both the self and the other. The unpredictability of the performer's body becomes their greatest muse or inspirational resource (Frank, 1991).

The communicative body introduces the importance of language and talk, something that the other conceptions fail to do. It is particularly interesting as it links the body to both communicative and constructive language. Merleau-Ponty (1945) provides a radical perspective on the body and lived experience which reflects some of the notions explored in the communicative body. He suggests that true experiences occur through the body as we relate to and interact with objects of the real world. This emphasises the dyadic nature of the communicative body. According to MacMullan (2002), Merleau-Ponty views the body as a "meaning-producing entity" which allows us to create coherence from our worldly experiences by using cognition to form meaningful patterns from the stimuli we perceive (p. 6). There is, hence, an intimate relationship between the body and its experiences and the two cannot be viewed in isolation (MacMullan, 2002). In other words, the body is unpredictable and ever-changing as it is constantly interacting with different objects and different people which shape it. The body and the world are closely interrelated because "the body is an active subject, it is the point from which we take in and relate to the objects in the world" but at the same time it is "also another object within the world" (p. 6).

Judith Butler draws on several philosophers and theorists, including Hegel, Derrida, Freud and Foucault, in order to provide a radical social-constructionist and feminist perspective on the body. Although she does not deny the existence of a physical body that breathes and bleeds, she argues that the physical or material body does not exist outside the realms of language and discourse. The material body is always perceptually perceived. In other words, it can only be understood as a product of discursive and institutional factors and relations of power (Butler, 1990, 1993; Salih, 2002). The body is constituted as an effect of "exclusion, taboo and abjection" (Salih, 2002, p.62). It is only through prohibition or out casting that the

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body comes into being. In other words, the body is formed in spaces where it is problematic. It is only seen to be real in circumstances in which it differs from the accepted social laws and norms. In addition, the body is always a gendered body as it cannot exist without the social context and the social context is ever present. Both sex and gender, therefore, are viewed as "cultural constructions which contour and define the body" (Salih, 2002, p.49) as opposed to innate and naturally occurring physical attributes. Gender and sex are enacted through performativity which involves doing rather than being; a series of acts without an inherent actor behind these actions. This creates the illusion that the body is a fixed and stable entity (Butler, 1990, 1993; Salih, 2002). From this conception, desire is one of the social forces that aids the construction of the body; it is not an effect of or produced by an original free-standing material body.

3. METHODOLOGY

"Metaphors of masculinity are constitutive of our reality, forming powerful ways of thinking about the world. Indeed, masculinity (or masculinities) is not an entity but a discursive construction. Thus, it is the very talk of [Horatio, Duncan] and other men, that brings masculinity into being, even as they draw off the linguistic resources of their culture to do so".

(Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 119)

3.1. Overarching Aim

This study seeks to explore young South African men's accounts of ideal masculine body-image and discuss the implications that these constructions have on their identities and self-image. I will attempt to answer this by exploring the following questions:

1.) What discourses do young South African men use when discussing their own and other male bodies?

2.) What are the sources of these discourses and images?

3.) What social dynamics allow certain discourses around the desirable ideal male body to be emphasised and others to be silenced?

4.) How do discourses of the ideal male form influence the way in which young South African men construct and enact their identities?

3.2. Research Design

This study follows a qualitative approach which emphasises idiographic explanations and inductive reasoning. In other words it aims to gather thick, descriptive data in order to reveal deep subjective meanings and explanations for various social phenomena. Great emphasis is placed on individuals' historical and cultural contexts and the way in which individuals interactions with others and their social world shape their understandings and constructions of reality (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Neuman, 2011; Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, & McNeill, 2002). Data was collected using individual interviews which were transcribed and the written texts were analysed using discourse analysis.

Qualitative research is iterative and emergent. Iterative refers to how the qualitative research process occurs in a cyclical design as opposed to a single linear process. In other words, steps are repeated and combined in a flexible manner (Neuman, 2010). For example, data analysis begins well into the data collection phase, and after a full analysis has begun, more data may be warranted and therefore collected. The emergent nature of qualitative research refers to the fact that it tends to begin with a fairly broad and generally defined research topic at the beginning of the process and becomes more refined throughout, until the specific research questions emerge or stem from the data itself (Neuman, 2012). Furthermore, qualitative research views participants as actively involved members who also contribute to the production of knowledge and truth during the data collection period, and the researcher herself is the main instrument throughout the research process (Ulin et al., 2002).

This study was conducted using a combination of principles posited by the interpretive social science, critical social science and feminist paradigms (Neuman, 2011). In this study reality is viewed as socially constructed and hence fluid and context specific, with hidden or disguised underlying structures including power and gender-relations which govern and oppress people. Individuals are viewed as gendered and resourceful. In other words, people's experiences are fundamentally shaped by their assigned gender but at the same time they have an unrealised potential which is confined through hidden forces and maintained by an illusion of truth (Neuman, 2011; Ulin et al., 2002). Autonomy is viewed as bounded in that individuals are free to exercise personal choice but only within certain constrained and limited ways. Individuals are, however, adaptive and the structural and gender factors that confine their choices can be somewhat altered or challenged (Neuman, 2011) through innovative use of language, thinking and acting. Through the written work produced, this research seeks to uncover deep structural meaning which could perhaps lead to acknowledgement and change within these structures. In addition, it attempts to raise awareness or draw attention to various disguised structures, including gender-relations, in order to facilitate empowerment (Neuman, 2011; Ulin et al., 2002).

3.3. Sample Description

The sample in this study consists of twelve South African males, all from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, between the ages of 18 and 26, of various races, from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. A small sample is consistent with a qualitative approach as it focuses on detailed and meaningful descriptions of a few particular individuals' experiences (Babbie

& Mouton, 2005; Ulin et al., 2002). Non-probability, purposive sampling was used as participants were selected according to selection criteria (Ulin et al., 2002) which stipulate that individuals need to be South African (from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal) male and between 18-26 years old in order to be eligible to participate in the study. In addition, participants were selected on their willingness to participate voluntarily in the study as well as their ability to contribute to the research topic. In other words, possible participants were told about the research topic, aims and objectives and those who were interested in it or have opinions on the topic were encouraged to participate. Snowball sampling was further used when recruited participants referred me to other willing and interested individuals who met the selection criteria (Ulin et al., 2002). The sample used in this study was deliberately selected using a non-random method of sampling as the research does not aim to generate statistically sound data or generalise results to a larger population but rather seeks to sample a select group of individuals with specific characteristics which can aid the researcher to gather valuable information regarding the research topic (Ulin et al., 2002). The representativeness of this sample cannot therefore be guaranteed. This, however, consistent with most other qualitative research, was identified as less essential than collecting thick, detailed data which presented a broad range of experiences and viewpoints pertinent to the research area (Ulin et al., 2002).

Young individuals were selected as a criterion for the sample in this study as it has been suggested that they are more susceptible to social influence from both the media and from others (Erikson, 1968; Stevens & Lockhat, 2003) than older individuals, and hence more prone to experience body-image concern. Viewing identity as fluid and dynamic as asserted by the social constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995) which this research espouses, however, it can be argued that all developmental periods hold the potential for difficulties regarding self-concepts and self-image. Furthermore, it can be suggested that the proliferation of images in magazines and movies feature young individuals and emerging South African contemporary consumer culture has an especially strong niche targeting young adults. This makes the chosen sample particularly relevant in this context. In addition, only male participants were used in this study as it has been argued that few qualitative research studies on body dissatisfaction and body image have been conducted amongst young men in South Africa. Furthermore, it may be suggested that the experience of body dissatisfaction amongst males is similar to that of women yet appears much less severe due to underreporting or misrepresentation. It could be argued that this is due to the fact that it is more socially

acceptable for women to express their emotions or concerns openly than it is for men who are required to maintain a façade of confidence and strength consistent with the notions of hegemonic masculinity prominent in the social domain (Bond, 2009; hooks, 2004; Pattman, 2005). Finally, men are traditionally viewed as holding a relative position of power or advantage in South African society. By exploring the experiences and views evident amongst those who form part of the dominant ideology we may gain better insight into why and how it is being maintained. As Barker and Galasinski (2001) argue "the contemporary perception of masculinity as a `social problem' has put men on the research agenda. If we are to forward the health and wellbeing of men, along with the women who live with them, then we have to comprehend how men perceive the world and their place in it" (p. 86). What is of utmost importance is how men experience themselves and the ways in which they construct and enact their identities.

Table 1 below depicts the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants sampled in this study. As can be seen, most of the participants were involved in tertiary education of some form and several were also employed part-time or on a temporary basis. Of particular importance is the participants' home language, as social constructionism and discourse analysis emphasise the relevance of language and words used to portray thoughts, feelings and experiences and its role in shaping identity and meaning. In addition, different languages have different ways of presenting and describing guiding metaphors and discourses (Burr, 1995). As can be seen most of the participants indicated that English was their first language, with only three participants mentioning a different home language, isiZulu.

It is also important to note that all, but one, of the participants sampled in this study identified themselves as heterosexual (as listed in the Sexual Orientation column in Table 1 below). This is pertinent because when talking about desirability and attractive bodies they often referred to pleasing or attaining romantic partners which, hence, in most cases were women. It is interesting to reflect on the perturbed and defensive responses several participants provided when they were asked to disclose their sexual orientation. Considering the context of the study, which includes discussions around male bodies and masculine ideals, with interviews being guided by a woman, many of the men appeared almost outraged and indignant, suggesting that their heterosexual orientation should be obviously self-evident, with no need of questioning. For example, one individual, Brutus, responded "Wahaha sexual

orientation? I should hope it's transparently clear, as straight as straight can be not curving nor slanting an inch of a degree". This will be more fully explored in the results section.

Table 1:

Participants' Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Home Language	Race	Religion	Occupation	Sexual Orientation
Duncan	23	English	White	Deist	Full-Time student, works part-time	Heterosexual
Hamlet	23	English	Indian	Hindu (more spiritual)	Full-Time student, works part-time	Heterosexual
Macbeth	22	English	Indian	Islam	Full-Time student	Heterosexual
Romeo	22	English	White	Christian	Full-Time student, works part-time	Heterosexual
Horatio	24	English	Indian	Hindu	Full-Time student	Heterosexual
Tybalt	21	IsiZulu	Black African	Christian (Roman Catholic)	Full-Time student	Heterosexual
Othello	22	English	Indian	Islam	Full-Time student	Heterosexual
Lysander	21	IsiZulu	Black African	Christian	Full-Time student	Heterosexual
Puck	24	English	White	Christian	Part-Time student, works full-time	Heterosexual
Cornelius	21	English	Indian	Hindu (more faith-based)	Full-Time student, works part-time	Heterosexual
Brutus	24	English	White	Christian (Roman Catholic)	Full-Time student	Heterosexual
Lorenzo	26	IsiZulu	Black African	Christian	Full-Time student and employed	Undisclosed

3.4. Data Collection and Procedures

Data was collected by the use of in-depth semi-structured individual interviews, conducted in English, with each participant being interviewed on a single occasion. I contacted each participant via email or telephonically and arranged a suitable time and date to meet. The interviews all took place in the UKZN psychology department on the Howard College campus. This venue was selected as I had easy access to a quiet and private room in this venue where confidentiality could be upheld. Written informed consent was received from each participant before the interview commenced. All interviews were audio-recorded and the interview lengths ranged from thirty minutes to one hour.

I began the interview process by introducing myself to the participant, providing them with some personal information and asking them whether there was anything they would like to ask me about myself. This facilitated the development of rapport and helped to create a

secure and open environment where stories and information could be shared freely in a mutually trusting manner (Renzetti, 1997). Semi-structured interviews were useful as they provided guidance and clarity for participants yet the process remained flexible and dynamic allowing participants to share and explore their own experiences or understandings freely, without harsh restrictions (Kvale, 1996). In addition, they provide a great source of verbal talk and language which is directly relevant when using discourse analysis (Parker, 1992). Furthermore, interviews involve a certain degree of social interaction which, according to Social Constructionism theory, is essential when trying to understand how individuals produce narratives and construct their identities (Burr, 1995).

I was guided during the interview process by an interview schedule (See Appendix 1). This consisted of predominantly open-ended questions which encouraged the participants to provide detailed descriptions of their personal perspectives. Probing questions were used to elicit deeper meanings and closed-ended questions were used in an attempt to provoke more specific, clarifying responses (Kvale, 1996). The questions asked in the interview schedule were shaped by the theoretical framework of the study. I also took a few notes about some of the important non-verbal details (such as body language and facial expressions) that were not able to be captured by the audio-recording. I have tried to incorporate these into the transcripts themselves, usually in brackets within the text. Each interview was transcribed as immediately as possible to allow subtle details to be noted with clarity. Furthermore, I tried as far as possible, to familiarise myself with each completed transcript before the following interview to allow myself to develop my interviewing skills and techniques (Kvale, 1996).

3.4.1. Development of the interview schedule

When considering the necessary and appropriate questions to guide the interview process, I drew on the broad literature around the body and body dissatisfaction and was particularly interested in the social and cultural ideals created around the desirable male body as ideal images themselves are discursive constructions and are not fixed or permanent inevitable "truths" (Gordon & Abbott, 2003). In other words, what is deemed to constitute a desirable and attractive body or person is fluid and malleable and is shaped by language, discourse and social interaction (Burr, 1995; Butler, 1993). I therefore hoped to explore specifically how young men in this context, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, constructed the meaning of the ideal man through spoken language. In addition, I was interested in exploring the ways in which young men related these constructed ideal images to themselves and their own

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experiences. The interview questions, therefore, began by asking questions around the participants' constructions of the ideal male body and the ideal man and then progressed to more personal questions on how the participants' viewed themselves in relation to their, and society's, ideal images. As mentioned, the interviews were semi-structured and the interview schedule was used in a flexible manner.

Some of the questions were slightly altered or refined as I progressed through the different interviews because I noticed that participants occasionally found the initial wording difficult to comprehend and required further explanation. I often asked similar questions in several different ways which tended to encourage the men to speak. The one question "what kind of a man are you?" for example appeared to evoke a few confused, and even uncomfortable, responses highlighted by shifting and fidgeting, immediate closed body language and a slowing of speech. This is illustrated well by the following interview excerpt from one of the earlier interviews:

Simóne: *Oh okay I see and (p) what kind of a man do you think you are? How would you describe yourself as a man?*

Hamlet: *HA! (Laughs nervously, sighs, runs hand through hair, pulls a face)*

Simóne*:   (laughs) Sorry are these difficult questions?*

Hamlet: *No it's okay don't worry, I don't think [people are] going to like these questions! (Both laugh, shifts in chair, runs hand through hair) no-no it's okay, (P) uh (P) it's like a doctor Phil (big sigh) I think that uh I'm in a transition period (P) HA! (Groans loudly, throws head back, covers face)*

Simóne: *What's wrong? Why is that so stressful? Tell me how you are feeling?*

Hamlet: *It's not stressful, it's just hard to explain. It's actually hard to think about (sighs) so what you're going to analyse me now (both laugh)*

Simóne: *No! Of course not! I'm not even looking for –*

Hamlet: *Hmm all right how would I describe myself, how would you describe yourself as a man?(p)*

Simóne: *Hmm what kind of a man are you?*

Hamlet: *What kind of a man am I? Okay I think I misread the question. (Sighs, shifts uncomfortably, touches neck) Oh no now I'm playing with my chain so now that's all going to go into psychoanalysing me*

Simóne: *(both laugh) No man, I'm not going to psychoanalyse you –*

Hamlet*:   Okay so to be honest the question makes me uncomfortable, so can I explain why it makes me uncomfortable, it's because I can't be honest okay and I feel like that I can't be honest because, I don't know uh (p) it just feels like I don't want to come across as, it will come across as, I don't want to be read wrong*

Simóne: *I'm not going to read you in a specific way*

Hamlet: *Ja no-no I know*

Simóne: *So you can say anything that you want*

Hamlet*:*   *I know I know that I'm just saying it's uh it's always a difficult, difficult question for anybody*

Simóne*:*   *It is of course! All personal questions are –*

Hamlet*:*   *Are difficult, ja. Okay so I am going to describe myself (puts his head in his hands, groans loudly)*

Simóne: *(both laugh a bit hysterically) this is making you SO uncomfortable! Sorry! Okay (p) do you think that you are a strong man?*

Hamlet: *Okay, let's go back to the original question, okay what kind of a man do I think that am I? ...*

After this period the interviewee relaxed considerably and answered the rest of the questions more comfortably. Although I did retain this question in the schedule, I often asked the participant to "describe [himself] as a man" first as leading with the phrasing "what kind of a man are you?" appeared to be unintentionally accusatory and may be reflective of an affront or an insult. As the different interviews progressed I also developed my interviewing skills and became more efficient at managing tense interview moments.

3.4.2. Transcription process

Transcription was carried out promptly after each interview. The verbal data was transcribed verbatim to ensure that all valuable information including emotional emphases were retained. All repetitions, grammatical and speech errors were recorded. Pauses were denoted by (p) if there was a short pause or (pause) for longer breaks in speech. When speakers interrupted each other, this was indicated by a dash (–). Changes in voice, displays of emotion, mimicking, laughing as well as body cues and facial expressions were all incorporated into the interview transcription text within brackets. This is consistent with the basic transcription technique posited by King and Horrocks (2011). The transcription was performed by me personally as it was deemed an essential initial part of the analysis process in that it facilitated a familiarity with the data and allowed me to become fully immersed in the texts. I used the computer programme NVivo10 to perform the transcription process. This programme was also used to store, manage and arrange the data obtained through the interview sessions.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data was then analysed using discourse analysis. Broadly, a discourse can be defined as a collection of meanings, images, stories and statements that, when combined, construct a particular account of a phenomenon, person or class of people (Burr, 1995). In other words, discourses can be seen as the lens through which the world can be perceived and the meaning which this provides, allows certain objects to come into being (Burr, 1995). Fairclough (2001) describes discourse analysis as a "theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis … which gives rise to ways of analysing language or semiosis within broader analyses of the social process (p. 121). It emphasises the "social actions accomplished by language users communicating within social and cultural contexts" (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 63). In other words, discourse analysis attempts to establish, and provide an explanation of, the various forces which structure what individuals think, how they experience the world and the ways in which their identities are shaped. These structures can be identified within the language that individuals use when providing personal accounts but they are often out of their own consciousness.

Various approaches to discourse analysis exist ranging from broad and general guidelines, to specific and multiple structured steps in analysis. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) provide an excellent introduction which facilitates understanding around the discourse analysis process. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) the first stage of analysis involves identifying various discourses in the text by "reflecting on culture" from a slightly detached position (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, p. 158). This can be achieved by identifying binary-oppositions (for example good and bad or true and false) in the transcripts in order to highlight the different discourses that may be explored. Next, terms and phrases that are repeated or recurring in the text are noted, as specific terms are usually associated with particular discourses. Specific focus is given to the subjects mentioned in the interviews and how they are mentioned. In addition, the researcher's role in the interviewing and analysis processes should also be acknowledged and carefully reflected on (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The second stage of discourse analysis involves linking various narratives and experiences to actions in order to establish what effect the narratives are having. In other words, discourse analysis is interested in what varying types of "truths" are being constructed through the use of language (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

Willig (2008) provides an interesting discussion of the distinction between discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis. Some researchers suggest that the two forms are highly compatible and can be neatly integrated into one method for use in a single study and hence the distinction between the two should not be made too severely (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Willig (2008) argues, however, that although they are similar and have some overlapping features, they are essentially used to answer different types of research questions as they are based on "different intellectual traditions" (Willig, 2008, p. 92). Discursive psychology stems from conversation analysis and its main focus is on discursive practice, in other words how individuals use language and the performative aspects of discourses. Foucauldian discourse, on the other hand, stems from the writings of Foucault and post-structuralist theorists. With this method the main emphasis is on "the ways in which discourse constructs subjectivity, selfhood and power relations" (Willig, 2008, p. 95). This refers to the different types of objects and subjects that discourses construct within particular contexts and, in turn, the various types of "ways-of-being" that are available to individuals through these constructions. For the present study, it has been identified that the Foucauldian discourse analysis is most suitable as it is consistent with the aims and research questions of the project. The following discussion will, hence, focus on this particular type of discourse analysis.

It is asserted that from "a Foucauldian point of view, discourses facilitate and limit, enable and constrain, what can be said, by whom, where and when" (Willig, 2008, p. 112). The type of knowledge that Foucauldian discourse analysis seeks to produce involves identifying the "ways-of-being" that are made available to particular people through location within various discursive worlds. The aim is not to determine one objective and definitive truth but rather to establish various ways in which phenomena have been constructed through discourses as well as the physical, social and psychological effects thereof (Burr, 1995; Willig, 2008). It can be seen that this is consistent with social constructionist perspective discussed earlier from which this research is presented.

One of the most well-known methods of discourse analysis consistent with the Foucauldian method is presented by Parker (1992). He provides seven criteria for identifying discourses. Firstly, he suggests that all texts can produce and contain discourses and any material that has meaning and can be interpreted can be considered a text, irrespective of whether it has an obvious author or not. The first step in analysis, then, is to stipulate which particular texts are

considered as part of the study. Thereafter, "a process of exploring the connotations, allusions and implications which the texts evoke" (Parker, 1992, p. 4) should occur. This is best done in a group of people using free association. The second criterion refers to the objectification process that occurs through discourses. By naming something or referring to it within a discourse, that object is presented as real. These same objects may not exist in concrete form outside the discourse that created them. In addition, discourses themselves can be made objects and analysed as such. From this criterion two further steps in discourse analysis are suggested. The objects referred to in a text are identified and described and this description in itself is identified as an object (Parker, 1992).

According to Parker (1992) discourses also contain subjects. These refer to the sense of self to which a discourse speaks or appeals. During analysis it is important to identify and describe the types of person which appear in the discourse and then speculate their scope of speech within that discourse (Parker, 1992). Discourses also represent a "coherent system of meanings" (Parker, 1992, p. 6). This suggests that all ideas or metaphors of a similar topic within a discourse can be grouped to form a consistent depiction of reality. The meaning produced will be socially and culturally specific and alternate meanings of similar topics may be produced in differing contexts. A further stage in discourse analysis, therefore, is to create an image of the reality represented in the discourse and establish how texts manage or deal with oppositional terminology (Parker, 1992). In addition, discourses tend to refer to other discourses. The process of reflexivity and critiquing one discourse necessitates the use of another discourse. The next useful step in analysis is to identify contradictions in different discourses as well as the similarities in the way in which they depict certain objects (Parker, 1992).

Furthermore, Parker (1992) suggests that many discourses are internally reflective in that they comment on the specific terms selected and used in that discourse. This criterion leads to the next step in analysis which involves the use of other texts to explain and expand the discourse as it is presently used. In addition, careful consideration of the term used to describe or label the discourse, and the moral and political implications of such a choice, must occur (Parker, 1992). It is also important to note that discourses are strongly rooted in a historical context. They are dynamic and fluid as different aspects are altered and new layers are developed over time. It is, hence, necessary to analyse the process through which a

particular discourse emerges and in turn acknowledge the ways in which the discourse has changed and remained the same (Parker, 1992).

In addition, Parker (1992) suggests three further criteria of discourses related to their political utility. Discourses are often used to support particular institutions, they may reproduce and maintain power relations and, in turn, they can have serious ideological effects (Parker, 1992). An important aspect of analysis is, therefore, to acknowledge and highlight the institutions which are both reinforced or maintained as well as those which are criticised and suppressed by a particular discourse. Furthermore, it is useful to identify the groups of people which benefit from the use of a particular discourse and hence are motivated to promote it (Parker, 1992). Finally, a radical and critical discourse analysis should incorporate an examination of how a discourse joins and compliments other discourses in order to create an oppressive effect. This involves highlighting the ways in which discourses enable certain groups of people to voice their stories and create a particular depiction of truth whilst others are silenced and hence prevented from changing their present reality or redefining a more liberating future (Parker, 1992). The political aspect is specific to Parker's view of discourse analysis and other authors tend not to place such emphasis on power and ideology.

In the present study, throughout the transcription process and thereafter, I immersed myself in the data by familiarising myself with all collected materials and read and re-read the transcribed texts. Willig's (2008) 6 stages of discourse analysis were then used and followed by Parker's (1992) final 6 steps which emphasise power and ideology. This combination was selected because these two methods were deemed most appropriate and consistent with the aims of the study. Although Willig's stages usefully address most of the research questions, it is not entirely consistent with traditionally Foucauldian methods as it does not pay attention to genealogy and the historical origins of discourses nor does it focus on oppressive political uses of discourses. Although the historical progression is not directly relevant to the research questions in this study, the oppressive uses of discourses is relevant and hence Parker's (1992) final three criteria (consisting of 6 steps) which highlight power and ideology have been incorporated in the analysis process.

3.5.1. Stages in analysis

The analysis begun with 6 stages as posited by Willig (2008):

1.) Discursive Constructions

The initial step was used to establish the various ways in which the discursive object was constructed in a particular text. This involved identifying all the occasions where the discursive object was mentioned or referred to in different ways within a text. The discursive objects that were of interest and therefore focussed on in this study were the male body, the ideal male body, the ideal man or masculinity. It is important to note that both implicit and explicit references to the discursive object were pertinent as indirect references often help facilitate understanding of how the object has been constructed (Willig, 2008). For example, the reluctance of participants to directly discuss the male body in terms of its desirability or physical attractiveness suggests that many of these individuals see it as less socially acceptable for their bodies to be objectified than have functional value.

2.) Discourses

The next stage in analysis involved highlighting the differences between the various constructions of the seemingly single or solitary discursive object. For example, one participant described his body pre and post transformation. He used words such as "obese" and "overweight" to describe his previous body-image and then went on to describe his present body as "better" or "healthier". I also explored the different ways in which the discursive objects were constructed by different participants. For example, one participant described the ideal man as "the caveman" type whilst another emphasised a new-age sophisticated, "gallant man" as being the ideal. The aim of this process was to situate the differing constructions within broader discourses (Willig, 2008). In other words, I tried to establish the larger discourses operating within the participants' speech. For example, describing the ideal male body as natural can be located within a broader humanist discourse which emphasises authenticity.

3.) Action Orientation

The following step focused on how and where the various constructions are being used or deployed. This action orientation facilitated an understanding of what the different constructions may achieve or attain within a text. The fundamental question that was

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asked during this stage was: what is the function of using this construction of the discursive object at this particular point with reference to the surrounding constructions in the text? (Willig, 2008). For example many participants highlighted their bodies' *functionality over form*. By emphasising how much they could utilise their bodies and the fact that they could still perform all the tasks that the muscular and defined men could, and then some, they were able to combat or pacify their insecurities about not physically resembling the toned and trim man idealised in the media or amongst their friends. Another example can be seen in the discourse *the body is secondary* where many participants strongly emphasised non-physical aspects such as intelligence and personality as key to the ideal image. Their focus on character may be an attempt to present themselves in a way in which they are not viewed as shallow or superficial.

4.) Positionings

The next stage in analysis revolved around establishing the various subject positions that were created through the different identified discourses. This refers to the various ways in which an individual may be positioned within a system of meanings and the rights and duties that are available to subjects occupying that location. The process by which individuals come to occupy a particular subject position has direct implications on subjectivity (Willig, 2008). For instance, *the healthy body* discourse found in this research allows men to be positioned as responsible and proactive members of society because they look after themselves properly and are disciplined and self-controlled. By self-improving they are, therefore, upholding their duty to preserve their wellbeing in order to maintain their status as active contributors to society.

5.) Practice

This step in analysis focussed on the ways in which various discourses and subject positions identified within the text influence what particular practices and behaviours are made available and what opportunities are withheld. It is important to note that various practices can be deemed to be legitimate behaviours when framed within certain discourses and, furthermore, these practices tend to "reproduce the discourses that legitimate them" (Willig, 2008, p. 117) in a mutual and self-fulfilling process. For example, by constructing the muscular body as *the healthy body*, men in this study are positioned in a way which allows them to legitimately engage in body-improvement behaviours such as "gymming" and using supplement products.

 6.) Subjectivity

The final stage in Willig's (2008) discourse analysis involved exploring and suggesting ways in which the discourses identified in the texts could produce psychological realities by providing a variety of different ways of perceiving and acting in the social world (Willig, 2008). This stage was primarily concerned with exploring how various subject positions may produce particular feelings and experiences for individuals. For example, within the discourse *it's what women want* men may experience considerable anxiety and pressure to resemble the ideal man, one being physically attractive, strong and economically stable, as it is believed that only men resembling these ideals will appeal romantically to women. This may leave individuals feeling insecure and inadequate.

Thereafter a further 6 steps in analysis as posited by Parker (1992) were completed:

1.) Institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used were identified.

2.) Institutions that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears were identified.

3.) Categories of person who gain and lose from the employment of the discourse were examined.

4.) A consideration of which parties would want to promote and which would want to dissolve the discourse occurred.

5.) The ways in which a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression was explored.

6.) The means by which the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history, was considered.

(Parker, 1992).

Data was analysed both within and across texts. Within a qualitative tradition, discursive data analysis is not a linear process. Analysis begins early in the research process, throughout data collection and transcription and, hence, these stages were performed in an iterative and reflexive manner (Neuman, 2010). These stages were checked by my supervisor who is familiar with discourse analysis and the process of qualitative research.

3.6. Addressing Quality in Qualitative Research

One of the common complaints of qualitative research is its inability to be assessed using the traditional positivist evaluation yardsticks of reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisability. Although it would be futile to attempt to hold qualitative research to these standards, it is still important to assess research to ensure that the knowledge being produced is useful and trustworthy. Following the principles suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1989, as cited in Mertens, 1998), I attempted to address the issue of trustworthiness in this study as fully as possible.

Credibility is the proposed equivalent of validity and refers to the degree of confidence in how accurate or true the findings appear to be, with specific emphasis on a contextual understanding (Ulin et al., 2002). In other words, credibility refers to whether there is a correspondence between the ways in which participants view phenomenon and the ways in which the researcher has presented these views (Mertens, 1998). In this study the use of informal member checks occurred during the interviewing process. I confirmed with participants that I had correctly understood their positions and asked clarifying questions if I was uncertain (Mertens, 1998). In addition, every effort has been made to ensure that the findings are strongly rooted in and supported by the verbal data produced in the interviews (Ulin et al., 2002). Furthermore, peer debriefing was used whereby I engaged in regular and lengthy discussions with both colleagues and my supervisor in order to ensure that I constantly challenged my own values and paid attention to the ways in which my own perspectives were influencing the findings being produced. This was accompanied by personal individual reflexivity, whereby I documented my biases and feelings and critically reflected upon them (Mertens, 1998).

Transferability is the principle that is proposed as the equivalent to generalisability or external validity used in quantitative research. Since qualitative research uses small, purposive samples, generalisation is unlikely and, hence, transferability refers to the degree of correspondence between the site of study and the receiving context. Qualitative research is not concerned with making statistical generalisations, but rather tends to focus on producing conceptually representative data for the individuals in that particular context (Ulin et al., 2002). This was achieved in the present study by providing thick and detailed descriptions, with particular attention being paid to the cultural and historical context within which this

research is located (Mertens, 1998). In addition, several cases were used when gathering data, which is another method of strengthening transferability (Mertens, 1998).

In qualitative research the equivalent to reliability is called dependability. Since in qualitative research stability of findings over time is not expected, or even necessarily admirable, the inevitable changes in results should be tracked and inspected over time (Mertens, 1998). Although this is beyond the scope of this thesis, several other methods of establishing dependability were utilised. I ensured that the research process was conducted in a consistent manner and that it followed, as closely as possible, the methods and conventions coherent with the qualitative paradigm (Ulin et al., 2002). In particular, serious attention was given to the consistency of the research questions, research design and theoretical underpinnings of the study to ensure there was a logical connection and integration of all aspects of the research (Ulin et al., 2002). In addition, I chose to follow specific authors with regard to data analysis procedures and these steps were also checked and confirmed by my supervisor who is familiar with the area.

Confirmability is considered to be the qualitative equivalent for objectivity used in the positivist paradigm. Objectivity implies that the researcher is detached and distant in his approach to research participants, and this is clearly not the case in qualitative research. Confirmability, therefore, refers to whether the researcher is able to show a close and logical connection between the findings they produce and the data or source from which these findings should stem (Mertens, 1998). In the present study, I used a chain of evidence to track the process by which data was analysed and results were produced. In addition, critical reflexivity was once again used to identify and document the ways in which I influenced the research process (Ulin et al., 2002).

It is important to note that the above discussion which presents a qualitative equivalence of assessing the quality of research has been included in order to provide a thorough discussion. It should be emphasised, however, that the authentic value of qualitative research is to offer new insights and understandings of phenomena and behaviour by using new methods or standards that do not conform to Positivism but nevertheless hold sway and that are believable as they are firmly based on collected evidence. In other words, qualitative research that addresses different research questions by being able to arrange and explain data in a

coherent and consistent formation, which allows phenomena and behaviours to be more fully understood than before, would be deemed to be valuable and useful.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from The Ethics Review Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (See Appendix 3).

3.7.1. Procedural Ethics

All participants received a clear explanation of the aims, objectives and procedure of the study as well as what would be required of them during the research process before being asked to participate. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and this was especially emphasised to the individuals. All participants were required to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix 2) before participating in the individual interview. In addition, permission to record interview sessions was obtained from each participant before each interview. All participants were 18 years or older (legally adults), hence parental or legal guardian permission was not required. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences and all information provided was kept confidential and anonymous. Research participants were not required to provide their names or any information that could identify them specifically. The data was kept secured in the Psychology Department at Howard College Campus. Only I had access to this data in order to maintain confidentiality. After five years the data will be destroyed. Furthermore, no names or personal details were recorded when entering the data into the NVivo10 computer programme and only I have had access to the electronic copies of the data. After five years all computer evidence will be erased and purged. The participants have been referred to using pseudonyms in this final research report where the findings are presented. Furthermore, any other individuals named and discussed during interviews were also given pseudonyms in all copies of the written data and in this thesis. This is to ensure that participant anonymity is upheld at all times.

Although no monetary or material compensation was provided to individuals who participated, there was little anticipated risk as, although the area of research did require participants to share personal stories and accounts, it did not intend to delve into any deeply traumatic experiences. I was, however, available to discuss any issues or concerns that any of the participants may have had throughout the process. At the outset, all participants were

informed about the UKZN psychology clinic, where they could receive counselling at a reduced rate, if the process caused any discomfort or evoked any unpleasant feelings and experiences. After the interview, I talked informally with the participants and enquired as to how they were feeling. I made it clear that I was available for any further discussion and my contact details, and those of my supervisor, were made accessible.

3.7.2. Practical Ethics

Although procedural ethics, as established by the ethics committee and policies and principles they espouse, is essential in all studies in order to protect the rights of all research participants, it can be argued that it is insufficient as it is too explicit and nuanced and therefore does not always account for the vast array of experiences and situations that the researcher will encounter once they commence research in the field (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). This, it is argued, is particularly relevant in qualitative research where the researcher is closely involved with research participants, and the participants themselves are regarded as an integral part of knowledge production. One of the most challenging aspects of qualitative research is ensuring that one maintains a non-exploitative pattern of interaction with all participants while at the same time fulfilling the purpose and role of researcher (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

In order to move beyond procedural ethics and produce critically ethical work, researchers need to acknowledge the ways in which theory, research and action can all be both emancipatory or oppressive in nature and, therefore, to actively adopt values, assumptions and practices which foster the liberatory effects of knowledge production (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). This is particularly relevant in a South African multicultural context. With a history of racial and gender based inequality, much of which still implicitly and explicitly exists today, and a severe disparity in economic wealth distribution and difference between the educated and the illiterate, there is a broad scope for abuse of power and entrenchment of confining and oppressive practices of which researchers need to be critically aware. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) highlight that this requires ethical competence which refers to recognising ethical issues when they arise as well as the ability to consider all the possible courses of action and respond most appropriately. This process is greatly facilitated by reflexivity. In other words, one of the most crucial elements of research which is pragmatically ethical involves paying great attention to one's own role in the research process

and to critically reflect on the process as a whole. The narrative of my personal reflexivity will be presented later in the conclusion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of all the interview transcripts reveals several prominent discourses present across the texts, namely, *the natural body; functionality over form; the necessity of progression; the body for self and others; the body is secondary* and finally *the homosexual aversion,* which will all be discussed in the section that follows. These discourses were each evident in several of the research participants' speech and were often repeatedly called on as explanations for engaging in, or avoiding, various practices and behaviours or explaining the ways in which they viewed the world. In addition, they seemed to provide a means by which the participants came to understand themselves as well as the ways in which they felt or the emotions they experienced. Table 2 below provides a summary of the discourses (and sub-discourses) presented in this chapter.

Table 2: *Summary of the Discourses*

	Discourses
4.1.)	The Natural Body
	• The Healthy Body
	• Artificial Intervention/Cheating
4.2.)	Functionality over Form
4.3.)	The Necessity of Progression
4.4.)	The Body for Self and Others
	• The Body for Self
	• The Body for Others
	❖ It's What Women Want
	❖ Keeping up with the "Boys"
4.5.)	The Body is Secondary
	• The Intellectual Man
	• The Man of Good Character
	• The Material Man
4.6.)	The Homosexual Aversion

Before commencing an exploration of the emergent discourses it would be useful to define some of the terms that will be used in the discussion and how they were constructed and conceptualised by the participants in this study. The two broad "types" of men that were

discussed were the traditional macho man and the more modern metrosexual man. Although I am by no means suggesting that these are fixed categories, or that they are mutually exclusive, it is important to note that many of the men constructed the ideal man in one or other of these ways and referred to both these terms. In addition, the participants also usually identified themselves with one or other of these types of men.

Figure 1: Digital image of the predominant male characters from the movie *300* (2006).

Macho men were constructed as "men's men" who are very traditionally masculine, are concerned with strength and power and often engaged in or showed interest in sporting activities. Here the image of "brawn and brawl" was emphasised. Some of the adjectives used when describing the ideal macho man were strong, tough and rugged (La Cecla, 2000; Risé, 2000). One of the examples of the macho man image that was referred to by participants was the "cavemen" like "dominators" depicted in the film *300* (2006, see Figure 1 above).The macho man tended to be distanced and differentiated from the metrosexual man. The metrosexual man was constructed as a relatively new and emerging, but increasingly favourable, form of masculinity. It was identified as being the "sensitive" man who "cares" about himself and what others think. He takes pride in his appearance and is interested in presenting himself as not only being well-kept but gallant as well. The favouring of the metrosexual ideal may be linked to an older discourse on chivalry which supports the "noble gentleman" (metrosexual man) over the "boorish lout" (the macho man) as manners and sophistication were viewed as signs of class and wealth (La Cecla, 2000; Risé, 2000).

Figure 2: Photograph of David Beckham, self-proclaimed metrosexual
(http://www.sportsposterwarehouse.com/detail_GB-FP1962__394__beckhamwhite07gb.html).

Examples of the metrosexual men discussed by participants include Brad Pitt, Jonny Depp
and the most renowned, David Beckham (see Figure 2 above). All, but one, of the men that I
interviewed (even including those men who either admired or personally identified with the
metrosexual masculine ideal) asserted that although the boundary between being metrosexual
and homosexual was becoming blurred, one should definitely still exist. As one participant
exclaimed:

> Simóne: *and what do you think of this idea of the "metrosexual" man?*
> Puck: *(laughs) I DIG IT!!! (very enthusiastic almost singing, throws head back)... It's (p) like (p)
>   I wouldn't want to say a guy PAMPERING himself but you know, going out of his way to
>   still try and look good. Like you know the way he's dressed, (p) okay look I wouldn't go as
>   far as to get a manicure, like NOUGHT eh, like you still gotta have your rugged
>   individualism but uh (p) ja like ja having a nice haircut and stuff you know like the way
>   you like (p) ja the way you DRESS all that kind of stuff ... I see it more as having pride in
>   your appearance and that. Like some guys will go like (gestures above his head) - there's a
>   LINE, there's a LINE! Yoh! Yoh! YOH!*
> Simóne: *(both laugh) there is?*
> Puck: *and it's definitely more down here (gestures at waist level).*

Men that were considered too metrosexual or who extended beyond the clearly established
and accepted "degree" of metrosexuality were considered to be either homosexual or acting
in a manner representing a "gay" man. These "moffies", "inkonkoni" or "isitabane" as they
are colloquially (and offensively) referred to in South African slang, were often viewed as
less manly or not holding or maintaining a legitimate form of masculinity at all. These

individuals were said to be clearly identifiable by their style of dress (especially the infamous skinny jeans, see Figure 3 below) as well as the excessive use of supposedly "strictly feminine" cosmetic products such as hair wax and several facial products.

Figure 3: A sarcastic e-card about skinny jeans (*Macbeth*, Personal Communications, October 10, 2012, http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/said%20no%20one%20ever).

4.1. The Natural Body

The first discourse, *the natural body,* refers to the construction of the ideal male body as looking naturally strong, fit and defined. More specifically, the ideal male body was constructed as one that is moderately large, had a strong torso and back, with muscular biceps and defined legs. This is consistent with previous research (McFarland & Petrie, 2012; Morry & Staska, 2001; Nikkelen et al., 2011; Shilling, 1993; Tager et al., 2006). The body was also described as needing to be proportional in that the upper and lower body segments were to be comparatively similar in both bulk and dimension. Above all, however, the body could not be artificial looking or artificially developed (Bordo, 2002; Galli & Reel, 2009). All these elements needed to resemble a naturally occurring body. Most of the participants mentioned this as, not only an abstract ideal, but a benchmark image to which they aspire. The two sub-discourses that follow highlight a continuous issue that runs through the research data which suggests that the experience of masculinity should not be concerned with aesthetics, but rather involves hard work and physical labour. As referenced earlier Volli (2000) asserts "being a man is hard work. This has always been true in the Western tradition. The work in question involves education, training, and, especially, selection. Because in this tradition not all human beings are men, not even all those of the male gender" (p. 114). It is important to consider how accurately this seems to reflect the South African (traditionally non-Western) context. What this present study seems to elucidate is that proving your manliness is not

solely a Western concept and the extent to which individuals are being influenced by an increasingly Westernised milieu appears very significant.

4.1.1. The Healthy Body

The healthy body is the initial sub-discourse in which the necessity of naturalness is clearly stressed. This discourse refers to the construction that a body which is in good physical shape as indicative of both a fit person and a healthy lifestyle. Almost every participant mentioned that one of the key aspects of being an ideal man is being active and that the ideal body was one which is healthy. When asked to describe how such a healthy body would look the body that was described was the athletic build which closely resembled the media ideals of muscular, defined and toned bodies (McFarland & Petrie, 2012; Morry & Staska, 2001; Nikkelen et al., 2011; Shilling, 1993). In addition, several of the participants stressed that they felt that the media images were not problematic or unrealistic but rather that they were in the individuals' best interests because, by featuring "healthy" men, they were thereby undoubtedly encouraging individuals to pursue vigorous lifestyles which would lead to improved life expectancy and an enhanced sense of wellbeing (Featherstone, 1991). This can be seen by the following responses:

> Romeo: *... what I believe is portrayed in the media uhh, in terms of males is not necessarily like a a like a muscled like a proper like bodybuilding you know like massive guy, that's not what is really portrayed umm to a large extent in the media. What's portrayed is a FIT and HEALTHY (P) male, if you know what I'm saying?*

> Simóne: *what would be the ideal looking man?*
> Hamlet: *Uh okay (p) I would think that (p) ja I would think that he would have to be (p) pretty fit, fit looking, uh healthy, I think that, I do think that (p) sometimes the way he can look can be a reflection of who you are, and so if you look after yourself on outside, (p) it's it's part of who you are on the inside, that you go out and you wanna be healthy, and make THOSE choices etc etc.*

The above quote highlights that health does not only involve a physical aspect an exterior or physical experience, but an internal psychological one. Individuals who look healthy have more healthy "inners", they have better internal qualities. These ideas also seem to be strongly evident in media messages, not only in advertisements (Berger, 1972) but in supposedly motivational images on social network sites and as inspirational mantras on health and fitness blogs (see Figures 4 and 5 below).
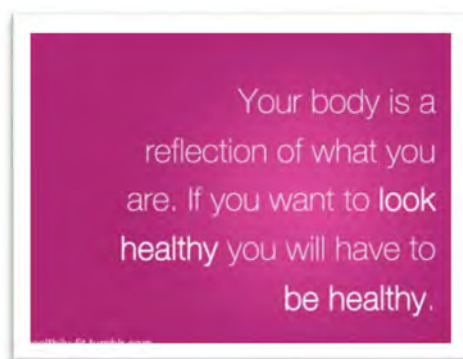
Figure 4: A motivational quote about the healthy body
(http://thefruitdoctor.blogspot.com/2012_10_01_archive.html).

The participants' speech often seemed to reflect a strong belief in the "halo effect" operating in society which refers to the "tendency to generalise a favourable impression to unrelated personal characteristics" (Coon & Mitterer, 2007, p. 614). In other words people who have one strongly favourable characteristic (in this case physical appearance) are considered to be superior in numerous other areas unrelated to their attractiveness. This is similar to what both Mishkind et al. (1987) and Wienke (1998) argue in their work. Supposed beauty or physical appeal seems to encourage others to respond more favourably towards the individual and they are perceived as receiving preferential treatment over others deemed less attractive, irrespective of their other abilities (Mishkind et al., 1987; Wienke, 1998). For example, attractive people are said to be viewed as more competent and capable than those less attractive than them. This point was specifically emphasised by the following remark from one of the participants:

> Romeo: *I FULLY believe in like first impressions (p) and I guess like you know like you know if you go to a job interview and like you're a good looking person opposed to an unattractive person you there is it's UNDENIABLE that that person is straight away on a better foot than that unattractive person*

More specifically in this study, from this discourse individuals who achieve the muscular ideal not only are physically more attractive but are also more responsible, self-controlled and determined because they have engaged in all the appropriate behaviours (such as dieting and exercise) and avoided all the negative actions (such as fatty food consumption and indolence) that produce such a physique (Featherstone, 1991). Furthermore, they do not only receive the rewards and benefits associated with being attributed this label (for example acceptance, praise and status) but are also seen as fully deserving of them as they are responsible for their

own favourable position (de Botton, 2004; Mishkind et al., 1987; Wienke, 1998). One of the implications of these ideas is that those who do not achieve such an ideal are not only viewed as "unhealthy", lazy and indulgent thereby less conscientious and self-preserving, but additionally are seen to have earned this unfavourable label by their own doing and hence are deserving of it (de Botton, 2004).

The notions of stressing personal responsibility and "reaping what you sow" are also reflective of the ideology of Meritocracy. Meritocracy can be explained as a form of social organisation that provided an ideological alternative to both the egalitarian and hereditary principles (de Botton, 2004). Meritocracy argues that inequality in society is perfectly acceptable, if not inevitable, as long as the inequality was preceded by an initial period of complete equality in terms of opportunity. In other words, if all members of society have previously been allowed equal access to opportunities (such as education, and the wealth and status this education brings) any inequality that may proceed could only be attributed to individuals' capabilities and limitations. In other words "privileges would be merited as would hardships" (de Botton, 2004, p. 81). This stresses that value is legitimately achieved by individual effort.

In this case the healthy (and desirable body) has come to represent a means by which individuals either access power and maintain status or the terms by which it is denied. Furthermore, the onus or responsibility for achieving a position of success or value (in this case) lies solely on the individual. Ideas presented within de Botton's (2004) "Three Anxiety-inducing New Stories about Success", can be extended to explain this narrative presented by the young men in this sample. Individuals can no longer blame bloodlines or titles for their lack of success. Now, those who hold status are not only more prestigious, but they are in fact better people. In other words "they are bound to recognise that they have an inferior status, not as in the past because they were denied opportunity, but because they *are* inferior" (de Botton, 2004, p. 91). The implications of a meritocratic system are serious. It legitimates inequality and actively denies large groups of people access to physical resources and material, quantifiable opportunities such as decent education and well-paid jobs. In conjunction, it contributes the added psychological and emotional insults of shame, insecurity and inferiority (James, 2007).

Figure 5: An advertisement for a protein supplement retrieved from a health and fitness blog (http://kellyrmiddletonhopestoinspire.blogspot.com/2012_09_01_archive.html).

The ideology of meritocracy seems to be evident in many aspects of social structures and is often strongly supported by individuals both in positions of power and the layman. It appears to be readily endorsed with the defending argument that it promotes competition and hence productivity in society. This appears to be particularly relevant in terms of how masculinity is understood as only being legitimately achieved through much effort and hard work. Advertisement is an excellent example of a social mechanism that is driven by this same ideology. Berger (1972) asserts that advertising is "usually explained and justified as a competitive medium which ultimately benefits the public (the consumer) and the most efficient manufacturers- and thus the national economy" (p. 130-131)**.** It is seen as a friendly encouragement to the lazy lowly that they too can share the plush privileged position if only they worked a little harder and contributed a little more to society. These notions were strongly represented in the data. Those who considered themselves to be labelled "unhealthy" in terms of their bodily representation were desperate to improve it and those who proudly described their own bodies as healthy were still plagued by fears that they would one day lose it (de Botton, 2004; James, 2007).

Brutus:	*a lot of guys feel that they are not good enough um (p) it is (p) it's the same with women where they feel that they fat but there is nothing wrong with them. Guys are exactly the same! I myself now am at gym four five days a week, you know, feeling the need that I HAVE to be at gym, you know, you don't feel sexy if you're not, that's just how it is.*
Othello:	*I was 117 kilo's and that was in 2010 December, the first of December. That was when I weighed myself after a LONG time and I weighed 117 kilo's and since then I have been training, I have been going to the gym (p) I have been going to places like (p) I mean I watch what I eat and (p) um (p) I was obese for a long time and I didn't like it at all. I*

> *mean (p) the becoming thin has opened so much of doors for me but I WANT MORE, I feel like I haven't (p) done ENOUGH... I was in gym from 2010 Dec- 2010 first December and I have stopped that now from this year this year February at the end of it, I had to stop. Not because I wanted to but because of financial issues but ah! I wish I could go back! (eyes glossy with emotion) I honestly felt free! I honestly felt free! (p)*

Romeo: *...I WOULD like to attain the best possible in terms of myself, so personally I think I am on the right route, so maybe if I deviate from that route I might be a bit like you know, down*

Simóne: *okay, ja that makes a lot of sense so what you're saying is maybe if you got like a bit of a boep, then would that be a bit of a problem?*

Romeo: *yes, yes, but I like guess maybe for me I would be disappointed in how I got to that stage, because like uh, the only way to get to that stage is to be like, to be unhealthy, to have bad habits and that sort of thing and that's something that we're like, it's just, it's just (P) it it it might sound a bit arrogant but like I don't really enjoy like MEDIOCRISY in terms of myself, so like I'm going to do something, I am going to do it well and if I am not able to do it well then I don't believe I should engage in that.*

Tybalt: *Right now, ja. I'm not sure later I might get a big belly (both laugh)*

Simóne*:   Maybe!*

Tybalt: *I hope not, then at that time then gym would become an option!*

Simóne: *Okay!*

Tybalt: *So in that instance, (p) attaining a level of (p) MAINTAINING a level of masculinity would be important. So maybe I think (p) because I'm happy of the way that I look now*

Simóne: *Yes?*

Tybalt: *I don't see it as much of a concern but if I were to wake up tomorrow and I was (p) big bellied (both laugh) I don't think (p)*

Simóne: *You might want to do something about it?*

Tybalt: *Ja, uh huh (nods)*

It is clear that the participants' responses indicate a certain amount of anxiety about not meeting the cultural "be buff to be healthy" ideal, but more importantly they fear what this is said to mean (Berger, 1972; James, 2007). Their real fears seem to stem from the idea that their looks are indicative of who they really are as people (James, 2007; Mishkind et al., 1987; Wienke, 1998). In order to BE a decent and respectable man, they need to LOOK a particular way and this must be maintained throughout their lives. It is interesting to note that these brief discussions were some of the very few instances in which the aging body was discussed, albeit implicitly. These responses reinforce Wolf's (2002) argument that the aging body is completely excluded from the desirable body ideal and, in fact, is seen as unattractive and generally unacceptable. In this case the bodies of men, not only women as discussed in Wolf's (2002) *The Beauty Myth*, were held to this standard. The implication of allowing your body to age naturally appears to be that you are perceived to be less self-preserving and therefore less responsible social actors. It is interesting to note the contradiction in desire for

a seemingly natural appearance that really needs to be created in reality. Only one participant explicitly refers to and discusses the aging male body. His responses appear to reinforce the contradiction discussed as they too seem to have conflicting ideas. He initially seems to reject the desirability of the naturally aging body by praising and supporting his father's use of body supplement products and presenting their use as a real "necessity" for an older man.

> Duncan: *… my dad takes them because he's gymming now 6 times a week (p) … But HE'S gymming to keep fit and (p) obviously (p) at his age he needs it because his body's craving protein and stuff that he can't get from food.*

Conversely, however, this same participant goes on to argue that the muscular body would become more of a hindrance in later life and therefore less of a sought after ideal. He creates the impression that the most desirable older male body was NOT the toned and trim body as depicted in media images, but rather one that was maintainable and was especially useful in creating comfortable relations with other bodies, especially those of a long term partner. In other words, the more mature body is viewed as serving increasingly more functional purposes, in particular one that facilitates close and intimate personal relationships. In addition, the appearance of an individual's body is suggested to be an influencing factor determining their partner's degree of anxiety or sense of self-satisfaction with his or her own body (James, 2007; Myers & Crowther, 2009).

> Duncan: *… when you get into bed with your partner, male, female, whatever, (p) you wanna be cuddly! You don't wanna get into bed with a bunch of rocks, I mean okay – Yes I mean it might be good for your twenties or late thirties, (p) when you forties, fifties, want someone to cuddle with, you know you want that, you don't (p) and imagine how –*
>
> Simóne: *So you see it much more as a tactile thing, a body should be something that you can use and (p) like (p) interact with –*
>
> Duncan: *Hmm, definitely... definitely, definitely (p) it's more than candy! (Simóne laughs) … also taking it from the angle that you get, you get a partner, you maintain this body for how long (p) and they, they aren't maintaining their body… Hell, the poor girl is thinking to herself "no Joe, over there, look how you go to gym every morning, every evening, look how good that he is, look how good that I am NOT. So it puts like (p)*
>
> Simóne: *Unnecessary pressure?*
>
> Duncan: *Ja, like (p) implicit pressure on your partner to maintain themselves, so you can be on the same level but you don't WANT that you just want people to be themselves …You know. And you want to cuddle with them!*

This highlights Merleau-Ponty's (as cited in MacMullan, 2002) theorisation of the body being both an active subject (that interacts and relates to all the objects and other bodies in their surrounding context) and an object in and of the world itself. This response emphasises

the idea that there appears to be a mutual co-construction of reality that occurs between the individual and their environment, which includes its interrelations with other bodies. In other words, the body is seen as essential for constructing reality for the individual as they use it to interact with their environment, but it is also viewed as being structured and shaped itself by the world around it (MacMullan, 2002).

The participant's responses also seemed to highlight the dominance of the biomedical discourse in this South African niche, especially with regard to views about health and wellbeing. The biomedical model is an individualistic perspective which stresses that ill health, disease, life expectancy, psychological stability and the like can often be considered to be directly connected to individuals' actions and behaviour and, in turn, these individuals are responsible for maintaining their own healthy status (Beyer et al., 2007; Gordon & Abbott, 2003, Marks, 2002). Although it is useful to encourage individuals to be aware of illness and disease and promote less risky behaviours, the problem with overemphasising the individual's role is that it tends to obscure social, culture and political contextual factors that both maintain and enable illness and disease. From the quotes above, for example the use of the words "bad habits", there appears to be a moralism in this discourse (Lovett & Jordan, 2005). It places blame and negative self-worth on those who do not embody the ideal (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Foster, 2006).

As discussed above, the implications of not attaining a "not too big but not too small" muscular, lean and fit body extend beyond an experience of undesirability. Bodies that diverged from this ideal were discussed in derogatory ways or were looked down on and participants who considered their own bodies to differ beyond the legitimate proximity to the ideal, expressed their experiences of dissatisfaction (Myers & Crowther, 2009; Nikkelen et al., 2011) and disappointment of themselves as people, not only with explicit regard to their bodies. More specifically, the thin or narrow body was discussed with derision and those who identified themselves as having these body types expressed experiences of undermining, mocking and condescension. One of the most commonly mentioned insults with regard to the slender man was a saying *"a scrawny guy with a six pack is like a fat girl with big boobs"* or *"a skinny guy flexing in a vest is like a fat chick posing in a thong, nobody wants to see that shit"*. This highlights the importance of the size of the body in terms of stature (including both height and weight), not just in terms of desirable features such as six-packs and

developed biceps (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). Furthermore, men with slender or smaller bodies discussed their personal experiences of not meeting the male body ideal.

> Simóne: *Okay cool and um and (p) how would you describe your own body? You talked a bit about it; you said you were on the smaller sector apparently-*
>
> Horatio: *(sighs) Ja I would say (p) and this is weird but I have had to really go into it and have the confidence to say it uh "a slender athletic build" (p) I use to say I'm skinny but I am not physically skinny (p) skinny! Because like I say I have fat thighs but but it use to come in defence, like the description use to come in defence of something of like defending myself kind of thing like "I'm not!" but I have come to (p) to the realisation that I am not (p) particularly like VERY skinny because I know and then it comes to the case of comparing with others (p) like as long as (p) if there is someone else SKINNIER than you then you're like "WELL I'm not THAT skinny!" and that's what it comes down to*
>
> Simóne: *But do you see the word "skinny" as a negative thing?*
>
> Horatio: *hmm no, I never did, I never did and that's the weird thing I never ever saw it as a negative thing UNTIL it was brought up by others and even then I didn't really think of it like that I was like umm (p)*
>
> Simóne: *But did other people like kind of try and use it as an assault?*
>
> Horatio: *Definitely definitely! Ja you know ja like when my mates and I joke around THAT will be the one thing coming up you know.*

The quote above stresses the importance of language in the construction of meaning and its influence of experience. The participant was defined by others as having a "skinny" physique. Although this word was acontextually neutral and he, himself, had no explicit concern with being slender, when used by others the word "skinny" undermined his satisfaction with his own body. It can be argued that in Butlerian terminology he subjugated his experience of dissatisfaction by substituting the words "slender athletic build" for "skinny" when describing his own body (Butler, 1990, 1993). In other words, he managed to change his experience and create a more satisfactory self-image without physically changing his body. Furthermore, although "hailed" into the "skinny" identity by others, he failed to accept this position. By objecting to their remarks and replying "I'm not skinny!" he rejected the subject position into which he was being interpellated (Butler, 1990, 1993).

The extract above also highlights the importance of both social comparison and social approval (Festinger, 1954; Myers & Crowther, 2009; Nabi, 2010). Individuals determine their relative worth (and deprivation) based on how they rank within a socially constructed hierarchy. If the individual perceives that there are people that are "worse off" than them in terms of stature, desirability, attractiveness and so forth, then they are likely to maintain a sense of worth even within the company of those that they may perceive as being far "superior" to them (Ebren, 2009; Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Festinger, 1954; Myers &

Crowther, 2009; Nabi, 2010). This point was also stressed by another participant when he explained his views of social comparison in response to how he feels about people represented in magazines and on the television:

> Duncan: *… I'm like "Ja, so let's be serious, it's only like TEN percent', not even more, no probably less, like SEVEN POINT FIVE percent' of the mass population look like that (both laugh). And I'm better than (p) the rest (Both laugh) you know (p) there's always, there's always –*
> Simóne: *So, okay, on the spectrum there's those one's (gestures with hand) that we just discard those*
> Duncan: *Ja, it's like okay, fine, there's always gonna be someone BETTER than you, more attractive than you, can have more babies than you – (both laugh) runs faster than you, has a better job that's fine! But I think people are just content with BEING (pause) better than the average Joe. Like (p) so I'M better than the average Joe, I'm chilled*

Although the discussion above highlights that the "skinny" male body has been constructed as problematic, in relation to *the healthy body* discourse, it was the overweight body that was most severely criticised (Connell, 1995; Turner, 1982). As one of the participants so aptly asserts "it's always, it's always a little more dangerous being fat than being skinnier, it's always easier to pick on". The common response when participants were asked to explain what the "healthy body ideal" they referred to constituted, was almost always, first and foremost, a body that was "not overweight". The overweight body was constructed as not only undesirable (Galli & Reel, 2009; Watt & Ricciardelli, 2012) but an unhealthy body and the "owners" of such body were strongly frowned upon as their bodies were seen to be their own responsibility. The soft, round and distended stomach appeared to be the most feared, and disapproved of body part for males in this sample as it was frequently referred to with distaste and there appeared to be a sense of shame attached to developing one.

> Brutus: *a chunky man tends to be a depressed man, I say this, NOT from experience but from having to deal with friends who complain about the beer boep and they're very unhappy with themselves and you know I don't want that you know…*

Like those with skinny bodies, the overweight men were also seen to be lacking by others (Galli & Reel, 2009; Watt & Ricciardelli, 2012) and often those who identified themselves as being overweight expressed their experiences of extreme feelings of inferiority.

> Othello: *it starts off with how people look at them and they just see how different they treat you from them and it all starts off with (p) well when speaking from a person who has been obese you start looking at a person in terms of their thinness and and their weight. And you look at the fact (p) that (p) the the type of people that they attract and then you say WHY are they attracting it is it is it also because of uh not only because of their thinness but*

> *because of their uh the fact of their skin, or their COLOUR skin or their hair or the TYPE*
> *of hair that they have and um the way they address women, the way they address*
> *themselves.*

This highlights the way in which one's body comes to represent far more than just their physical appearance. It is integral to how they are perceived by others and, in turn, how they view themselves. More specifically, the overweight individual appeared to have the added insult of being regarded as internally "weak" (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Wienke, 1998). Some of the specific ways in which they were perceived to be unsatisfactory were that they were considered indulgent, undisciplined, lacking self-control (Featherstone, 1991; Wolf, 2002), irresponsible members of society and, most importantly, in some ways, not worthy of love (de Botton, 2004). Interestingly, these last two characteristics were most evident in comments from a participant who had described himself as suffering from obesity in the past. He talked about his parents and the resentment and shame he felt because he believed that it was through their irresponsibility that he became to be irresponsible himself. Furthermore, he went on to describe the complex cycle where his weight appeared to present a hindrance to his ability to receive love and acceptance, and he felt it was this love he needed to encourage him to take pride in his appearance.

> Othello: *… I just never felt his [Grandfather's] love coming toward me. He would generalise his*
> *love when we were there collectively, but I NEVER felt it per- on a personal level, I never*
> *felt like he loved me for me, I always felt that he loved me for uh because I was his*
> *daughter's son. Umm ah ja um I got hugely raised up by my mom (p) yes and (p) just by*
> *my mother (p) and my sister (p) and um (p) I never felt enough love from a MALE and I*
> *feel like that would have hugely influenced my interest in trying to take care of myself*
> *better (p) or or being there so I felt more accepted by men by other boys.*

And then later:

> Othello: *…they [his parents] NEVER I can honestly tell you they never took any (p) initiative to see*
> *(p) to see what was happening with our bodies. Even with my bigger sister and brother and*
> *my little sister as well. So there is a WHOLE lot of resentment. It's not just like they made*
> *a mistake with just one person, it was like a PATTERN and that like created uh (p) an even*
> *worse image of what they were as parents. Okay. I feel like they used food and money to*
> *distract us, instead of because you know as children you see money and you go wild! But if*
> *uh you really did think about it and you think about whether your parents really were there*
> *for you as parents and not providers- there is a difference – and you realise hey um (p)*
> *they were bad parents they should have done better. I wouldn't have experienced the*
> *things that I DID experience because of my weight if it wasn't if they (p) TOOK more*
> *initiative in the making sure we were healthier people, you know? Healthier children. It*
> *was THEIR responsibility, definitely.*

In addition, it is also clear that from this discourse, men who were unable to attain the muscular and therefore "healthy" ideal (in particular overweight men), also experienced that the behaviours or actions available to them were limited (Willig, 2008). From the subject positions framed by this discourse they were unable to fully engage in social interactions. Men felt excluded from socialising with other people beyond their home environments, reported difficulty in experiencing fulfilling intimate relationships and were prevented from participating in recreational activities such as sport (Connell, 1995). These practices were seen to be beyond their access due to their body structure. It can be suggested that although this "alienation" can be attributed to the physical size of their bodies and the implications size has on practical movement, it does appear that the social stigma attached to, and societal perception of, these bodies was a more significant reason for the experienced exclusion (Connell, 1995).

> Othello: *… I wasn't really a person to go out a lot BECAUSE of my weight, I I SHOULD ALWAYS stay at home. Always always always always. Very much a home person … but that's changed you know that you have a better chance of going out because you have better clothes. You don't buy clothes that you HAVE to buy you buy clothes that you actually want to buy…I couldn't have relationships with with with women umm (p) sports, SPORTS you know, I am just SO interested in sports you know that that I just asked myself "I WOULD have been good at that! Had I had the opportunity"…*

Although the above discussion creates the overwhelming impression that, within this discourse, individuals were bound by subject positions (Willig, 2008) which were inevitably going to result in a sense of failure and experiences of on-going dissatisfaction not only with how they look but their sense of stable identity as well, it was also evident that individuals were not merely passively oppressed by the tenets of this discourse. They, at times, appeared to respond rather flexibly, and integrated other peripheral discourses (Frizelle, 2005) to combat some of the emotions evoked. An interesting and positive discourse, for example, that was utilised by several participants as a response to the meritocratic implications of *the healthy body* discourse was that of heredity or genetics (Connell, 1995). Several of the participants mentioned that certain aspects of their bodies could not be changed or altered because of their genes (Ricciardelli, 2011). In other words, participants were able to extricate themselves from the responsibility of not maintaining the healthy body ideal, with its muscular arms and torso and substantial stature, by explaining that it was impossible to achieve such a body due to their biological make up (Connell, 1995; Weeks, 2003). The

quotes below stress that no amount of hard work can combat a genetic limitation, and
mentioning this can reduce anxiety.

> Simóne: *What does she [his girlfriend] say is wrong with your calves? Just not big enough?*
> Brutus: *(sarcastically) Oh! Apparently I have PINS for legs! I do squats at 120 kilo's but still I
>   have pins for legs!*
> Simóne: *Oh dear!*
> Brutus: *So I just hereditary wise, they're small, nah I don't mind.*

> Simóne*:   *Um do you think that like, in relation to what you consider the ideal man to be, how would
>   you feel like you are in relation to that?*
> Puck: *Oh I am a LONG way off! (laughs)*
> Simóne: *A long way off? What would you think that you need to do to get there?*
> Puck: *Change my genes! (laughs raucously) That's it!*

This could be suggested to be particularly beneficial to individuals' lived experiences as it
helps to alleviate the stress men may experience by feeling "to blame" for their own failure to
adhere to societal benchmarks (de Botton, 2004; James, 2007). If results can be attributed to
factors beyond the individual's control then they cannot be held liable for any deviations
from ideal standards. In addition, the heredity discourse (Connell, 1995) was also used by
participants when boasting about particularly desirable parts of their own bodies in order to
simultaneously express their pleasure at achieving these much sought after standards whilst
reducing the appearance of being arrogant or self-obsessed. This corresponded with the two
most strongly disliked male attributes according to most of the participants, which were
overconfidence and self-absorption. For example, the heredity discourse appeared to be a
common way in which the supposedly "skinny" man could be seen to get back at the man of
larger stature because they were able to develop a six-pack which heftier men could not build
(irrespective of the number of hours spent doing "crunches").

> Romeo: *I guess what I most enjoy when I am thinking about my body (p) is umm (p) I guess like
>   'cause of like my my physique, my abs stick out quite a bit so so (p) ... like I wouldn't say
>   I'm proud it's just like uh um it's something that just like it's something that like a lot of
>   like body-builders or roids guys or something like that can't really obtain, because it is
>   kind of genetic, so it's something that like I just might of been blessed with you know?*

This quote highlights the importance of subtlety when men are assessing the desirability of
their own body. It also indicates the conflicting ideas of desirability that men need to manage
and a particular way in which these contrasting parts can be balanced. Here an individual had
two conflicting interests. In order to benefit from the status attributed to muscular and toned
men, he needed to disclose that his torso was well-developed and hence in accordance with a

desirable male body ideal (Ricciardelli, 2011). At the same time, however, doing so would create the impression that he was self-opinionated and conceited which would distance, or even exclude, himself from the gallant, humble and above all unassuming ideal man (Flood, Kegan Gardiner, Pease & Pringle, 2007, 2007). In order to overcome this conflict he uses the genetic discourse to deflect praise and attribute responsibility to influences beyond his control. This allows him to both express and experience himself as being particularly physically appealing (and therefore achieving a sense of superiority amongst his peers) whilst simultaneously remaining noble by denying his role in creating such an appearance (Flood et al., 2007). This suggests that constructing the image of modesty among men was almost as important as portraying their achievement and maintenance of the muscular ideal.

4.1.2. Artificial Intervention/Cheating

The natural body was closely linked to the second sub-discourse *artificial intervention/cheating.* This discourse was predominantly evident in the discussions around topics of steroid use (Kanayama et al., 2006) and the hyper muscular body (see Figure 6) during the interviews. Most of the participants seemed to be strongly against steroid use and were vehemently opposed to the "excessively overly-developed" man. Only one of the men that I interviewed admitted to using steroids and even he was most apprehensive about discussing his personal use of them. Only after being repeatedly assured of the confidentiality agreement and the fact that he would remain anonymous within this written text did he disclose his practices.
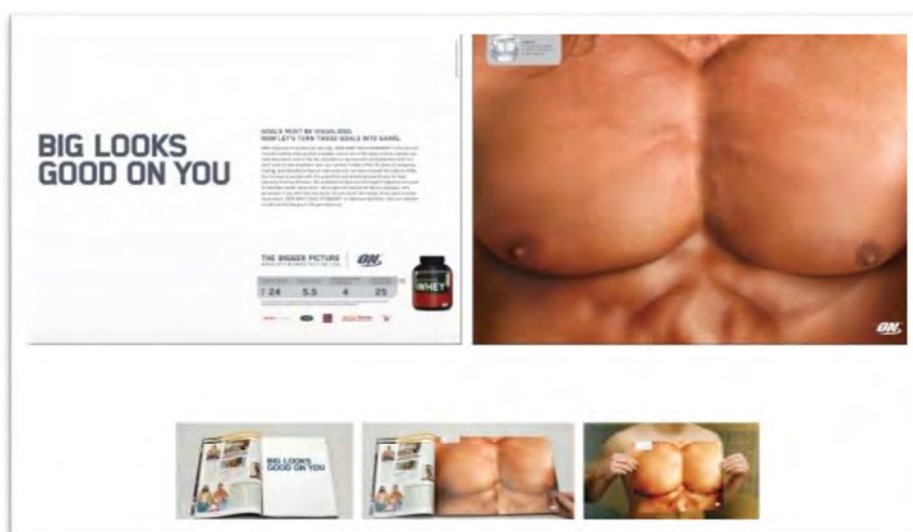

Figure 6: Digital image of a Whey product advertisement (http://www.advertolog.com/optimum-nutrition/print-outdoor/chest-9676955/).

> Simóne: *... What kind of products do you use?*
> Puck: *(shifts on chair, rubs head, laughs nervously, folds arm)*
> Simóne: *Remember, bearing in mind that nobody is going to know this was you ever!*
> Puck: *Okay! Okay! You sure? Okay! That's cool then! Ja umm no I use steroids. I use ALL sorts of supplements!*

It is also interesting to note that he is the only individual who supported the hyper muscular body and expressed sentiments that suggest that bigger was better at all times, there was no such thing as being over built. He appeared to be very invested in becoming the "biggest oke in the pack, bra". The rest of the participants seemed to outrightly express that they viewed steroid use as wrong, if not even immoral, and they scorned over developed men because they felt that these results HAD to be produced by steroids and, furthermore, the results did not constitute real muscle development, nor were they sustainable over substantial periods of time as the desirable body should be. Four of the participants' responses are recorded below.

> Brutus: *Buff men! Ha (laughs) Most of those buff men are taking something to make themselves look large ... half of them are taking anabolic steroids, post and pre [workout], which is a water retention so their muscles are bigger than what they actually are but those same guys if they stopped gymming they would deteriorate extremely fast whereas I could go without gymming for a month or two and maintain the shape I had while I was gymming because I'm not taking all this stuff just to LOOK much bigger.*
> Cornelius: *... personally believe if I was going to build muscle I would want to muscle build or something I would want something that would last (p) something sustainable...If you really look at guys that uh take supplements and stuff (p) give them (p) take them two months away from gym and all that is GONE directly back into fat. Like take Arnold Schwarzenegger, if you look at him now he's TERRIBLE. He's DROOPY all over and stuff ja.*
> Romeo: *umm I like have a REALLY big hatred towards steroids and I think like steroids has become SO popular, in Durban, like I go to a club and I like see these kids that were like younger than me in high school and stuff, ROIDED up to like, the NEXT extreme ... I think there are such detrimental effect that steroids bring onto your health, for WHAT though? To look good while you are like in your 20s?... once you go off that you lose that muscle in like two months, three months so really you know, it's like it's like it's a quick fix umm for a for a limited period*
> Duncan: *like I've always had a thing like if I was gonna become like an athlete, if I was gonna run the Comrades one day (pause) I'm a naturalist, I want to do it naturally. And you can see IMMEDIATELY if the person is built NATURALLY or if they cheated. And I think [using steroids] is cheating.*

This discourse, one again, appears to have a moralistic undertone (Lovett & Jordan, 2005). The resentment of steroid use is described by the word "cheating" which suggests it is morally incorrect because the individuals are achieving results without hard work (Volli,

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2000). The use of protein products and supplements, however, were generally deemed acceptable and beneficial as they, supposedly, contain no foreign or detrimental substances and were used to merely add essential nutrients which could not be achieved through diet alone. Individuals engaging in such behaviours were constructed to, in, fact be more responsible because they are proactively addressing their bodies' needs in a natural and favourable manner (Featherstone, 1991; McFarland & Petrie, 2012). During these periods of discussion participants tended to draw on quite scientific or biological discourses (Connell, 1995; Flood et al., 2007; Weeks, 2003) when explaining the difference between the acceptable protein supplements and the objectionable steroid substances. It is interesting to note that individuals still presented their arguments for supplement use as a justification, as if they were obligated to prove that either the substances themselves were natural or that their bodies physically required these products for optimal functioning at some activity or another.

Simóne:	*do you use any like supplements or anything, like USN?*
Hamlet:	*yes, I do, I use protein which is NATURAL*
Simóne:	*(laughs) oh okay is this "Protein" a natural one? Okay and what is the purpose of using it?*
Hamlet:	*okay, ja my views of protein is that ideally okay let's not balls about, you want to look a certain way and and you can gym as much as you want and if you're not taking in enough protein you kind of, well one you can damage your body, because I do push heavyweights, and if I'm not taking in enough protein I am going to hurt myself okay?*
Simóne:	*okay, sure*
Hamlet:	*and two, I am not going to get the best results, because my body will, my body won't actually shape and not be where I want to be*
Simóne:	*so it will burn –*
Hamlet:	*yes it will burn and start eating my muscle away, start eating protein away so I have to have something to supplement it, replenish my body and make what I am doing progress, to be where you want to be and three, I do think that what you eat is important and I know that I am not eating as well as I should be eating, you should be having a certain amount of natural protein etc and one of the really important things is why I have protein and why I advocate protein is because in Whey, you know that Whey protein is extracted from milk? So it it is a natural protein and obviously they do throw in the a whole lot of vitamins and also some artificial stuff as well, the cool thing about that is it's not as good as eating healthy food but it is a way of bridging that gap*

Similarly, another three participants commented on the use of supplements highlighting their relative "naturalness" and the biological necessity for them in maintaining functioning bodies (Connell, 1995; Flood et al., 2007; Weeks, 2003). Here the moralism is re-emphasised by suggesting "right" reasons for using products such as preventing damage and "replenishing" the body which is perceived to be good because it is natural, and "wrong" motives such as

enhancing muscularity or "muscle building purposes" which is viewed as bad because it is artificial (Lovett & Jordan, 2005).

> Brutus: *I do, I take muscle supplements (p) it's actually a muscle fuel so it just carbs and proteins so there is no (p) Uh (p) Creatine there is none of those hyperbolic accelerators, it's actually a compounded amount of natural substance. I just have that with my meals so when I gym I don't burn off what I eat.*

> Simóne: *... and do take products and supplements and stuff?*
> Romeo: *No.*
> Simóne: *No, none whatsoever? Not like even the protein shake?*
> Romeo: *That but that I take PURELY because (p) umm my sport so like on a biological level umm having that like after sports is really good to just like help you recover quicker, so that like your next game, you're not fatigued or anything like that, or training, because I train quite a bit of fast-growing game things like that that's the main thing but not for like muscle building purposes.*

The biological discourses were also used as a means of indicating that individuals were responsible and rational beings (Callero, 2009; Weeks, 2003). Products could not be consumed without proper "research" into what they contained and the possible implications of these substances. This provided individuals with a way of justifying the use of particular products and maintaining a subject position in which they experience themselves as sensible and conscientious actors despite possible engagement in supposedly dubious practices.

> Macbeth: *... I DO use [supplements] but like (p) um (p) uh one of my dad's very close friends, he's a food technologist, so before I began using them, you know like the bottles have all those pictures with like the chemical breakdowns whatever, so I just went to one of my friends who had one of those things and I just tore it off and just gave it to my uncle and I just told him you know "make sure it's safe! And that there is no funky hormones" because I don't want to be putting anything that is not natural in my system because then I don't feel like if if if I compete or if I don't, uh any of my achievements won't make me feel like it was ME, I would feel like I cheated, you know?*
> Simóne: *Alright sure. So you kind of (p) it defeats the purpose?*
> Macbeth: *Ja you know even even if I LOSE no one can tell me anything because that was MY hard work, it not, I didn't cheat, I didn't, so (p)*
> Simóne: *And what part of it would be cheating?*
> Macbeth: *Anything that I feel, not not JUST steroids, but anything (coughs) 'cause a lot of these supplements today have like all these funky hormones and increase your testosterone and all that stuff and I feel like REALLY if you need to increase your testosterone, you are in the WRONG sport you know! Umm (p) I mean in terms of body-building and weight-lifting 'cause you wanna look MANLY but if you need to put in TESTOSTERONE (pause) NO MAN! Um (p)*

The quote above draws attention to the ways in which the ideal man was seen as a responsible man, one who thought about the consequences of what he consumed and engaged

in and made decisions accordingly. More importantly, this participant's response, in particular, also highlights how the ideal male body should be "naturally" manly (Connell, 1995; MacKinnon, 2003). In addition it stresses that the positive consequences associated with achieving such an ideal body can only be successfully and fruitfully gained if the individual attained the result unaided. Altering your bodily constituency stripped you of the right to deserve praise, acceptance and a positive self-appraisal (Bruce, 2007). In other words, convincing others that your body is "naturally" manly is insufficient. If you, personally, know that the practices or behaviours you engaged in are not legitimate forms of self-improvement you can no longer claim the recognition as your own achievement. If you know that you "cheated", you forfeit your experiences of personal satisfaction. This, once again, reinforces the idea that masculinity should involve hard work and personal effort in order to be legitimately achieved (Volli, 2000). This next quote, however, goes one step further and really emphasises how, in some cases, the desire to achieve the muscular ideal outweighs the desire to be seen as responsible and self-preserving (Featherstone, 1991).

> Puck: *JA well you HAVE to do research with everything you take. (p) but also there are guys that have been around the block and that, they'll say what to do what not to do. Like the Tren thing I'm on now, everyone said not to do it BUT I just read everything about it and I thought "NO WAYS! I'm not NOT using this!" (both laugh) so we will see in a few mo- in a few weeks.*

In addition, the hyper muscular body was often associated with men who were trying too hard and that "obviously" needed to because they were compensating for some other inferiority and masking their insecurity thereof (James, 2007). The "grotesque" overbuilt body was seen to be all that these men had and was said to be indicative of little other substance. In other words, most of the men in this study constructed the ideal male body-image as having enough muscle and definition to create the impression of natural fitness and health, yet any more than this was testament to a superficial character with no real skills or qualities beyond their overtly manufactured exteriors. It can be argued that the participants needed to differentiate themselves from the hyper muscular men in this particular way because it allows them to maintain a positive sense of self and reduces experiences of anxiety and inadequacy they may feel by not attaining this cultural ideal (James, 2007; Wienke, 1998). Furthermore, by emphasising their own interior characteristics, in comparison to the hyper muscular men's lack thereof, they are positioning themselves as less superficial and hence constructing a more positive social image. In other words, by highlighting that they view excessive interest

in external characteristics as shallow, they draw attention to their lack of vanity which is deemed to be socially desirable and most importantly not feminine (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003).

> Hamlet: *you wanna look, you wanna look, you wanna look like an athlete, that's the good look, you want to look like an athlete, because I think the biggest thing with men as well is that they want to look good but they don't want to look like a model, you know what I am saying?*
> Simóne: *so kind of, what you are saying is, they kind of want to look natural, like –*
> Hamlet: *yes! That is it! That is exactly it! They wanna look, they wanna look, they wanna look natural. So basically, every guy wants to look like "I'm gymming I am working out because I'm an athlete, and I'm fit, I'm a fit man, I do running etc etc" you look at someone who is too ripped, or his body is so big or whatever whatever you kind of, you kind of like "oh, that's a bodybuilder, that's a show pony."*

These quotes also stress the idea that the ideal male body is one that looks natural and, in turn, should be achieved by what was considered to be "natural" means. While sport and physical activities were seen to be an integral part of a healthy lifestyle, there was still a strong tendency to downplay most of the work that was required to achieve this supposedly natural looking physique. Most of the men I interviewed were reluctant to discuss their engagement in body building and when they did, they usually strongly justified their behaviours as, for example, a requirement for sport. In addition, most of the men interviewed were reluctant to admit to many body maintenance efforts beyond physical activity and, in fact, overemphasised how little they did in order to look more desirable.

> Tybalt: *Let me explain, let me explain my sequence in the morning*
> Simóne: *Okay! (laughs)*
> Tybalt: *I wake up very late (pause) Um (p) I go and take a twenty minute shower or even no probably less than that, (p) I go out, uh I only, I use Vaseline, you know the uh Vaseline blue seal baby?*
> Simóne: *Yes?*
> Tybalt: *So I use that because the other stuff is bad for my skin. But I uh like it like that. I use Vaseline. And the soap I use is, do you know the sunlight green bar?*
> Simóne: *Uh yes!*
> Tybalt: *So I use sunlight green bar! (grins proudly)*
> Simóne: *(laughs).*
> Tybalt: *AND (p) okay that's, (p) that's and then I use deodorant ... So that's the total.*

In this sense, I feel that there appears to be an experienced conflict between what the men felt they had to achieve aesthetically in order to attain a particular version of masculinity (to win the respect, acceptance, status and acknowledgement of others in society) and the means of achieving this masculinity (Bruce, 2007; Connell, 1995). The work required to attain and

maintain such a physique and appearance directly opposes the "biological" depiction of masculinity which asserts that males, with y-chromosomes and ample testosterone, should automatically be masculine (MacKinnon, 2003). As La Cecla (2000) asserts "masculinity is the practice of inadequacy…you can never be masculine enough and if you are not sufficiently masculine then you are dangerously not male" (p. 41). This can be further explained by exploring the idea that body maintenance practices, traditionally, were commonly regarded as being feminine behaviours and thereby only socially acceptable for women to engage in them. Research suggests that men tend to display a deep fear of femininity, both with regard to being perceived as womanly and identifying with women (Ducat, 2004). This was clearly emphasised by several of the participants.

Firstly, derision and disgust was often expressed by so-called "men's men" when commenting on what they considered to be metrosexual males, for example:

Simóne:	*And what do you think about the new metrosexual look that has emerged?*
Macbeth:	*I HATE it*
Simóne:	*(laughs) why do you hate it?*
Macbeth:	*I HATE IT. Um I think and DON'T think ah no I'm wearing this scarf so now I'm metrosexual (touches his scarf)*
Simóne:	*(laughing) no I don't think that.*
Macbeth:	*This is my Palestinian scarf (p) I got it from Palestine (p) my dad bought it for me*
Simóne:	*Why why don't (p) what would you say defines the metrosexual man?*
Macbeth:	*(p) umm (pause) a sense of (p) uhh (p) you know like ONCE upon a time if you made a booking at a salon for your hair, people were like (pulls a disgusted face; under his breath) "what the F" but now if you do it it's like "oh oh cool I will see you there!" (both laugh) to the point where people are BRAGGING like (mimics) "I go to THIS salon and I go to THAT salon" and I'm like why?! You are GUYS! Why are you doing this?! (p) and and I make I point. I cut my OWN hair (p) for the last 5 years (p) ...*

Furthermore one participant expressed his reluctance to be referred to as a "pretty-boy" by saying:

Hamlet:	*(laughs nervously) Umm I guess I don't want to look like a pretty boy sorry no I don't want to be conceived as a pretty boy because I think that the conception and my own experiences of that is that umm they have certain characteristics like they are almost untouched from reality, they are on the show they have qualities of arrogance, but not always true that you know I am (P) umm*
Simóne:	*That's just your personal experience?*
Hamlet:	*Yes that's just my personal experiences and umm not just arrogance but also umm (chuckles) umm (long pause) I would like to think of myself as more in terms of spirituality and intellectually and stuff and I guess when I think of the pretty boy I guess it's like how the blonde is looked at*
Simóne:	*Oh, okay like the bimbo?*
Hamlet:	*Ja the bimbo, you know the guy, head in the clouds image, I think that there is just so much more to me that you know*

Simóne: *Do you still see the pretty boy as a masculine guy?*
Hamlet: *No, not really*

Finally, even the metrosexual men showed discomfort when asked whether body maintenance techniques were considered "girly":

Simóne: *Okay, so you see it as there can actually be some "girly" parts to be masculine?*
Romeo: *(laughs uncomfortably) umm (pause)*

The participant avoids this line of questioning for a while but then reaffirms his position a little later on when he went on to say:

Romeo: *... I don't think that it is it is a like, uhh men are being forced into say like "girly" aspects at all...*

Furthermore, the men that did identify and engage in what they considered metrosexual behaviours or practices such as tanning, hair product use and careful clothe selection seemed to strongly defend or provide reasons for their behaviours if they thought they may near the dreaded "homosexual line". For example:

Puck: *...you know like shaving your legs, so I shave my legs, OKAY, but MINE is for the whole ATHLETIC thing, you gotta if you play rugga.*

These responses can be framed by Foucault's conceptualisation of multiple identities and individuals' tendencies to solidify a particular identity within one discourse by actively differentiating themselves from what may be viewed as the opposite (MacKinnon, 2003). The men thereby needed to distance themselves from any qualities or practices considered to be associated with femininity in order to reinforce a particular masculine identity. Furthermore this discourse appears to be linked to an overarching humanist discourse which highlights authenticity (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Corey, 2005; Rogers, 1957). Within this discourse subjects are positioned as having the right and responsibility to be sincere and genuine social actors. The sign of a socially responsible actor comes from their ability to both act and experience themselves as genuine or authentic people. In this sense authenticity refers to Roger's (1957) concept of congruence, that individuals are "without a false front, that their inner experience and outer expression of that experience match" (Corey, 2005, p. 172).

The employment of this discourse appeared to have positive influences in that it prevented men from becoming involved in steroid use that could potentially have serious physical and financial consequences, and it did appear to facilitate the alleviation of some of the anxiety

(James, 2007) associated with not achieving the hyper muscular ideal presented in the mass media. Participants were allowed to not only maintain a favourable sense of self by viewing themselves as superior to the hyper muscular bodied males, but created a sense of legitimacy and authenticity that they in fact were more genuine and real (Corey, 2005; Rogers, 1957), worthy of social acceptance and deserving of any achievements or praise as they acquired them solely of their own doing and via legitimate means (Bruce, 2007; de Botton, 2004). This suggests that this ideal is not only an aesthetic one, but a moral one. This discourse does, however, have some other more negative implications. It continues to construct masculinity and femininity in dichotomous, mutually exclusive and conflicting embodiments and reinforces stereotypical oppressive gender roles for both men and women (MacKinnon, 2003). Not only does it position men as being necessarily stronger and more powerful than women, but it reduces men who do not display particular masculine features to lesser men. As Ducat (2004) expresses, "it is not that there is something pathological about being male. Rather, the problem is the psychological cost of developing a male identity in a culture that disparages the feminine and insists that the boundaries between masculine and feminine remain unambiguous and impermeable" (p. 5).

4.2. Functionality over Form

Functionality over form was another particularly prominent discourse that was evident to varying degrees in almost all of the interview transcripts. This discourse refers to the idea that the male body's use lies primarily in its ability to move, perform and achieve desired results as opposed to its aesthetic appeal. More specifically, many of the participants particularly and repeatedly stressed the idea that what they could do with their bodies was far more important than what they looked like physically. The discursive act of forefronting the functionality of the male body can be argued to be closely linked to the initial socialisation of men as active and competitive beings as opposed to physically attractive ones. In other words, men have been traditionally socialised to believe that the main purpose for their bodies, and hence its main importance when considered by other people, was to perform. This is very similar to what Farquhar and Wasylkiw (2007) refer to as the male body holding an instrumental function. Groesz et al. (2002) argue that males are fundamentally raised and socialised differently to females, particularly with regard to their bodies. More specifically, young male children are taught to believe that to earn respect and acceptance they should produce excellent performance which is achieved by using their bodies to manage and influence their surroundings (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Groesz et al., 2002). Part of this focus on

functionality or performance also includes competition with and domination over other bodies as theorised by Frank's body style *the dominating body* (Frank, 1991). This very particular aspect of functionality will be explored more fully when discussing the *keeping up with the "boys"* discourse later in this chapter.

Once again the *functionality over form* discourse was used differently by diverse "groups" of men. All but two of the participants readily used this discourse. It is interesting to note that the two who did not were the men who considered themselves to have come as close as possible to achieving the cultural desirable ideals they described, in both cases the metrosexual ideal. Since this discourse was predominantly used as a defence or rational reason for not achieving the muscular ideal, it can be suggested that these individuals may not really have needed the anxiety reducing (de Botton, 2004) implications of this discourse, and they therefore constructed their experiences through other more relevant discourses. It is suggested that this discourse was used as a defence because most of the men in this sample strongly relied on this discourse to construct an explanatory account reasoning out their perceived differences from the idealised man or body. More specifically, operating within the *functionality over form* discourse, the participants appeared to spend considerable time justifying why they were pleased that they did not have the hyper muscular body. The most frequently referred to idea that was continually stressed by several participants was how the overly built body, often constructed in the media and amongst their peers as the desirable ideal, constricts movement and hampers performance and therefore is not to be admired or praised. Some of the responses that highlight this sentiment include:

> Puck: *It's not about just being able to LOOK big, you've gotta be able to still like carry that through in other dimensions and that, (p) like in the rugby perspective, it's no good being big if you can't (p) carry that out on the field … (laughs) These okes [very heavily built men] go to gym and that and they prance around in their little Speedo's or whatever to try and LOOK good (p) but they ah (p) and well you know they will CLAIM to be big strong guys and that but they CAN'T EVEN lift weights! But uh you know how many steroids how many steroids are in THOSE guys! Like don't even get me STARTED! (both laugh) But umm ja like I mean it just KILLS me. Pretty much those guys are SKINNY guys with LOADS of steroids in them and they can't lift weights ag ja!... And then some guys can be (p) you know like (p) ah they can be PLUMP and that but when you look at like the strong men and that. They're PLUMP but those guys are STRONG! Like the skinny guys I'm just like ag (p) but then again, they can be like RIDICULOUSLY quick you know…so each to their own*

Some of the men that the participants referred to when using this discourse were sportsmen such as Johnny Wilkinson and Dan Carter. Fedor Emelianenko, a Mixed Martial Arts fighter (see Figure 7 below), is an excellent illustration of the participants' construction of the masculine ideal within this discourse. He was discussed by a participant as a man who, despite his alternative appearance, was idealised because he is exceptionally skilled at manipulating his surroundings and controlling his opponents (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Groesz et al., 2002).

Figure 7: Photograph of Mixed Martial Arts Champion, Fedor Emelianenko (Peterson, S (Photographer), 2011).

Those participants who personally identified themselves as having narrow or slender bodies tended to use this discourse as a defence to the offensive assaults of being called, or at least seen to be, too "skinny" (Galli & Reel, 2009; Watt & Ricciardelli, 2012). The common argument made was that the stature of one's body was immaterial if its manual operations were on par with those around them. In other words, if they, too, could perform various tasks that men with heavier set builds could accomplish, they could defend their position (and self-perception) as "real" men (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003).

> Simóne: *Okay, so how would you describe yourself physically?*
> Brutus: *Physically? (p) umm, just above average (p) I say this because, if you ask me to run a ten k [kilometre], I could do it, if you ask me to swim so many laps, I could do it, I have no issues on a fitness level, I JUST don't have this MASSIVE, DEFINED physique.*
>
> Horatio: *for me it's like okay, it comes to a more like how much can I physically endure and sort of can I do manual labour and can I do this and that, with the way I am I can carry on and I can do everything they can do (p) so that's fine with me (p) … So it doesn't necessarily, the*

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> *body type doesn't have to be the same[as the cultural ideal] but I know I can I can DO certain things, I can play a full soccer game without getting tired and what have you INSTEAD of having to LOOK like a tank (p) and being useless (laughs) you can't do anything else*

Duncan: *And uh, I play squa-, I love my, I love my cardio. I don't CARE about big muscles (p) and big okes like when I go to House of Curries and I see those guys. (p) (mimics) "Ja boet, hey, you wanna come over for a braai and bring your stekkie".*

Simóne: *Why does it irritate you? You can see it's like –*

Duncan: *Because! Because they are, they are FULL of themselves. And like (p) they so full of themselves and society DIGS them, (pause) like WOMEN DIG them, everyone is like THIS is (p) what you should go for (p) ja (p)*

This last quote is most important for two different reasons. Firstly it uses the word "cardio" (meaning cardiovascular) when describing the type of movement he values. This specific word has a medical connotation (Marks, 2002) which places emphasis on the biological aspect of exercise and functioning. This stresses that within this discourse of which values functionality over form, there is still a strong reiteration of *the healthy body* discourse discussed previously. Secondly, his strong emotional response of frustration to the praise and prestige awarded to the muscular men re-emphasises the ways in which men feel that they need to compensate for (and defend against the emotions associated with) not achieving such an ideal.

Some of the most interesting material about this discourse was produced during an interview with a participant who not only used this discourse, but espoused it almost as a personal philosophy. For him, a good portion of his life was centred around optimal functioning and performing with superior skill. Right from the outset he stressed the importance of the movement of the body and the various tasks it should be able to perform. Like many of the other participants (as seen in the quotes presented above), for this participant the most important factor with regard to functionality was strength. The male body needed to be strong in order to accomplish male assigned tasks.

Macbeth: *(pause) strong legs, strong back, umm, (p) I think, I think, (p) in terms of physical strength kind of OVERRIDES umm (p) okay strong legs, strong back, strong torso, kind of overrides uhh the uh ripped and lean as opposed to functionally ABLE to do things… (p) FUNCTIONALLY the, your back and torso (p) is the BIGGER muscle (p) ja so um. I mean (p) um like you see many people you see people at gym who are accountants or what not but they're not going to be FACED with situations where they need to lift heavy things, who knows, a situation might need you to do that and if you are functionally able, you would be able to do it…*

The particular use of the word "overrides" also implies that the form of the body (it's appearance) is not deemed to be completely unimportant, but rather that its dynamic ability is accentuated. Unlike many of the other discourses discussed in this chapter, the media and its proliferation of images appears to be, at least according to the data gathered in this particular sample, a less influential source in the production and reinforcement of the *functionality over form* discourse. As discussed earlier, most of the participants talked about parental influence when discussing these ideas and stressed the notion that they were raised as boys to become functional men. Interestingly, one participant mentioned religion, in this case the Islamic religion, as an influencing factor when discussing his body in functional terms.

> Macbeth: *… in my religion we are encouraged to, like you know we have our prophet and we are encouraged to do the things that HE did and the things that he encouraged us to do and some of them were swimming and wrestling (p) SO I wondered and wanted to know WHY swimming and wrestling and I discovered that it builds you anaerobically, it builds you umm, anaerobic is without oxygen, and it builds you in terms of your concentric strength, your isometric strength and your plyometric strength. So (p) I found that that there was wisdom to that…(p) okay umm concentric, is you're your you know your ability to lift a weight (does a fake bicep curl), isometric is your ability to maintain constant force (pushes with hands forward) plyometric is kinda zero to a hundred um um your your explosiveness you know (p) ALSO on the other hand having a lot of FUNCTIONAL strength without AGILITY, it defeats the purpose… DYNAMIC! That's the word he needs to be dynamic…*

This is a particularly interesting example because it not only highlights the influence that macro social structures, in this case religion, have in the construction and experience of personal identity, but it also emphasises the ways in which different discourses mutually reinforce one another (Barker & Galasinski, 2001; Parker, 1992). In this case, the religious discourse is used to legitimate good and bad behaviours and thereby support the consumerist notions of body-maintenance behaviours by linking moralistic connotations to either performing or avoiding these practices (Lovett & Jordan, 2005).

Several points are important to consider here with regard to the possible benefits and detrimental consequences of using the *functionality over form* discourse. Firstly, on an intrapersonal level the employment of this discourse seemed to play a positive role in allowing participants to maintain a favourable sense of self-worth despite perceiving themselves as deviating from cultural ideals of bodily appearance (Crocker et al., 2003; Wienke, 1998). Secondly, however, when exploring the broader implications of this discourse, the consequences appear to be more destructive. By denying emphasis on the visual attractiveness of the male body the men continued to constitute themselves as

distinctly "masculine" by differentiating themselves from the aesthetically appealing feminine body (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003). An objection to emphasising, or even fully acknowledging, the aesthetic qualities of the male body was also relevant in the previously discussed *the natural body* discourse and will again be drawn upon during analysis of *the body is secondary* discourse. This emphasises and strengthens constricting subject positions from which individuals can speak and act (Willig, 2008) by solidifying their role in society as one based on their male gendered identities (Burr, 1995). To summarise, although this discourse allowed participants to temporarily relieve the anguish they experience from not fulfilling socially approved cultural images (for example, the muscular ideal) the use of this discourse simultaneously reinforces the overarching gender stereotypes that create a hierarchy of masculinity (Connell, 1995) that, in turn, contribute to the very inferiority that they experience and need to combat (James, 2007; Wienke 1998; Wykes & Gunter, 2005).

4.3. The Necessity of Progression

An interesting discourse that seemed to be quite closely linked to the individualistic notions posited by meritocracy, discussed earlier in reference to *the healthy body* discourse, is *the necessity of progression* discourse. This discourse basically refers to the participants need to be continually improving themselves, both physically and characteristically. This discourse was most commonly evident in the texts when individuals repeatedly mentioned that although they were pleased that they considered themselves to be progressing, to a certain degree, in terms of physical development and psychological maturity, they were still not happy to "retire" from the quest of progressing into the men that they wanted to be. The participants, on the whole, tended to stress that they were still not quite good enough and they still wanted to be better versions of their present self.

> Othello: *Uhh (p) I I do feel good about myself um (p) I do feel better about myself. Instead of admiring OTHER guys you know, I I look towards myself, I look towards myself, BUT I still feel like it is not good enough. But I feel that I HAVE made a lot of progress, I will be honest with you, I DO feel that I have made progress...but I must go on...I just I just felt like um (p) it was really really um hard it was really difficult ... people not understanding how important it is for you to just maintain it or you know to KEEP reducing it keep reducing it (p) so um (p)*

It appears that the body was a key area to focus on when considering *the necessity of progression* because it is the only visible aspect of the individual and hence the most readily identifiable. This suggests that improvement cannot just occur in the individual's own assessment; it needs to be seen, acknowledged and recognised by those around them for it to

be considered "real" progression. According to one of the participants, a frequently used mantra or saying amongst young South African men of today is "train or stay the same". This really highlights that acceptance of your present position is strongly frowned upon. Advancement is key to "success", and this success is quintessential to experiencing yourself as a worthwhile human (de Botton, 2004; Wienke, 1998). In order to advance their position in relation to their peers, men often compare themselves physically by emphasising how they used to look in order to highlight their change and hence their improvement (Ebren, 2009; Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Festinger, 1954; Myers & Crowther, 2009; Nabi, 2010). Here physical improvement comes to stand for a sense of internal improvement as well. Those who take care of their bodies and are constantly seeking to create better "homes" for their psyches, are constructed be superior people on the whole.

> Horatio: *... when it comes to the GROWTH and why the guys want to get bigger it's something that you see and so they associate the change with "YAY it's BETTER" (p) they have that saying "train or stay the same" and uh (p) I always come back and am like "what's wrong with who you are, what's wrong with how you look" but then they're like "I could look better, I could be better" and I'm like "according to who?".*

The necessity of progression discourse can be closely tied to individualism which is a worldview or ideology that is commonly associated with consumerism and Capitalism. According to Callero (2009) "individualism is a belief system that privileges the individual over the group, private life over public life, and personal expression over social experience" (p. 17). Some of the key values that are not only strongly supported by individualism, but are also seen to be natural and inevitable aspects of an efficient society within this framework, include "autonomy, independence and self-reliance" (Callero, 2009, p. 17). The idea of continuous self-advancement and the ever present desire to raise their level of status (de Botton, 2004) can be closely linked to these values.

A good example of how these individualistic ideas are being disseminated through the media is the recent television advertisement for a well know motor vehicle brand. The final caption claims "nothing is accomplished by standing still". This constant pressure to advance and progress appears to have become so ingrained it is seen as "normal" to be on a never-ending quest for self-improvement wherein the goals are always changing and attainment thereof is nearly impossible (Berger, 1972; Callero, 2009). The implication, therefore, which is clearly evident in many of the quotes discussed in this section, is that people appear to be

experiencing great dissatisfaction with their present way of living and on top of that, they are seeing themselves to blame for their situation and not the prevailing socioeconomic climate which creates this experience (Klein, 2005).

> Hamlet: *I guess in my own terms, my own it's like what I believe in um I guess sometimes it [the ideal benchmark] pushes me to be what I want to be and do you know whatever you know at the same time it is desponding , it's too much uh it's too much weight on myself because I feel like umm not that I'm nagging but I feel like I'm following in the shape of being ordinary and I think that the ideal man in my extent as someone who is extraordinary that I think you know you know who is better. Ja it does despond me sometimes when I'm like well I should have done this this this and should have done that that that and (P) ... I'm not living up to my expectations...*

In the methodology section I explored the implications of a particular interview excerpt with participant Hamlet, which highlighted his extreme discomfort with the question "what kind of a man are you", with regard to the interview schedule process. This same portion of text can also, however, be analysed with regard to the *necessity of progression* discourse as it provides great insight into the construction of identity (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). In particular, the above quote which frames his strong almost dilemma-like reaction to the question, suggests just how difficult it is to experience an authentic and satisfying sense of self, specifically in this case for young men, in contemporary South Africa (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003).

This is particularly relevant in post-Apartheid South Africa. The introduction of democracy in 1994 brought with it the illusion of equal opportunity to all young South Africans. In other words, the introduction of the Constitution (and particular The Bill of Rights) created the (false) impression that all individuals had suddenly been granted equal rights which operated efficiently in practice. The notion that flows from this development is that if equivalent resources are available to all individuals, everyone has the chance to achieve success (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). Those who are able to achieve it, therefore, are truly deserving of their loot and those who fail to become responsible for their own losses. Unfortunately, these equal opportunities exist in theory alone. In reality, severe inequality, with regard to access to power and money is still prevalent in South Africa rendering the achievement of status most difficult for majority of individuals (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). Furthermore, although rights may be granted in the Constitution, status is not. It is allocated according to hierarchies such as the different forms of masculinity explored in this study. Considering South Africa's history, this meritocratic ideology is highly problematic because not only does it render many

individuals helplessly self-blaming but it also disguises the social, cultural and historical structural factors that are really the underlying causes of distress. In addition, individuals are prevented from questioning current status quo's (for example the definition of success and status determined by material wealth, physical appearance and so forth) and developing alternative and less oppressive constructions (Klein, 2005).

An interesting idea that seems to stem from or link to this discourse is the notion that a real and great man takes risks. He is constantly on the move and taking chances to achieve the outstanding results that will earn him both acceptance and respect (Bruce, 2007, 2008). The phrase "you've gotta risk it to get the biscuit" was used by one participant to specifically stress how in order to achieve greatness, you need to take chances, and without these achievements a real male identity cannot be solidified or maintained (Le Breton, 2000; Segal, Pelo & Rampa, 2001.)

> Horatio: *I find that a soccer game is a big analogy of life and you can also sort of sit under the radar and do nothing special but not do anything WRONG (both laugh) and you don't get any attention at all! They will be like "you weren't even running" and you'll be like "but he did this and that and that wrong" (both laugh) but slowly what I have learnt as well is you have to at least make that attempt (p) TO fail or TO do something so uh that's what that's what the guys that we play with that's what we do now is if we lose we lose but we put EVERYTHING in it there! … NOW it's like you gotta put it all in, you gotta…*

These notions seem relevant to Lingis's (2002) discussions on masculinity. Lingis (2002) does not attempt to challenge or alter traditional masculinity but rather draws attention to virility which he defines as the courage to infringe upon all restrictions established. This aspect of manhood can, therefore, be viewed as powerful and can be used to transgress the boundaries and limits that, gender theorists have argued, masculinity constructs sustain. In other words, "Lingis contends that masculinity rests on the transgression of limits, not their enforcement" (MacMullan, 2002, p. 11). From this perspective, manhood is viewed as an experience driven by risk rather than quest for material wealth. In other words, risk taking is viewed as a means by which a secure individual "breaks free" from secure and "well-oiled" life (Le Breton, 2000, p. 165). From these suggestions, the masculine ideal is represented by a high level of risk taking as opposed to a search for attainment of social standing (Le Breton, 2000; Lingis, 2002; MacMullan, 2002). Alternately in this study, the dichotomy between a quest for material wealth and risk taking appears to be less distinct. It can be argued that risk

taking appears to be a means to both achieving a satisfactory social standing and, in turn, developing a stable sense of masculine identity (MacKinnon, 2003).

The support of risk taking seems to also be linked to the idea of being memorable. A real man was considered to be one that could be remembered by important others and who had left a legacy. It was suggested that only those who achieved great things were bound to be remembered.

> Hamlet: *I guess, I'm in the period of getting to where you want to be, I am in the period of learning the tools that I need to learn and doing the things that I need to do in order to be the man who can, who can maybe even leave a mark one-day.*
>
> Brutus: *… an ideal man would have to be a type of person that people REMEMBER, you know?*

This notion of being remembered may be linked to broader existentialist and humanist discourses. The existentialist discourse stresses that individuals inevitably feel great isolation, loneliness and emptiness in their lives (Corey, 2005). They also, however, possess the opportunity for human choice and have the ability to shape their own destinies. From within this discourse individuals are viewed as being able to intentionally and consciously act on and within the world (Ivey, D'Andrea, Ivey & Simek-Morgan, 2007). If individuals are encouraged to act using conscious decision-making, they are able to alleviate the inevitable sense of anxiety associated with the human condition. From this discourse, individuals require meaning and purpose in their lives in order to experience themselves fully (Ivey et al., 2007). The humanist concept of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1967), which refers to the ultimate human need involving an individual developing and experiencing their fullest potential (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Corey, 2005; Ivey et al., 2007), is relevantly linked to these ideas as it suggests that individuals will achieve most emotional and psychological satisfaction if they are able to be the best version of themselves possible. This discourse can also, once again, be linked back to the ideology of individualism which is "based on self-determinism, where free actors are assumed to make choices that have direct consequences for their own unique destiny" (Callero, 2009, p. 17).

4.4. The Body for Self and Others

When discussing their bodies, and their experiences of being men, the participants most commonly referred to two contrasting but interrelated ways. Firstly, they described their own personal feelings and experiences with a strong emphasis on them as individuals and highlighted the importance of their own self-perception. The colloquial phrase that comes to

mind is "doing it for yourself" which is a mantra used by many of the men that I interviewed. This implies that the only person you need to please or impress is yourself and if those standards are met, you can consider yourself to be a successful and happy person. This is what I refer to as *the body for self* portion of the discourse. At the same time, however, when talking about both their bodies and themselves in general, the participants made continuous reference to other people in their lives, both their peers and potential romantic partners. It became explicitly clear that they did not exist in isolation. They are social beings that are simultaneously influenced by and influence those around them (Burr, 1995). In this regard, their bodies were almost considered to be quintessential aspects of their interactions with others and both their physical bodies themselves, and their attitudes to their bodies, appeared to be fundamentally shaped by their perceived experiences with other people (Beyer et al., 2007). This is what I refer to as *the body for others* portion of this discourse. It was particularly interesting to analyse how the participants attempted to manage and balance these two closely connected discourses which seemed to conflict at times.

4.4.1. The Body for Self

This discourse stressed a particularly intrapsychic perspective which highlighted the importance of men being satisfied with their own bodies, traits and identities, irrespective of other people's opinions. The strongest motivators for self-improvement were seen to hinge on their own personal needs (Callero, 2009) which were constructed to exist somewhat separately from others in their social environment. This discourse stressed a forefronting of one's own personal perspectives as more valuable and more pertinent than those of anyone else who may comment (Callero, 2009). This is illustrated by the responses of two participants below. The values emphasised in this discourse, as discussed previously in the *necessity of progression* discourse, can be linked to aspects of individualism.

> Cornelius: *Well uh if you REALLY look at going to the gym and stuff you want to do it for yourself, you don't really, you don't necessarily do it to be the best, you know the best buffest body, best built and stuff.*
>
> Othello: *… I never did it [attended the gym to train] for anyone else. I never did it for anyone, I did it for myself. And I went there, even the days that I was tired, like REALLY tired but when you walk out of there (p) knowing that you did it for yourself and you worked hard and you know that tomorrow that that that weight is gonna be BURNING off you know? You feel like you have really done something worth your while... you should just take PRIDE in your skin (p) also uh uh my family has good skin, so uh, they never emphasise it, they don't emphasise it a lot it's just that (p) they take pride in it. But uh I'm not doing it because of them, I am doing it FOR ME.*

There was strong emphasis on self-improving for the "right" reasons as opposed to the "wrong" ones. Engaging in behaviours such as exercise and taking supplements was seen to be "wrong" if they were motivated by anyone else, other than themselves. This again, draws on the humanist discourse which stresses authenticity (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Corey, 2005; Rogers, 1957) and a sense of genuineness. There appeared to be a perceived conflict between being who you really are, and meeting others expectations in that one had to be sacrificed for the other, they were considered to be mutually exclusive. Most importantly, sacrificing your own identity to resemble what others desire you to be was seen as shameful and a sign of weakness. Furthermore, it is seen as feminine to self-improve for others and only acceptable for women to use this motivation, not "real men", and hence is seen to be incompatible with the authentic masculine ideals they wished to attain (MacKinnon, 2003).

Horatio: *I think you've gotta do it [self-improve by taking steroids or excessive physical training] for the RIGHT reasons (p) I think like I mentioned before that friend that is a role model for me, I think why I admire him is because he's comfortable with himself and he knows who he is (p) once you have that then by all means you know do what you need to do but if you you know these these KIDS who are doing it (p) they don't know who they are they are doing it immediately and they IMMEDIATELY regret the decision but they are doing it because okay peer pressure and all this right but they are just not happy with who they are and then that's the main issue they should worry about because then you get a lot of carbon copies of you know people walking around because they they are too afraid to be themselves they just want to fit in ... In other words you've just got to be true to yourself. And I think that what I am saying is BE REAL and I think my whole problem with these guys who are taking steroids, they don't know who they are before they start doing that, so they already decide that they don't like themselves without even knowing who they are.*

The body for self discourse seemed to be used highly defensively as if participants were ashamed to be seen to be influenced by others perceptions or making attempts to meet these standards. It appears to be a moralistic (Lovett & Jordan, 2005) discourse where men can legitimate certain body-improvement behaviours, most particularly "gymming", because they are doing it to fulfil their own emotional and psychological needs, rather than for the benefit of anyone around them. In this regard, it may be suggested that *the body for self* discourse, like *the necessity of progression* discourse, may be linked to a wider existentialist discourse that highlights the struggles humans have with solidifying our identities in the face of loneliness. More specifically, that they fear that they will "discover that there is no core, no self, no substance" and that they are "merely reflections of everyone's expectations" (Corey, 2005, p. 140).

As discussed in many of the discourses earlier, it appeared that men were trying to justify or rationalise their engagement in body modification as it was deemed to contradict what they should "naturally" possess as men (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003). When operating within *the body for self* discourse, the main quality which they aimed to develop and strengthen when "doing it for themselves" was self-confidence. Many of the men stressed how important physical training, correct dieting and maintaining decent hair and skin was by emphasising the role these practices play in developing their personal sense of confidence (Featherstone, 1991). Ironically, self-confidence was also described most commonly by the men as what they considered women to be most attracted to in a man.

> Puck: *it's your self-confidence more than anything else [that's important]. Like I mean, I don't know, like the more you grow and like the harder you work in the gym, the better you feel about yourself so that type of thing…I donno I wouldn't say to make myself more DESIRABLE, I just (p) well again it's the self-confidence.*

This discourse may be linked back to the socialisation of men as being in control of their environments. Traditional socialisation suggests men are ideally supposed to use their bodies to manipulate their surroundings in order to compete effectively and produce superior results (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Groesz et al., 2002). This adds to the earlier discussion on the *functionality over form* discourse. Here other individuals become an integral aspect of men's environments, which therefore, should also be managed by the men. If men were seen to be too perturbed by what others think of them they essentially are constructing themselves as controlled, as opposed to controlling, beings, which contradicts their socially constructed perception of the masculine body and, in fact, is a social construction linked to femininity (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Groesz et al., 2002; Malson; 1998).

4.4.2. The Body for Others

Despite emphasising the importance of self-improvement for personal satisfaction alone, the participants appeared to speak extensively of their interactions with others and their inevitable influence, not only with regard to the practices and behaviours they engage in or choose to avoid, but also with regard to how they feel about themselves. When discussing the proverbial "other's" role in their lives, the participants generally stressed the importance of two main audiences and interactees that they valued (and often resented a little too). *The body for others* discourse can hence be categorised into two subsections, *it's what women want* (which refers to potential romantic partners) and *keeping up with the "boys"* (which refers to other male friends and peers) which will each be discussed separately below. Generally, the

overriding idea was that individuals tended to receive attention from others (in the form of praise and acceptance) when their own personal appearance (Bruce, 2007; Crocker et al., 2003) began to approach whichever version of masculinity that they considered to be ideal (most often the "healthy" macho or the "well-groomed" metro man).

> Othello: *Immediately...I started getting attention, when I started getting compliments, uh I mean for losing weight and everything*
>
> Puck: *When I have been training properly and all that (p) you get compliments all the time as well you know everyone is like "dude you're looking good, you're looking big!" that kind of thing you know, and it does, it helps the way you carry yourself (p)*
>
> Horatio: *... in terms of how I look and stuff there would be times where I would just be like okay and dress up and what have you and you get that NOTICE and that ATTENTION because you haven't been doing that before so ... I think the attention thing is good for everyone like uh every guy who tells you otherwise is lying, every guy loves attention, EVERY guy loves it, depending on the type of attention, especially if it is from a girl (p) they ADORE attention, WE, we do. That's the thing that every guy, size and all, wants to entertain, definitely... It's a sense of confirmation of who you are and the sense of confirmation of (mimics) "oh! You ARE this interesting person"*

4.4.2.1. It's What Women Want

When discussing desirability of the male body most participants tended to emphasise the pressure they felt to attract and please romantic partners, which were generally considered to be women as all but one participant identified themselves to be heterosexual males. Even the participant who did not specify his sexual orientation discussed the way in which his sister talked about young men she finds attractive. This discourse emphasised the way in which the ideal male body was indeed deemed to be one which was sexually attractive or desirable (Ratele, 2003). Initially when talking about potential suitors, and when directly questioned about them, the men tended to be quite vague ("all women are different") and defensive ("no one ever knows how to meet a woman's needs") as if to try and placate me without offending me due to my status as a young woman. It also appeared as if the men were ashamed or embarrassed to admit that they cared about being able to attract a suitable romantic partner or that it was unmanly to make an effort to be desirable to others.

> Hamlet: *it's not just about attracting the opposite sex, it's about, I guess, (P) I guess with a male it's (P) you have this ideal version of who you are with characteristics etc and you have this ideal version of how you look and you want to really try and keep all those things ... but it's not just about attracting the opposite sex it's a matter of fulfilling that standard...*

As the interviews progressed, and when this topic was broached more indirectly, however, the men appeared to have a strong sense of expectation as to what a potential partner, in

particular women, would look for in a man, including both physical appearance and characteristics. Several of the participants were most adamant that women were highly influenced by media images of men, both with regard to how an appealing man's body would look and how the man should be and behave. In other words, the participants believed that women had an expected version of masculinity that was admired in men, and only these men would make suitable partners. In particular, motion pictures and women's magazines were seen to significantly structure the ways in which women thought (Wolfe, 2002) about and perceived men in general and hence affected the ways in which they viewed and interacted with the men in their micro-social surroundings.

Puck: *literally like their magazines are their gospel! So (p) uh (p) the media is their gospel (p) like in a sense they're image focussed, but then you will get the few that will literally say (p) you know THAT'S what I'm interested in (gestures to his side) so I will go THERE (uses both hands to point to one side). But I mean it will it will get a LOT of people to raise their eyebrows...*

This appeared to influence the ways in which men felt about themselves and hence, their interactions with other people. It appeared that they felt that failing to live up to the images of desirable male bodies and suitable male partners portrayed in the media would hinder their ability to attract a suitable partner (Wienke, 1998). This, in turn, seemed to be a motivating factor for men to engage in certain body modification procedures such as physical training or the use of certain body supplement products in order to attain this ideal as closely as possible. In other words, this discourse about women's perceptions (only buff men are desirable) and behaviours (becoming intimately involved with men who have managed, by whatever means necessary, to achieve this ideal), may encourage certain practices and hinder other behaviours in men (Willig, 2008). For example, from this discourse, men are positioned in a way that the use of protein products and engaging in physical exercise becomes almost essential (see Figure 8), although, of course, this reasoning cannot be explicitly disclosed without simultaneously undermining their sense of "natural" manliness (Ducat, 2004). In addition, other behaviours (such as initiating a potential courtship) may become difficult to engage in.

Cornelius: *women of today go for that ideal man ja so you kind of feel dating wise, you kind of feel set back in approaching women when she's looking for these PERFECT qualities... I found this one cool stat that said uh 40 percent' of uh (p) gym memberships had increased after people had watched The Avengers. Ja so I think some guys after watching that and having their girlfriend with them at the show and their girlfriends are always in AWE of the movies so ja.*

Figure 8: Digital image of a spoof Whey advertisement of a Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) marriage proposal (*Puck*, Personal Communications, November 20, 2012).

More specifically, women were portrayed by the participants as only being attracted most strongly to men who were macho "men's men" and, in particular, men who were suitable partners should be handsome, muscular, confident and wealthy.

Othello:	*when I think of the IDEAL man I think of a Mercedes, the latest model as well. I think that women take them more seriously. Definitely ... I don't think it's the job necessarily I think that it is the money you get out of the job!*
Simóne:	*Okay sure, so are you saying that it is money that brings the status and attracts the women?*
Othello:	*Yes yes yes... he is su- he is sure of himself, he has money OF COURSE and he doesn't have to worry about the fact that he is gonna fall of the edge, I mean he has ENOUGH (p) ... I think that as LONG as they have the money around, I think the women will be okay with anything.*

The participants often used the Darwinist concept of "natural selection" or "survival of the fittest" when providing explanations as to why they think that women are attracted to muscular and macho men. In other words, they suggest that women are attracted to heavily built, strong men because they are instinctually seeking out the best possible mate in order to reproduce offspring of the highest quality to ensure optimal survival of the human species (de Botton, 2004; Weeks, 2003). Not only this, but the biggest strongest macho man will be able to protect her physically.

Romeo:	*the strongest dude sort of thing, he's gonna get the female because he's like you know, I don't know, like Darwin's theory...*
Puck:	*...survival of the fittest will always come through*
Horatio:	*for some girls the image [of the well-built macho man] means safety ... I mean if you look at a big guy and you look at a stereotypical "I want him to look after me" that type of thing.*

From this discourse, it would appear that men absolve themselves from the responsibility of not being selected by women as potential partners as biological instinctual drives cannot be under their control, and they cannot be "blamed" for something beyond their control (Connell, 1995; Weeks, 2003). At the same time, however, they are constructing themselves as superior "evolved" beings because they, unlike the emotional women, are rational cognitive beings and are not under the control of their primitive desires (MacKinnon, 2003; Weeks, 2003). This tendency to prioritise "sophisticated" aspects of the individual, such as intelligence and character, over physical aspects such as size and stature is more fully discussed in the discourse *the body is secondary*.

On the other hand, it could perhaps be suggested that these perceptions that men have of women's perceptions, themselves do, in part, come from the ever increasing wave of images that they encounter every day (Berger, 1972; Coupland & Gwyn, 2003). An excellent example is the recently released motion picture *Crazy, Stupid, Love* (2011) in which the main male character is flooded with women's advances due to his chiselled body, wealthy status and manly nonchalance. Figure 9 below depicts an image of this film in which the lead woman becomes overwhelmed at the sight of her potential partner's body.

Figure 9: Photograph of Emma Stone perusing Ryan Gosling's body in the film *Crazy, Stupid, Love* (2011).

This discourse may also be reinforced by the ever prevalent internet advertisements which present messages such as "Tired of having a fat belly? Want to get the abs that women love?" (http://www.youtube.com/user/sixpackshortcuts?v=Lln3c_37GnQ). The notions presented in these advertisements (Berger, 1972; Coupland & Gwyn, 2003) are further entrenched by individuals providing personal accounts of "success" when using whatever supplement, diet

or training programme on offer, such as "I never got much attention from girls before, but with my new body I was able to attract my dream girl" (Chang, 2011) and are usually accompanied by very provocative pictures (see Figure 10 below). de Botton (2004) discusses the impact that "real-life" stories of the "self-made man" have on ordinary people by creating the impression that anyone can achieve the societal ideal standards of success, beauty and wealth if only they put their mind to it. The message they preach, which is one similar to notions discussed in the *necessity of progression* discourse, is the "possibility of change" (Robbins, 1991 as cited in de Botton, 1994). These "progressive" individuals also provide their own lives as proof of this. The problem with these stories is that they not only provide false hope to individuals who, more often than not, do not have the resources or skills available to change their situation (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003), but in addition, they focus change within individuals without considering changes in macro structures, including power and political systems, which are responsible for their lowly position in the first place (Klein, 2005).

Although these examples are both American (and the film is fictional), it does appear that the participants' perceptions of women's expectations may not be wildly inaccurate. Up and coming South African female musician ChianoSky's latest single *Act like a Man* sports the lyrics "please remember that cowboys don't cry so I need you to act like a man, yes I need you to act like a man…if you want to stand by my side, you have to break the law and be willing to die, sometimes the truth is just based on a lie so I need you to act like a man…I'll be yours if you act like a man" (ChianoSky, 2012). Similarly, a participant in this study related a personal story in which he grappled to end a frivolous and unfulfilling romantic relationship. He explained how one of his female friends called him out on not being "man" enough to take control of the situation and told him he was being "a fucking idiot" and that he should "stop being a pussy". In the example the word "pussy" is particularly pertinent because it creates the impression that the way in which Cornelius was behaving was not only stupid ("idiot") but also feminine. His inability to act decisively and unemotionally constructed him as feminine. These more contextually relevant examples draw attention to the ways in which a particular macho version of masculinity is idealised and reinforced by women even if it would appear that these ideals are not in their own best interests (hooks, 2004; Nikkelen et al., 2011; Ricciardelli, 2011). In other words, women support ideal constructions of masculinity (which include ideal men exhibiting emotional repression, risk taking, dominance and control) which have subordinating and repressive effects on the ways

in which women's roles and positions are constructed. (Barker & Galasinski, 2001; hooks, 2004).

Figure 10: Digital image of a body supplement advertisement depicting a lusting woman (http://ws200jennifer.blogspot.com/2011/02/week-4-hannah-k.html).

The men tended to resist this discourse by creating the impression that only a certain "type" or "quality" of women would be attracted to a man for his money, good looks and muscular body. These women were portrayed to be shallow and superficial and, hence, the men asserted that they would not be interested in being romantically involved with such women. This subject position appears to serve several functions. It allowed the participants to combat personal self-perceptions of failure (James, 2007) they would experience by not meeting women's expectations of the ideal man and simultaneously portray that they were, in fact, worthy potential romantic partners despite this failure or, perhaps, even more so because of it.

Lysander: *okay umm (p) um okay for I I believe that um maybe girls want guys who are fit, sexy bodies and things like that*
Simóne: *And what constitutes a "sexy body"? what do you mean by sexy body?*
Lysander: *You know those who go to gym, they have muscles and everything, on his arms yes yes and he must have six-pack yes yes*
Simóne: *And so do you try and do that yourself?*
Lysander: *No umm I I think it's about understanding yourself I I (p) I I like to make an example of myself I don't date girls that (p) you know those girls that um will always tell you about*

their sex bodies and that I only am interested in girls that in are intelligent, they uh not
somebody who who who who WANTS me to look in a particular way

By differentiating themselves from the women that they consider to be conceited and shallow for being overly concerned with physical appearance, the men were actively constructing themselves as having unaffected and sincere identities. In other words, it was their LACK of concern with physical appearance that makes them desirable because this is a key component to being real and genuine. It is important to note the contradiction here. The participants were not "naturally" genuine, they were consciously being genuine. In other words, the participants were performing authenticity which in itself was constructed as not masculine. Once again this discourse appears to have a moralistic aspect (Lovett & Jordan, 2005) to it which suggests that there is a "right" way to be, in this case modest, genuine and real, and a "wrong" way which would be to be superficial or artificial.

4.4.2.2. Keeping Up with the "Boys"

Keeping up with the "boys" refers to the second group of "others" that seemed to have a significant influence on the ways in which the men perceived and experienced themselves, the male peer group. When discussing other men and their bodies, the participants tended to focus on two key aspects: the competition they experienced when interacting with men and the camaraderie that appears to exist between male friends (Connell, 1995). These two aspects, however, cannot really be separated into two distinct experiences because many of the practices the males engaged in had both elements of competition and camaraderie. In addition, both these aspects appear to play an integral role in the construction of both ideal images of male bodies and personal accounts and maintenance of a masculine identity (Connell, 1995; MacKinnon, 2003). A good example which illustrates the tightly knit co-existence of camaraderie and competition between men is recorded below.

Hamlet: *… the cool thing is with most guys, is everyone is kind of, they kind of trying to look at*
their best, but at the same time, there is, like especially when you go to gym, there is, there
is actually a camaraderie (p) like, like, uh (P) one thing that I have noticed, like you can
talk to like the biggest most ripped guy and you're like (mimics) "what!" And he's like
"Dude, you're so big" and you like "no, I'm not" and so – and I, and I, and I think that,
with guys, there's generally speaking uh (P) most guys, a lot of guys, (P) will go to gym
and you know, and they, they may know they good-looking they may know they strong, but
when they, but when they, with other guys, (P) there is a lot of camaraderie (P) between
them … they can be encouraging but at the same time, they do, I think every guy inside
their head, um (p) wants to be, wants to be, they kind of look at that guy and want to be
better than him.

Rivalry between men is not an unexpected emerging idea due to the traditional socialisation of men as controlling, competitive beings (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Groesz et al., 2002). Figure 11 below highlights the ways in which media images tend to encourage rivalry between men. The competition between men was discussed in various ways, both explicitly and implicitly, by all of the participants that I interviewed. On the surface, competition was mentioned in terms of specific attributes or achievement (such as being the biggest, strongest or most sought after by women) but when analysed more closely, succeeding in competition appeared to be linked to various other things. Firstly, the act of competition, in itself, is linked to the performance and construction of a socially legitimate masculinity (Connell, 1995; MacKinnon, 2003) and secondly, "winning" was a means through which individuals could achieve status and hence the love and acceptance with which status is associated (Bruce, 2007; de Botton, 2004).

Figure 11: Digital image of SAN supplement product advertisement (https://www.facebook.com/SAN.Supplements).

In terms of physical appearance, competition was seen in terms of size and definition of muscle of male bodies. Males would compare themselves physically (Festinger,1954) using these attributes as indication of strength and physical power which were viewed as crucial elements of the ideal masculine body-image (McFarland & Petrie, 2012; Morry & Staska, 2001; Nikkelen et al., 2011).

Hamlet: *… I guess if you (P) look at, if you look at like, someone that you admire or a male or a friend and you can see that he is gymming well and going hard, like and, someone who isn't, I guess it is desponding, you, your self-esteem is lower, NATURALLY, not just with the opposite, attracting the opposite sex, but with most things, you kind of think that you aren't, you aren't, being noticed and uh (P) that, almost that, that, because masculinity is*

> SO ATTACHED to it you almost feel like you are LESS masculine than the guy who is
> bigger and stronger

Furthermore, when interacting with other males, men tend to compare themselves functionally to those around them and try to maintain a similar level of progress with regard to physical appearance.

> Hamlet: *If you look at so many guys that you know … when they are around other males who are gymming, I think that when guys really trigger off, and – like with most of my friends and stuff, is when other guys started gymming and started getting bigger and stronger and then everyone else was like "Woah! He's getting bigger and stronger! I want to be better, I want to get bigger and stronger!" (Both laugh)*

It is interesting to note, however, that it was often seen as "unmanly" to acknowledge that you were competing except within your tight and trusted circle of friends.

> Puck*:   You see someone lifting weights around you, you DEFINITELY want to push it! (p) You want to be the biggest guy on the field, you know everyone talks so it's just ja…Well you wouldn't want HIM to know! But you would tell your mates "yoh did you see that guy whata whata whata"… like (p) there is always an opposition and you're happy with those around you knowing that you know you're targeting that guy but you don't want him to know. So ja like it's a little bit of a like dog-eat-dog world, but it's just how it is.*

As mentioned, size and definition were important indicators of one's physical strength and a way of determining another man's level of functioning which, as discussed earlier in the *functionality over form* discourse, is an important way in which individuals develop a secure sense of masculinity (Connell, 1995).

> Horatio: *this is is how I see how men see each other and I may be completely wrong but when I have shared it with other guys they like kind of like share the same view kind of thing, you look at another guy and you see if you could take him in a fight! And maybe there will be guys that won't say that but that's how I see it... If if there was a physical altercation, WOULD I be ABLE to handle myself against this particular person.*
> Simóne: *And how do you judge if you will or not?*
> Horatio: *That's uh that's stature is the main thing, depending on whether he is taller, bigger than you, then you look at the arm size, you LOOK at uh uh I think (p) I would look at like definition (p) be like okay this guy is (p) is cut or whatever…*

This highlights another quality which was deemed to be an essential component to a legitimate form of masculinity, aggression. The quote above reflects Frank's (1991) theorisation of the dominating body. In this case, men are constructed as beings that not only need to be disciplined and controlling of their environments, they also need to be seen as exercising control over other individuals (Frank, 1991). Biological explanations are often

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provided for aggressive behaviours of men in which excessive testosterone and other hormonal components cause men to be naturally aggressive (Connell, 1995; Weeks, 2003). It would appear, however, that this is a simplistic and somewhat unsubstantiated explanation and more focus should be given to the ways in which men are constructed as aggressive and dominating beings through social evaluation and assignment. In other words, men are socialised to be aggressive and dominate others because the social rewards of praise and acceptance are reliant on them displaying such behaviour (Collins, 2013, in press). One of the most common examples is the way in which aggressive behaviour is not only tolerated but commended within the sporting arena.

> Horatio: *you can show that aggression that I was talking about earlier, you can show that aggression and it's ACCEPTED, so it's not something frowned upon you not beating someone up randomly you know like you're making a good tackle or like you're being AGGRESSIVE in the game you know and those are generally the things that you are praised for (p) you know BEING aggressive, BEING active, BEING uhh (p) and it's it's amazing it's because IN the game there are times where there is a particularly good player, like one of my mates, you can BE elegant, you can BE, like people actually describe it as that moment as being beautiful (p) but it is not until that point where you actually take a REALLY AGGRESSIVE like shot or kick, that's where you get the real adoration and so the guys are like "ahh! How was that kick?!" and even like HEARING the sound of the (p) even the movement, the movement is elegant but it's the build-up to the main show which is that kick so (p)*

This quote I found particularly interesting because it discursively illustrates the way in which socially constructed typically feminine qualities such as beauty and elegance are subordinated by masculine qualities such as force and aggression and highlights the ways in which social acceptance and recognition as a worthy man is closely tied to performing in accordance with such established benchmarks (Collin, 2012, in press).

Sport is also a legitimate and well-accepted form of competition between men and participation in sporting activities is strongly encouraged for men from an early age. Many of the participants commented that the ideal man should be engaged in some sort of sport and that they themselves were committed to their own sport of choice. Sport appeared to serve several functions. Firstly, it clearly displays men's functional capabilities as they are men in action, engaged in an embodied masculine performance of physicality involving both strength and skill (Connell, 1995). This particular role that sport plays in men's experiences is linked to the *functionality over form* discourse discussed earlier. Furthermore, "the institutional organisation of sport" appears to be a legitimate way in which fixed gender and social

relations are reinforced and maintained, more specifically, the "competition and hierarchy among men" and "exclusion and domination" over women. (Connell, 1995, p. 54). In other words, certain men's relative position of power over women (and other men) become accepted as reasonable and natural due to superior use of their bodies through performance. At the same time, this kinetic movement (the running, jumping or throwing actions) only become significant when recognised within the institution of sport. This highlights the way in which neither the body nor the institution of sport can exist in isolation. They construct and reconstruct each other's value in a mutually dependent manner (Connell, 1995).

Furthermore, physicality (as is displayed in sport and "gymming") was also seen to be an important passage into brotherhood. In other words, the male bonding or camaraderie that occurs on the sports field is one of the ways in which men form close relationships with other men in an "appropriate" way, without it being construed as homosexual.

> Horatio: *my mates and I are like social social players, we play whenever we get the chance and umm it's just we get the sense of (p) brotherhood we it's just we ALL well most of my mates we're very competitive (p) VERY competitive, some more than others so that's why the ones that are less competitive try to say "Oh I'm not competitive" 'cause if you compare them to some of the others they would be less so but in that regard (p) we find that in that team when we work together, we gel so well, we know each other*
>
> Puck: *Between sport and boarding school hey, like the brotherhood that the okes form there is lasting because you have always got that one common association of like (p) your high school or (p) like you played for that rugby side.*

Not only is the physical act of sport important but discussions around physical activities are a way in which men can "safely" communicate without being seen to be engaged in "girly" emotional conversations.

> Horatio: *when I have conversations about guys who DO gym or are currently gymming, the guys who don't will (p) will HAVE to bring up stories of how they use to (p) like "I I use to do that, I I have done it but I'm OVER it now, I WAS in that MOVEMENT" as oppose to "I've never gymmed before"… like I uh just use to go for (p) it was just some sort of like it was just like self-defence a training class … when guys are talking about working out that's the one thing I bring up. (p) like I won't just be like "no" I will be like "I use to do this and that oh ja" so it's just a case of- I would think for (p) an AUTHENTIC MALE experience talking with another guy like having a a – like what what chicks would have an EMOTIONAL connection, (under breath) I shouldn't say chicks but whatever- but an emotional connection with a guy would be talking about something would be talking about something physical and once you have that I think I have had that with guys, we haven't particularly got ALONG (p) but that would be the one thing, "I know about this, I know about that, I know about boxing and stuff, oh ja me too" and and and it will start there and that will be the core ...*

This highlights, once again, the benefit of physicality to men, not just in terms of its practical value but also in terms of establishing a sense of closeness and bonding with other men. This quote also draws attention to the construction of men as "detached" and "rational" beings and emphasises the degree to which their core interactions with others are structured by these views. It also stresses the silencing of men, especially with regard to expressing their feelings (hooks, 2004). One man talked, quite explicitly, about the negative implications of men being forthcoming with their emotional experiences.

> Puck: *…modern days you literally have to keep quiet to yourself, like who can you trust?...you still wanna be like held in high esteem by everyone, like I know as a guy you don't want to be thought of to be like a little emotional wreck or this or that, so you just want to try and hide those feelings from most people.*

Another participant highlighted the way in which cultural traditions further emphasise and support such ideas of male stoicism and emotional repression. He explained that in isiZulu, there is the idiom "indoda aykhali" which roughly translated into English means "a man doesn't cry" or "to cry openly is effeminate". This stresses the role that language, particularly within and across cultures, has to play in the construction of meaning. Furthermore, these examples emphasise the way in which a single representation or ideal can be constructed and co-constructed by various different forces (peer influence, potential romantic partners and cultural expectations) to provide an almost cemented version of truth that becomes so normalised and expected that its restrictive implications are never called into question (Beyer et al., 2007; Burr, 1995).

Overall, *the body for others* discourse appears to be strongly linked to experiencing a sense of social acceptance and the ways in which the body hinder and promote such an occurrence. According to Bruce (2008), individuals' desires for "status symbols [in this case an ideal body] often reflect an underlying insecurity about achieving acceptance from others" and this insecurity is said to be closely associated with a low self-esteem (Bruce, 2008, p. 54). In other words, individuals attempt to, through consumption and self-improvement, produce a particular self-appearance that will be considered socially acceptable by their peers and adhere to these norms in order to create a good impression or to enhance a positive sense of self. This idea was similarly asserted by Goffman (1959), who draws attention to the constant series of performances individuals are engaged in as a means of constructing a favourable self and social image. It would appear that even within the study itself, the participants were

engaged in this process of performing their masculinity to secure a positive social identity. A clear repeated example that stands out is the way that almost every participant (despite being perfectly well-groomed and most presentable) mentioned in the interview how they had not made any effort to present themselves well on this particular day and that they could, in fact, look much smarter, neater, cleaner and so forth.

Referring back to "The Contingencies of Self-Worth Model" (Crocker et al., 2003) discussed in the literature review would also be useful here. Specifically, the domain or contingency called "approval from generalised others" (Crocker et al., 2003, p. 895) is of particular relevance. Self-esteem, in this instance, hinges on the ability to gain acceptance from people in their social environment. Great emphasis is placed on others' opinions of the self and more importantly beliefs about how one is perceived by others, not necessarily how others actually see them in reality (Crocker et al., 2003). This is closely linked to the idea of self-enhancement and the role of social interaction in developing the "self-concept". People generally have a desire to make a good impression in order to gain approval from others as well as to maintain a positive self-image. One of the methods that individuals can employ to manage the impressions that they make is through social conformity with the norms of relevant reference groups (Edson Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

4.5. The Body is Secondary

In *the natural body* and *functionality over form* discourses, the non-aesthetic aspects of the masculine body were emphasised in order to create distance from the feminine aesthetic body. In other words, the operational body was constructed to be masculine through its differentiation from the physically appealing feminine body. In this discourse, *the body is secondary*, this idea is taken one step further by subordinating the importance of the physical body all together by emphasising other qualities, other than the individual's body, that were considered more essential to the construction of the ideal man. This discourse was used by both those who identified with the macho and the metro' ideals alike and was repeatedly called on by participants, especially when they were uncomfortable speaking about the body physically. This discomfort was noted both in their body language during the interviews and the way in which the physical body was discussed as important in other subtle and implicit ways. The various other qualities or properties that were discussed by participants can be grouped into three different sub-discourses, namely, the *intellectual man, the man of good character* and *the material man*.

Lysander: *Personally it's not about how you look or or anything it's about personality and intelligence you know so it would have to be somebody who is intelligent you know and different (p)*

Horatio: *… whenever you see an ideal guy he always has (p) um at least two of three things: financial security, emotional security and uh (p) female companionship. That's ALWAYS the three things you see. And even if you see in movies that's the three things the guys are looking for. (p) He's in his job and he is unhappy or whatever but he is in his job and then he finds some sort of EMOTIONAL meaning, he finds some sorta, he's GOTTA have a love interest …*

4.5.1. The Intellectual Man

The first attribute which was promoted as more important than the physical body was the mind. The modern day ideal man was constructed as requiring an enquiring mind and an educated understanding of both himself and the world. Brawn without brain was seen to be futile. Majority of the participants mentioned how the ideal man should be able to display intellectual prowess and that they, personally, aim to develop their intelligence through education, not only as a means to self-progression, but also as a way to gain acceptance and attention from other people (Bruce, 2007; Callero, 2009; de Botton, 2004).

Brutus: *he's gotta be well read, because in this day and age it's all TV, you know, and it's terrible, most of the guys I speak to, their grammar is appalling um (p) You sit there and listen to the contradictions and you honestly have to keep quiet, 'cause it's so embarrassing!*

Furthermore, many of the participants constructed the sexually desirable male as being academically superior and claimed that their own personal intelligence was what made them sexually appealing and hence was a means of attracting potential romantic partners.

Lysander: *(pause) You know in in um maybe in BBM like you are chatting with a girl you don't know and then she says like what is interesting about yourself um I'm sure a lot of guys would be like um um say I have this sexy body and stuff (laughs) but for me I I I it's a different story because it's not about my body, I tell them I'm I'm doing my third year in in in UKZN and that that that is something that I think makes me you know desirable other than like my body.*

Duncan: *I'm not TRYING TO (p) be like a male peacock and attract the female peacock (p) and if I AM I'm not going to use those methods [physical size and cosmetic products]…it's gonna be so much more than that! I think it's gonna be so much more than that (p) I think I'm gonna meet someone with words –A meeting of minds! If if you look at it that way, making myself more desirable is probably getting this degree… I can be like (mimics) "Hey! I'm doing this degree on… sexually explicit material!" (raises eyebrows, pulls a face).*

It is important to note that in both of these quotes from two different participants the word "degree" is used and not intelligence. In other words, it is the institutionalised form of education that is seen to attract the female companionship and not necessarily the intelligence itself. This suggests there is an aspect of class associated to intelligence, more specifically, that the educational degree appears to be important because it facilitates the acquisition of an increased income (de Botton, 2004).

Figure 12: Photograph of Jesse Eisenberg as Mark Zuckerberg in the movie *The Social Network* (2010).

One of the participants mentioned how the "rise of the nerd" has been facilitated by the anti-hero characters in motion pictures. It was argued that many of the main male characters in movies are being portrayed as neither particularly muscular nor handsome, but that their superior level of intelligence has been valued as more important. Jesse Eisenberg (see Figure 12 above) is one of the individuals who has recently come into popularity through his roles depicting much loved "geeks", who despite deviating from the muscular body ideal, are admired and successful leading men. It would appear, however, that "despite" is the quintessential word used. In other words, many of the participants described the ways in which they actually used intelligence not as a preference to the ideal muscular body but as a compensation for not achieving it. Once again, the importance of money becomes significant as the "geeks" are constructed as being able to earn a substantial amount of money, and thereby achieve status, whilst the macho men are seen to only hold positions of menial work.

> Duncan: *Ja, and if I know (p) if I know that like I'm not, (p) in different aspects of my life, then it's like that whole compensation theory, (pause) well sure you might be BIGGER, but what degrees do YOU have bra?*

Horatio: *I think it came back to (p) it came back to the physical thing (p) it ALWAYS does it ALWAYS comes back to the physical thing to the fact that you have to make up two more categories because of the category you fit into (p) so when I was in (p) school being the smaller guy and what have you I had to up my game in terms of other things, in terms of intelligence*

4.5.2. The Man of Good Character

One of the most common, and often initial, responses when asking about the ideal male body, and the ideal man in general, was that appearance is not important and that the main consideration should be what kind of "personality" the individual displays. More often than not, the interviews began with a considerable discussion on the type of person the ideal man should be rather than what he should look like, irrespective of the body focussed question that was asked.

Duncan: *I donno, I'm not really into like when I think of the perfect man and you said that, my mind didn't actually picture (p) a human. I pictured CHARACTERISTICS.… Someone that (p) is compassionate, someone that has goals…he must be authentic and genuine…*

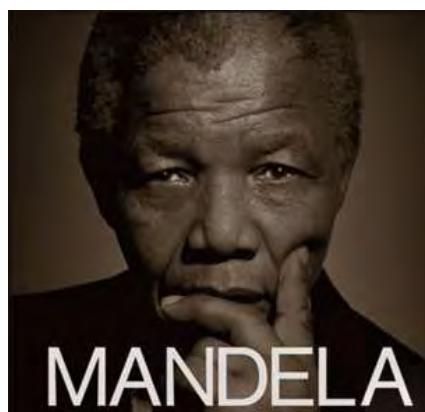*Figure 13:* Digital image of a portrait of Nelson Mandela
(http://miriamwanda.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/who-is-the-great-nelson-mandela/).

A whole host of different personality characteristics were mentioned by the various participants, but from these descriptions several common ideas became apparent. As mentioned before, the ideal man was seen to be someone who exudes confidence, but not so much that he appears cocky; ambitious and determined but at the same time humble about his success; displays resounding leadership potential but facilitated by co-operation with others and not fear. Most importantly, the ideal man should be worthy of respect, and in order to achieve this respect they should be honest, sincere and above all, emotionally resilient. Some

of the different ways in which the participants described the ideal characteristics of a real man have been illustrated in the quotes below.

> Tybalt: *the man is being people who are seen to be able to take leadership, so it is someone who is able to take leadership and get the trust of the (p) people around him, rather than being FEARED by them.*
>
> Horatio: *when you be SINCERE you attract that same type of attention so I am trying to actually put that across being more sincere even if it's something if you're doing something a little unsavoury or being somewhat little critical of others or whatever at least you know you are being true to yourself and in return you actually get those people coming back to you or those people agreeing and respecting you for it...*
>
> Lorenzo: *I think I am very (p) very caring (p) but I think that can be my downfall as well (p) people take advantage of that*

It is interesting how many of the characteristics were described as having a "limited degree" to which they should be possessed or displayed and having "too much" or the "wrong type" of a characteristic contradicted or undermined the ideal image. This idea is specifically relevant with regard to sensitivity.

> Hamlet: *the ideal male, as a as a, sportsmen, because they have so many qualities, that you kind of look, that they never give up, they showed determination, fight, etc etc, team spirit, blah blah blah ... I like BMT! I like when the chips are down, you know, they step up (both laugh). I think I think that's (P) that also defines a man, when things are really Tough (P)... you know when you're getting broken, your body is sore, you're on the floor and you're hurting, but you pick yourself back up and keep going... okay, sensitive I think is a sign of strength if it is attached to empathy, if you're sensitive for other people, you can experience what they are feeling and you can be there for someone else it's sensitive. I think when it comes down to when you take yourself too seriously when something is happening to you and you're too sensitive of situations and life experiences that challenge and happen to you and you're too sensitive about that I think that can be a great sign of weakness, emotionally weak.*

Here it is articulated that sensitivity should only expressed outwards with others but not when considering yourself, where resilience and toughness is deemed more suitable. This, once again, highlights the way in which men sharply differentiate themselves from qualities that they consider to be feminine (MacKinnon, 2003). In this case, sensitivity (or more specifically being personally sensitive) is seen to be non-masculine as it is constructed as a stereotypical "soft" response of a woman. Empathy, however, is viewed as a way in which men can show emotional support for others and thereby maintain the protective roles stereotypically associated with men. One the most common individuals that was mentioned when discussing *the man of good character* was Nelson Mandela (see Figure 13 above) who was deemed to have achieved the suitable balance in characteristics. He was seen to remain

noble and gallant with the glory of success and he managed to be compassionate and caring without appearing weak or feminine.

> Brutus: *Well (p) uh (p) even for me, I'm more along the lines of PERSONALITY, so I (p)... then body and uh (p) face-wise it shouldn't matter!*
>
> Horatio: *Respect is very important because I think with the umm (p) it does in a physical sense you know you can always dress up, you can ALWAYS dress up, you can always shave, you can always cut your hair but you can't really (p) you can't CHANGE your personality you CAN'T dress up your emotions that type of thing so I think that's that's kind of the forefront that type of thing. It's like wearing stuff and clothes and stuff will still be important (p) but not AS important so I think what clothes is about now, you want it to show your sincerity, you want it to represent who you are.*

Both the quotes by Brutus and Horatio highlight the necessity to conceal or justify valuing the physical body. The use of the word "shouldn't" is particularly interesting in the quote by Brutus above as it implies that the body may in fact be more important than individuals are prepared to admit because placing emphasis on physical appearance would undermine their performance as deep and modest individuals (Corey, 2005). The final quote brings attention back to the ways in which physical aspects of appearance come to form an important representation of one's internal characteristics or personality and that placing emphasis on the physical should only occur as a means to achieving full authenticity internally as a person.

4.5.3. The Material Man

The final way in which the importance of the physical body was minimised was through a primary focus on material wealth. All of the men that participated in this study believed, to varying degrees, that despite living in a time of gender equality, the role of the man was still, as it was traditionally, to be the breadwinner. The image of the ideal man which was constructed therefore tended to highlight the ways in which a real man should be able to support himself comfortably and provide financial security for a wife and family. This is not to say that the participants did not acknowledge the changing historical context and note that there should be an intention for sharing of responsibilities between both partners, but rather that failing to maintain the position of financially independent individual and the role of primary provider may result in men experiencing feelings of inferiority and insecurity.

> Lorenzo: *he has to be the head-of-the-household-provider kind of thing.*
>
> Brutus: *well I have always grown up with the fact that the male should be the breadwinner, irrespective of the fact that in this day and age where women feel like they have to dominate in every way (pause) umm it's always about equality but I still feel that the male*

> *HAS to be able to provide for the family, the male feels INADEQUATE otherwise, I for myself wouldn't settle until I don't know my thirties I would say because I want to be able to support a family if I have kids and it IS you supporting when she takes leave and what not so ja, so he has to be able to support*

Cornelius: *I mean we still believe that the macho man is the man who goes to work all the time, the man is always the breadwinner of the family, that kind of thing. And if you look at somewhere like America, you think like you know what there are two people in the relationship, we both can support each other, ja.*

Tybalt: *… from a cultural (p) standpoint for me, I'm Zulu/Nguni and the cultural idiom that they say "Ubuhle bendoda yinkomo zayo"*

Simóne: *Okay?*

Tybalt: *Meaning a man's beauty is their cows*

Simóne: *Alright!*

Tybalt: *Which is better translated to mean a man's beauty or a man's handsomeness is the value of economic provision that they can provide, so THAT, not really the [physical] features.*

The two quotes above highlights the importance of culture in the construction of gender roles and ideals and stress the fluidity of constructs depending on historical timeframe. Cornelius emphasises an interesting point in that many aspects of social life in South Africa appear to already be strongly influenced by Westernised perspectives, however, the transmission of ideas and constructions through globalisation is not a uniform or patterned process. Different ideas are taken up by different cultures and societies over varying time frames (Burr, 1995). As a result, an individual tends to hold several conflicting viewpoints simultaneously which can become problematic when the contrasting perspectives undermine the anxiety-reducing effects each "story" would provide if held singularly. Tybalt's account provides an excellent illustration of how the Zulu culture, for example, constructs a man's prized possession of cows as constituting part of the man himself. His cows are describes as part of his "beauty" or indicative of his physical appearance. This illustrates the ways in which objects and beings beyond an individual's physical body or psychological make-up come to form an integral part of their identity through the symbolic assignment of value that occurs through the use of language (Burr, 1995; Willig, 2008).

Although most attention was given to being the provider, implications of financial wealth did not stop with that role. Many of the participants went on to express how the ideal *material man* must also own expensive material possessions as a clear visible indication of his financial status. As discussed earlier, the men's drive for acquisition of financial wealth also appears to be reinforced by their perceptions of women's needs and wants in a romantic partner

Figure 14: Photograph of Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark on the set of the film *The Avengers* (2012).

Two of the "real-life" examples that were discussed regularly in the interviews were the fictional characters Tony Stark (Iron Man) and James Bond (see Figures 14 and 15). These material men were seen to have it all: expensive clothes, fast cars, quirky gadgets and beautiful women (Segal et al., 2001).

Lorenzo:	*I love (p) I LOVE clothes (p) how I dress is ALWAYS important, well obviously not now I'm just relaxed now doing some stuff, but if I'm going to work, I'm going to church (p) I always make sure (p) make sure I fit the image (p) so I wear the whole corporate office look at work (p) if I'm going to church, I want the tie look...*
Horatio:	*umm in terms of like the ideal guy he will have (p) I would say like a model on his arm, a car, a NICE car, he drives a sports car obviously, something ostentatious (p) ja*
Brutus:	*if a woman accepts you [with a dilapidated "bakkie"] HELL! You know most women won't. They are like (mimic) "THIS would be so nice, HON! I want this or that"*
Puck:	*Like (p) like they want someone that's going up in the world. A lot of girls, most girls want, uh they won't so like "oh he's cool he's got a job, like like, I have got a BETTER job, so we can still make something work" you know…You know look, I don't think he should be able to be happy with himself just with, in a lull of a job.(p) But you know, you get guys that ARE and to be honest they probably enjoy life far more than us.*

Closely linked to this aspect of the material man was the implication that those who were financially wealthy have motivation, ambition and "drive". These qualities allowed the individual to be in a continual self-renewing and improving process in order to achieve their higher potential (Maslow, 1967). This indicates how *the material man* discourse is closely linked to *the necessity of progression* discourse and highlights the way in which the two discourses create and reinforce one another (Parker, 1992; Willig, 2008). In other words, the construction of the ideal man as one who is wealthy and possesses expensive material goods creates the subject position in which individuals are motivated actors and, at the same time, material wealth is one of the explicit ways in which individuals can display or exhibit their

positions as men engaged in the practice of continuous self-advancement (de Botton, 2004). The two discourses are therefore co-dependent and together reinforce oppressive definitions of success and status based on material wealth and occupational level. Furthermore, both these discourses appear to be also further sustained by the *it's what women want* discourse as it reinforces the idea that these are, in fact, the qualities and behaviours that would facilitate the commencement and maintenance of a successful romantic relationship.

Figure 15: Photograph of Pierce Brosnan as James Bond and Izabella Scorupco as Natalya Simonova in the film *GoldenEye* (1995).

In addition, from this discourse men and women are both objectified and commodified in different ways. Although the objectification and commodification of women is well documented, research amongst men has been less extensive, although interest into this area is increasing. Objectification refers to the reduction of individuals to a singular unit by only focusing on one area of their entire being (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Parent & Moradi, 2011; Ratele, 2005). Commodification refers to the process whereby something, or in this case someone, is either turned into or treated as a commodity in which it is used as an object or a service (Beder, 2001; Gottdiener, 2000). Traditionally women's bodies have been objectified and commodified by focusing solely on their physical appearance and providing sexual gratification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Leclerc Madlala, 2004; Parent & Moradi, 2011; Ratele, 2005). These aspects are, similarly, highlighted in this study by the association the material man has with beautiful women and their function as status symbols. On the other hand, however, men have also been objectified and commodified by constructing their sole role as breadwinner and their service as material provider (Beder, 2001; Gottdiener, 2000;

Pattman, 2005). In other words, from this discourse both men and women are encouraged to view each other as possessions to be bought and owned and, hence, both genders' value has been reduced by limiting it to one aspect of their being.

4.6. The Homosexual Aversion

Debatably the most prominent discourse that was evident among all of the twelve transcripts was *the homosexual aversion*. This discourse refers to the participants' consistent attempts, both explicit and implicit, to continually differentiate the ideal man in general, and themselves personally, from homosexuality. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the body and its actions are seen to be strongly indicative of an individual's sexual orientation, and a homosexual man was thought to be identifiable by his physical body, manner of speech and engagement in certain behaviours. This discourse, once again, draws attention to the severe divides between the macho, metro and "moffie" men and their associated practices.

> Tybalt: *the whole metro-sexuality thing I think that the complication becomes with um underlying issues of masculinity such as where (p) can people who are gay be seen to be men? So (p) uh um we immediately link it in our heads with (p) being straight, metro-sexual, gay (p) so there has started to be- (p) if this person is TOO metro-sexual then it starts being - it is effecting their sexual relations in a way*

> Macbeth: *Umm, generally, you can tell who is homosexual because there is that metrosexual thing EVERYWHERE (p) you know it is like rainbows coming out of their ears. Umm (p) BUT sometimes I have a friend I have a CLOSE friend who is, who might even think he is gay you know (p) but he's not he is straight but like (P) HONESTLY I think he is hiding something from me you know? Because he's like (p) you know (p) (sounding rather disgusted) SKINNY SKINNY JEANS and the HAIR and he goes for CHEST waxing and all that stuff, it's just way way too much! WAY TOO MUCH! And I was like "You know what man, your penis is ashamed of you!"*

Other, more subtle, indications of *the homosexual aversion* discourse were made in passing remarks when discussing other unrelated topic.

> Horatio: *you know whenever someone, you giving him a compliment like "eh dude you look quite ripped" you know what have you, you know that's the only way a guy can give another guy a compliment (p) or say anything without sounding (p) OFF*

The use of the word "off" indicates an attempted "politeness" toward homosexuality, yet the idea still remains the same: being considered homosexual is not desirable (Butler, 1990). From this, it may be suggested that the most devastating assault on one's masculine identity occurred when individuals considered themselves to be in danger of being perceived as non-

heterosexual. Possibly, the most explicit presentation of this discourse came from one participant's painful story of high school bullying.

> Brutus: *Ja and well I got called GAY! So I had a bit of a uh uh uh masculine (p) identity crisis! I felt the need to HAVE to EXERCISE, DO things! I had to PROVE I'm MALE you know?...I didn't have friends, the girls wouldn't sit with me because "I'm GAY" –*
> Simóne: *Girls even?!*
> Brutus: *Ja, girls even, so girls wouldn't sit with me because "I'm GAY" and guys would just stay away from me completely, they even made up a little rhyme about me! It was terrible (mimics in sing-song voice)"Brutus the queer gave Marcus[1] up the rear and jumped off a pier when the girls came near"*

Although this is an unmistakable reference to *the homosexual aversion* discourse, it appears that this discourse seems to be well-entrenched throughout most of the interview transcripts. This really made me consider how well-engrained notions of heteronormativity (Butler, 1990; Tadele, 2011) appear to be in 21st Century South Africa, despite just over 15 years of Constitutional equality. This discourse appeared to be operating right from the beginning of almost every interview. Two specific cases illustrate the way in which the immediate responses of the participants involve a defensive affront to homosexuality. Below are two responses to one of the first "formal" interview questions: "I would like you to imagine what you would consider to be the ideal or the perfect man and then I would like you to describe him to me".

> Hamlet: *okay, sounds GAY. But – (both laugh)*
> Cornelius: *(very long pause) hmm can't he be a woman rather?! (laughs)*

Firstly, what the two quotes above highlight, is the reluctance of men to talk about or to describe other men for fear of being perceived as homosexual. Both Hamlet's quote, and Brutus' quote earlier, place strong emphasis on the word "gay" as if the mere word in itself is disgusting or horrifying. The word "gay" appears to have serious negative connotations. Not only is it used to offensively refer to homosexual oriented individuals but it now is also colloquially used to express or exclaim distaste for things that have nothing to do with homosexuality at all. For example, it is often used in the same manner the jargon word "lame" is now used and it is common for someone to let out the cry "GAY!" if they do not like something they have seen on television or if they are severely underwhelmed by an interaction they have had with a peer. It is especially used to describe effeminate things. The

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[1] Pseudonym has been used.

normalisation of this word reinforces the idea that homosexuality is objectionable and emphasises how it is constructed to be closely tied to femininity (Butler, 1990, 1993).

The power that words have to construct and assign meaning is further emphasised by different languages. Two of the participants (Tybalt and Lorenzo) discussed that in the Zulu language, there are several different words for the English word "homosexual" (such as "inkonkoni" or "isitabane") yet all of these words are highly derogatory and offensive. In isiZulu, the only way in which homosexuality can be kindly (or neutrally) expressed is to describe what it is thought to entail, "ukuthanda umuntu wobulili obufanayo", which translated can be said to mean "loving someone of the same gender". This strongly reinforces the idea that homosexuality is not just objectionable and distasteful but so unacceptable that its existence may only be acknowledged with contempt.

> Lorenzo: *in my my culture, there are rules (p) there are standards you are expected to stick to (p)and uh if you (p) deviate from that uh (p) I suppose you get labelled (p) uh those different terms uh (p) ah mama's boy ah something like that ah you GAY I can't really express it in English but there are Zulu words that mean gay in a very derogatory way.*

The fear of being construed as homosexual came out in several other ways. When asked to record their biographical details, several of the participants responded in outrage to the "sexual orientation" question as if it were offensive that I would ever consider them to be anything but heterosexual. One participant responded as follows:

> Romeo: *I'm straight, and I really hope that was purely a research question and not that my sexual orientation was in question, because if that's the case I'm going to have to shave my head or grow a moustache (laughs).*

This quote is particularly interesting as it reiterates the ways in which the body plays a vital role in constructing both gendered and sexual identities. A possibly more telling response was that one participant refused to provide an answer at all. One can merely infer as to the reasons, but when analysed with the rest of the interview as a referring context, it can be suggested that identifying yourself as a homosexual man and expressing it openly to others is uncomfortable to say the least. Alternatively, Lorenzo's silence in response to this question may, in fact, be a way in which he resists the interpellation into the denigrated subject position of "homosexual" man (Butler, 1990, 1993). By refusing to disclose his sexual orientation, he is engaged in a Butlerian act of subversion where he rejects the status quo

definitions of sexual orientation to which we all appear to be rigidly confined and thereby personally experiences his constructed identity as more emancipatory as it is void of society's assigned negative connotations (Butler, 1990, 1993).

Returning to the initial quote by Brutus, where he describes his distressing experiences at high school, several other pertinent points can be made. Firstly, his quote suggests that there are some very serious implications of being considered to be homosexual, more specifically, the homosexual label brings with it social exclusion. This point was reinforced by another participant who expressed that within particular cultures (the Zulu culture in this case) that exclusion was extended to a full sense of alienation from one's family, community and traditional roots.

> Simóne: *What are the consequences of not adhering to your culture's or community's expectations of how you should act or be?*
>
> Lorenzo: *Rejection. (p) Complete rejection. just exclusion kind of thing (p) and it's quite it's quite intense (p) for you to feel it (p) not just as you say community (p) even at a higher level (p) the WHOLE family (p) you SEE it (p) you FEEL it (p) LIKE you are being rejected... sometimes you feel (p) it's just not healthy (p) so you feel you should just stick to what they want...you know any tradition (p) the deeper you go in (p) religion! (p) and you know it's not just because they are biased (p) it's like they have (p) never (p) never (p) encountered ENCOUNTERED it [homosexuality] before (p)... and like (p) I have taken some of my gay friends back to the community and the reactions!... sometimes people like (p) it's hostile (p) with the MEN it's (p) hostile (p) the women are like (p) curious (p) but with the guys are (p) it can be very violent.*

Secondly, Brutus' quote re-emphasises the idea that masculinity should involve hard work (Volli, 2000). Through this quote it can be seen how *the aversion to homosexuality*, the *functionality over form* and *the necessity of progression* discourses all construct and reinforce one another (Willig, 2008). In other words, in order to avoid the painful experience of being labelled "homosexual", men must engage in constant self-improvement specifically through DOING functional activities. In this case, Brutus refers to "exercise" as the functional activity that was required for him to perform his masculinity. Other participants, for example Tybalt and Duncan, emphasise the need to participate in sport to show their masculinity. This reflects the Butlerian concept of performativity in which an individual only comes into being by performing various actions. It is but through this performance that their bodies, sexualities and identities are constituted (Butler, 1990, 1993).

Finally, it can be argued that the aversion to homosexually appears to be its perceived link to femininity and not necessarily an objection to the homosexual orientation in itself. In other words, when individuals are differentiating themselves from homosexuality in order to reaffirm their position as heterosexual men, they may inadvertently be differentiating themselves from all notions of femininity in order to reinforce their sense of masculinity (Ducat, 2004). This really emphasises how closely interrelated constructions of sex, gender, sexuality and identity (Burr, 1995; Butler, 1990) are and the ways in which each isolated construction is used to support or undermine another.

Othello: *I SEE the looks that they give me and it really should and it really should put me down (p) NOW NOW when I go up to a guy like a heterosexual guy, like a REALLY heterosexual masculine identity guy and you know, uh when I go up to them uh (p) I TRY not to care (p) what they think, I feel like uh (p)*

Simóne: *What do you think that they think about you?*

Othello: *I feel like I feel like they think I'm FEMININE or I feel like they think I'm I'm and I have been accused many times of being gay.*

This participant uses the word "accused" to, again, stress the way in which being perceived as feminine, and in turn, homosexual, is seen as more than just objectionable, it is perceived to be "wrong" or immoral (Lovett & Jordan, 2005). This links back to many of the previous discourses which also have strong underlying moralistic discourses. Furthermore, this quote re-emphasises the shame and pain linked to these "emasculating" experiences. A further example in which homosexuality is rejected as a legitimate form of masculinity is presented below.

Cornelius: *Take a homosexual man for example (p) I PERSONALLY feel that they OVERCOMPENSATE in a way, they almost try to be TOO feminine. So if you take that perception of TOO feminine compared to a guy who is trying to be "metro" people will lose sight of the two, the difference between the two…For me there is a complete difference (p) like personally okay firstly (p) if you look at homosexuals for example, okay, (p) personally I feel okay fine, it's fine to be homosexual BUT DON'T do it in a way that somewhat feminise yourself. Okay because the PROPER definition of a homosexual is a MAN loving a MAN. Not uh (p) a MALE loving another MALE with a FEMALE perception. Okay? Do you get what I'm saying?... my friends alwa- and I always have this argument right,(p) if you take a, two gay – a gay couple right? And you have the one that's acting macho and the other that's acting feminine (p) why doesn't the macho guy just go and date a woman?*

Operating within this discourse, this participant provides a response that vehemently supports heteronormativity (Rosenfeld, 2009; Tadele, 2011) and, in addition, reinforces not only the idea that men and women are different, but that they should be different. Contrast to and disparity from the description of femininity is pivotal to the definition of a legitimate and

socially acceptable form of masculinity (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003). Since homosexual men are seen to be assuming the sexual role of women, they are no longer clearly differentiated from femininity. This is particularly emphasised by the words "they almost try to be TOO feminine" in the quote above. By constructing masculinity and femininity in such a definitive binary opposition, men and women's gender roles become concretely fixed and seemingly immovable (Burr, 1995). This, in turn, accentuates the experiences of shame and humiliation individuals, like Othello, are subject to when deviating from such a well-established and expected social norm.

To conclude, *the homosexual aversion* discourse can be summarised by a vibrant quote by Ducat (2004) who asserts that "many of the most vivid expressions of men's fears can be found in the colourful vernacular of everyday macho invective: sissy, bitch, pussy-whipped, mama's boy, wimp, girly-man, pansy. These terms of hyper-masculine derision attest to the narrow and rigid boundaries in which our prevailing notions of maleness are confined. Such words also tell us much about the shame that results from the failure to remain within these constricting borders" (p. 5). This quote, once again, draws attention to the oppressive effects of particular cultural ideals and the need to recognise and reveal the structures which prevent them from being challenged for more liberatory definitions (Burr, 1995).

5. CONCLUSION

"In this case masculinity [is] based on aggression rather than co-operation, dominance rather than equality, strength rather weakness, hardness rather than vulnerability, autonomy rather than dependence, and stoic endurance rather than emotionality. It exists in sharp contrast to, and contempt towards, things that are considered feminine. Thus the positive sense of self is not simply a cluster of personal qualities and abilities, but lies precisely in 'being a man': that is to say, in living out a socially approved idea of masculinity by enacting and displaying enough elements of that idea to receive the status and approval that comes with it".

(Collins, 2013, in press, p.7)

The analysis and discussion explored in the previous section provides a clear sense that masculinity has a fundamental role in shaping and defining male bodies. Furthermore, masculinity appears to be a fluid concept that is strongly influenced by, and constructed within (Connell, 1995; MacMullan, 2002), the context of mass media and social dynamics. In addition, it forms the basis from which individuals not only negotiate the choices and behaviours they engage in, but also the means by which they explain, or justify, these decisions and maintain a consistent and favourable sense of self. In addition, this identity also becomes the means by which they gain acceptance and approval from others (Bruce, 2007; de Botton, 2004).

To commence it would be useful to provide a short summary of the main analytic framework suggested in Chapter 4. It appears that all of the six discourses evident in the data are located within three overarching broader discourses. This includes two main competing, but ultimately closely interrelated, discourses and a third underlying discourse which appears to permeate all of the above. The two competing discourses are the humanist discourse which stresses authenticity (Corey, 2005; Rogers, 1967) and the consumer-culture-driven discourse (de Mooij, 2004; Dunne et al., 2006; Featherstone, 1991; Ricciardelli, 2011) which focuses on appearance as an expression of the self. These discourses ultimately conflict with one another because in order to achieve the "buff body ideal" created within the consumer-culture-driven discourse, one needs to relinquish, to a certain degree, the genuineness that is seen to be associated with being "true to one's self" posited by the humanist discourse. In other words, individuals are perceived to be "selling out" when trying to achieve body-

oriented social and cultural ideals, but at the same time, experiences of self-satisfaction, acceptance and status are all dependent on attaining these standards (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; de Botton, 2004). Most significantly, the third key discourse, which appears to be integrated into almost all of the discourses discussed, is the fear of femininity which facilitates the on-going active attempt to differentiate and distance legitimate forms of masculinity from all that is seen to be feminine (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003).

The natural body discourse draws on the consumerist discourse by forefronting the toned and muscular ideal by suggesting that, in order to be healthy internally, one must display this physical exterior. This discourse is supported by individualism and the meritocratic ideology which stresses personal responsibility for meeting social standards and attributes blame to the individual if they fail to attain these ideals (Callero, 2009; de Botton, 2004). This idea is reiterated in the *necessity of progression* discourse where continuous self-improvement and self-advancement are seen as essential aspects of the ideal man. *The body for others* discourse also supports these ideas by highlighting the role that other individuals play in reinforcing these cultural ideals. Once again, individualism constructs the social conditions necessary for such discourses to operate by espousing values of independence, competition and personal autonomy (Callero, 2009). The ideas of self-improvement and self-advancement are further reinforced by the notion that those who adhere to these practices are not only personally more disciplined and conscientious, but superior citizens as they are actively contributing to society's advancement through their personal productivity. In addition, they are more responsible social actors by preserving their health to lengthen and improve their benefits to society (Willig, 2008).

At the same time, however, the participants also utilised the *body for self* and *the body is secondary* discourses which are also strongly rooted within the larger humanist discourse about authenticity (Corey, 2005; Rogers, 1967). From this perspective, retaining one's true and genuine identity, despite societal pressures to adjust to the status quo, is viewed as essential. This discourse was also closely linked to *the natural body* discourse, in particular, *artificial intervention/cheating*. Authenticity, in this case, referred to more than just the way in which individuals are "supposed" to be, "naturally". It also refers to the ways in which participants behave or act. The practices that they engaged in are also an indication of genuine or inauthentic behaviour and, in turn, reflect on their personal sense of authenticity. This idea was further reinforced in *the body is secondary* discourse where the importance of

the body as a whole was minimised, as a focus on the body was seen to be shallow or superficial and in conflict with the construction of the authentic and real ideal individual. It is important to note that both these two key overarching discourses appear to have an underlying moralism which stresses that there is a definite contrast between what they consider to be "right" and "wrong" behaviours (Lovett & Jordan, 2005).

This division between "right" and "wrong" is echoed in the way in which a distinct dichotomy is created between male and female, men and women and, most importantly, masculinity and femininity (Rosenfeld, 2009). *Functionality over form, artificial intervention/cheating, the body is secondary* and *the homosexual aversion* discourses are all strongly influenced by the underlying fear of femininity discourse (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003). In the *functionality over form* discourse and *the artificial intervention/cheating* discourses, the aesthetic of the body is most strongly denied in order to differentiate the construction of the male, masculine body as markedly different from the feminine body. In these cases, the importance of the movement and effectiveness of men's bodies were accentuated and their physical attractiveness was subordinated. All body maintenance and body improvement practices were strongly justified using the "biological necessity" reasoning and the operational use of the body was stressed as more important than how it appeared physically.

Furthermore, *the body is secondary* discourse also reflects the fear of femininity discourse as it differentiates the ideal man, being real and "deep", from the generally conceited or narcissistic woman. In other words, it was seen as feminine to be concerned with the body at all, and hence construction of a legitimate form of masculinity involved denying the physical body to a certain extent. Finally, *the homosexual aversion* discourse clearly highlighted the fear and disgust men express toward all that is related to femininity, especially when it is seen to infiltrate masculinity (Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003; Volli, 2000). The significance of the body was reintroduced by exploring the ways in which the body comes to be an exhibition of "invisible" aspects of an individual's being, in particular, one's sexual orientation. This discourse revealed the extent to which heteronormativity (Rosenfeld, 2009; Tadele, 2011) has become engrained in South African norms and stressed the significance of this expectation. By closely associating homosexuality with femininity, the ideal man was constructed in vehement contrast to anything considered to be homosexual (Connell, 1995; Ducat, 2004; MacKinnon, 2003).

The discourses discussed all contribute to the establishment of a very narrow range of legitimate masculine identities and associated acceptable behaviours (Connell, 1995). More specifically, the forms of masculinity constructed by the participants were based on muscularity, emphasising naturalness and healthiness; authenticity, stressing self-confidence and character; achievement orientation, through superior functionality and competition; financial wealth, enabling material provision for others and consumerism for the self and finally; heterosexuality, with a focus on attracting and pleasing female romantic partners. The specificity of this ideal definition establishes and maintains a well-defined hierarchy of masculinity where those who do not attain and sustain such a version, are actively denigrated for being insufficiently "manly" (Connell, 1995; La Cecla, 2000).

5.1. Possible recommendations for future research

For future research, I would recommend that samples are selected with additional characteristics in the sample selection criteria, especially in terms of educational level and sexual orientation. Although this research was useful in uncovering majority discourses around muscularity and heterosexuality and perhaps personally empowering resistant discourses in terms of the compensatory factors such as intelligence, this sample consisted of mostly tertiary level students and had a strong heterosexual bias. Although in this case, the study aimed to explore the experiences and views evident amongst those who form part of the dominant ideology, or who hold relevant positions of power, in order to gain better insight into why and how it is being maintained, a study which focuses on less privileged groups would reveal silenced discourses that may have remained concealed in this study due to the participants selected.

5.2. Reflection

Since in qualitative research the "presence of the researcher in the research setting is unavoidable" (Holliday, 2002, p. 173) it is useful to benefit from their involvement and use it as a resource. This can be achieved through reflexivity. Reflexivity can be described as an on-going process whereby the researcher reflects or looks back on the research process. They then establish or comment on the ways in which their subject positions, as person and theorist, have influenced the ways in which the research has been conducted as well as the findings produced (Burr, 1995; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Willig, 2008). Reflexivity extends beyond merely acknowledging one's biases and includes drawing attention to ones values and

perceptions which both shape and are reciprocally cultivated by the research process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Willig, 2008). Consistent with social constructionism and Foucauldian discourse analytic approach, the researcher is viewed as authoring research and work and does not claim to discover or produce ultimate truth. All types of knowledge, and texts in particular, are constructed through discourses and, therefore, the written work developed by the researcher cannot be viewed or evaluated outside of discourse and discursive practices (Burr, 1995; Willig, 2008). It is therefore essential to be reflexive of the claims one makes when proposing knowledge and the subjective positions from which these claims are presented.

I was initially anxious when approaching this study due to my relative inexperience as a qualitative researcher. Although I had been exposed to many of the theories and methodologies I am using in my previous years of study, I had never practically applied them in the formal research setting. What started out as a considerable concern, became one of the most challenging and enjoyable aspects of my research journey as I appear to have taken pleasure in absorbing the seemingly new theory with fresh eyes and confronting the epistemological and ontological positions that I had held. The theory and perspectives I was exposed to during the course of this study influenced me personally and I found myself actively engaging with the concepts, especially around identity, subjectivity and gender. Through the readings of Butler (1990, 1993) and Burr (1995), in particular, I began to challenge my own perceptions of reality and, more specifically, found myself tracing my own gender and sexed identity constructions and actively challenging my socialisation through performativity. It was interesting to first engage in personal "self-deconstruction" before attempting to use discourse analysis to suggest ways in which my participants had been constructed and constituted by different discourses.

The theoretical grounding of this research as a whole was one which required a great deal of reflection. The emphasis on social constructionism, which focuses on the way in which individuals create meaning and determine notions of truth based on commonly held narratives predominant in a particular social, cultural and historical context (Gordon & Abbott, 2003; Weeks, 2003), forced me to challenge the well-entrenched and engrained concepts which we uncritically use in everyday life. This required a deconstruction of generally used terms, such as gender and identity, which are embedded with inherent connotations, and reconstructing them in an alternate more emancipatory manner (Gordon & Abbott, 2003).

Initially, I found myself grappling with some of the premises of the social constructionist theory. I found the idea that there is no objective reality or one real "truth" about the social world to be unsettling. People are required to make sense of the world and their surroundings and one of the ways in which they determine how to behave or gain an understanding of their existence is reliant on certain fixed "truths". The process of labelling and categorising people and behaviours creates a sense of stability and security; it provides a sheltered means of interacting with the environment. This, however, is directly challenged in social constructionism as it posits that all truth and all categories are socially constructed or created collectively by groups of individuals as they subjectively experience, perceive and interact with the world (Gordon & Abbott, 2003). Although, at first, this notion is uncomfortable as there is often no clear-cut definitive "answer" for social questions, it essentially is highly liberating if more constructive and uplifting alternative definitions and discourses are used (Frizelle, 2005; Gordon & Abbott, 2003).

Although I have always considered myself to be relatively liberal-minded, I find that my family is relatively conservative and these readings made me realise that I still held some of these conservative notions and encouraged me to challenge and reconsider my own position. This was particularly pertinent with regard to sex, sexuality and gender. The view which considers sex to be partly determined by biological and physiological factors, as it is our bodies that define the boundaries or potentialities of our experiences, but also highly influenced by the social, cultural and historical milieu as these contexts ultimately shape and mould both our desires and behaviours (Van der Walt, Bowman, Frank & Lange, 2007; Weeks, 2003) was interesting because it challenged the mainstream view that sex is merely biologically determined. The Butlerian view, however, was even more challenging. Butler (1993) views sex as entirely discursively constructed through performativity. In other words, we enact our sex in order to create the "appearance of bodily fixity" (Salih, 2002, p. 58). This means that as individuals we are not inherently male or female but rather interpellated or "hailed" into a particular sex at birth when the doctor declares the gender of the child. By recognising ourselves as the "hailed" subject and through the practices we engage in, we are continually constituting our own sex (Butler, 1993; Salih, 2002).

One of my most personally significant moments during the research occurred around the nature of identity and the process of identity formation. The fluid and dynamic view of identity formation we were presented with suggests that individuals are involved in a constant

and on-going process of constructing and reconstructing their identities in varying contexts (Frizelle, 2005; Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). It is also argued that it is possible for individuals to have multiple, fragmented selves which are weaved together and which can change over time (Frizelle, 2005). This idea really struck me as something very pertinent. It is refreshing to disband the notion that one has to find their single and stable identity and "purpose" which is fixed for the rest of their lives. It was particularly liberating as it created a sense of personal control and efficacy by redefining and normalising a healthy identity as one which is flexible and adaptable and able to create a sense of personal stability even within an environment of tremendous change and ambiguity (Frizelle, 2005). It encouraged me to look at myself and provided me with the opportunity to consider how I might reconstruct aspects of my identity to facilitate growth and expression without experiencing shame, fear or a sense of failure.

Furthermore, it is important to reflect on my position as a young, white and educated female individual. One of my greatest concerns when beginning this research was my ability to connect and identify with my participants who are all male. Although body-image and body dissatisfaction appears to be a problem that crosses nations and genders, expected reluctance on behalf of men to express their concerns and their anxieties, especially to a woman of similar age, made me question my ability to properly establish the necessary rapport and trusting environment where mutual sharing and honest communication could occur. I was particularly concerned about the males from different cultural and racial backgrounds as I feared that this additional difference in socio-demographic factors would further divorce me from their experiences and that my position would create a seemingly impenetrable wall of silence. Central to these concerns was the inevitable power relations that I expected to occur during the interview sessions. Although it has been argued that interviews are merely interactions that mimic ordinary everyday conversations it is simplistic to overlook that these interactions are never neutral, they are simulated and inherently biased in nature. In this case the power relations are of particular interest because in every interaction each participant would simultaneously hold a position of relative power (male/researcher) and subordination (female/participant). I feel, however, the importance lies in noting that all interactions involve power relations and instead of trying to eliminate difference, it is better to acknowledge and reflect on the ways in which these influenced the process.

Although initially recruiting participants proved to be a somewhat taxing task as many men were very reluctant to become involved in the research process at all, my experiences within the interviews were overall, surprisingly positive. There was a definite tendency for participants to initially display a "bravado-like" attitude, which is to be expected since most individuals are committed to maintaining a self-presentation that allows for positive social appraisal from others. As the interviews progressed, however, most of the participants seemed to become increasingly (although not necessarily easily or always entirely honestly) open and shared information about their insecurities and anxieties. It is important to note, however, that a great deal of this disclosure was often presented in a very nonchalant, matter-of-fact manner or justified or explained quite carefully. It could be suggested that this was a means by which men negotiated or balanced their perceived responsibility to be a reliable and helpful participant whilst simultaneously upholding a sense of "manliness". It was interesting to note that several participants mentioned how they would have been unable to express their experiences of body-dissatisfaction and feelings of inferiority had I not been a female and that their answers in general would have been considerably different. One participant expressed this by saying

> Othello: *I don't know if I would feel comfortable speaking to a MAN conducting this research… Not to say (p) I wouldn't speak to a man at all (p) I would just feel LESS comfortable sharing with him*

and another commented that:

> Cornelius: *… if I was being interviewed by a guy here now, I'm SURE that some of the answers I would be giving would be more what's it I'm trying to say (p) like trying to say things that you think would be more acceptable to him in a kind of sense... males want to hear ja okay I'm the macho man, you talk to me all the time about sport, we don't have intellectual conversations it's only sport soccer rugby drinking beer, ja.*

Language and culture proved to be less of an obstacle than I had expected as all the participants were fluent in English and I tried to specifically ask for explanations on any cultural jargons or idioms with which I was unfamiliar.

With some of the participants, the way in which they confronted the complex power dynamic is that they tried to control the interview situation by making their responses very curt and short and even by asking me questions in order to shift the focus away from themselves. In some instances, I found it particularly difficult to balance my dual positions of researcher and woman. On several occasions I found that the men made somewhat derogatory remarks about

women or were quite critical of women in general and I found it challenging to manage these situations. On the one hand, I felt I needed to support the participants' views in order to make them feel comfortable, to maintain an easy rapport and encourage further disclosure of information. On the other hand, as a woman myself, I felt defensive about their remarks and felt that from this subject position I should object to the comments or, at least, present an alternative view. It was also interesting to note that many of the men that considered themselves to be intellectuals or valued their educational level as integral to their sense of self, tended to make derisive comments, and even mock other men that they considered to be less scholar-orientated. Being well-educated and particularly academically inclined, I once again found myself implicitly agreeing with such attitudes. These direct conflicts made me feel very uncomfortable because, in most cases, my responses involved laughing or trivialising these comments which to me felt insincere, uncompassionate and feeble in that I allowed discriminatory attitudes around education-level and gender to be left unchallenged.

An important moment of insight during this study occurred just after the initial few interviews. I was highly concerned that I had "no data" or that the data I had obtained was lacking depth. I felt that the men that I had interviewed were not responding in the way that I had hoped. More specifically, I was concerned by the appeared "lack" of interest in the male body and I was worried that the seemingly sparse speech around bodies in general, would prove to be problematic in light of my aforementioned aims. After the initial data discussion session with my supervisor, however, it became clear that this supposed "lack" of interest was one of the core issues in this research study. By uncovering this insight, I was then able to identify the various processes which were underlying the spoken words, and to understand the importance of the things that were left unsaid (Burr, 1995; Willig, 2008). I became aware that what individuals consciously acknowledge when they speak or act is not the only factor to consider, and that a more pertinent deliberation involves examining the identity work carried out through the (often unintentional) use of particular words (Willig, 2008).

One of my biggest challenges, and most fulfilling discoveries, throughout the research process was centred around the issue of vulnerability. Although I had considered myself to have fully integrated feminist ideas of gender equality, and in particular, concur with the move toward men being more emotionally expressive and exposed, in practice I still experienced myself as holding particularly traditional views about emotional vulnerability as being shameful. Although I was delighted when the men shared their perceived inferiorities

with me, I still seemed to consider whether this was not something undesirable. This closely reflects bell hooks' commentary on the ways in which women reinforce patriarchal ideas of masculinity by subtly disapproving of sensitive men whilst ardently claiming that they wish that their male friends and partners would be more emotional. hooks (2004) claims that "women do not want to deal with male pain if it interferes with the satisfaction of female desire" (p. 6) and expresses how she personally "did not want [her] image of the strong man truly challenged by learning of his weaknesses and vulnerabilities" (p. 7). For me this was extended further by realising that I felt that all expressions of vulnerability, irrespective of gender, were signs of weakness and that I generally was reluctant to expose my own insecurities or anxieties for fear of being perceived as weak.

One example that stands out as especially pertinent was when one participant became emotional when describing his experiences with obesity. At first I was distressed and unnerved by the raw presentation of his experiences, stripped of all forms of protection, and automatically wanted to respond with pity. Yet his display of sincerity and adaptability made him appear far from "weak" and rather presented an alternative type of strength in the form of resilience and self-insight. His ability to feel, acknowledge and express his insecurities allowed him to have a very real and powerful connection with himself and this made me consider my dogmatic reluctance to avoid being vulnerable, and to mask my imperfections and where these ideas stem from personally. I was socialised to believe that the world was a competitive and hostile environment where any signs of incompetence, flagged by insecurity and vulnerability, were inevitably going to be pounced upon by rivals and used to undermine me. In order to maintain a favourable sense of self, I needed to not only present myself as constantly in control and unperturbed by any insecurity inducing stimuli, but also personally deny that these feelings of inadequacy existed at all. In other words, being supposedly flawless was the primary means to experiencing myself as a successful and adept individual, worthy of love and acceptance from others.

Most importantly, this process has allowed me to consider how this reluctance prevented me from experiencing myself in a truly authentic and fulfilling way. This is reflective of Brené Brown's work on vulnerability where she argues that if *"we want to live and love with our whole hearts, and if we want to engage with the world from a place of worthiness, we have to talk about the things that get in the way—especially shame, fear, and vulnerability (original emphasis) "* (p. 81). More specifically, as a researcher, she suggests that meaningful

experiences do not merely involve the production of knowledge and the maintenance of power but in addition require us to nurture our "tenderness and vulnerability" (p. 13). For Brown (2010) "[h]eroics is often about putting our life on the line [but] ordinary courage is about putting our *vulnerability* on the line" (p. 42). Through this experience I learnt that my fragility was not only key to my sense of supposed "feminine" beauty but also the source of my "lesbian phallus" strength. This is the term Butler (1990, 1993) uses to describe the way in which women, or any person without a penis, can have access to and wield power when the phallus is viewed as a symbol of but separate from the penis. Furthermore, Butler (1990, 1993) asserts that this need not be achieved by sacrificing a sense of femininity, as was theorised by Lacan (1958).

The study highlights how traditional differentiations of race, class and culture appear, to a certain degree, to become merged and hybridised within the 21st Century South African context. This milieu, with its globalised media and emerging consumer culture, seems to facilitate an interface of "macho" and "metro" masculinities. In other words, there appears to be a tension between traditional constructions of masculinities and the more contemporary globalised and consumerist representations of masculinities. As society becomes ever more focussed on the visual image, the male body, once solely viewed as functional, is now carrying increasingly more meaning in its physical appearance. This shift, which has placed increased emphasis on the aesthetics of the male body, has led to a perceived "threat" of "feminising" the male body which is, in turn, disavowed in the self-production of those very bodies.

Finally, I hope that, through the written thesis, this research may have a liberatory effect by providing new understandings of the ways in which young men manage these contradictions and by affording fresh insight into both the hegemonic and resistant discourses which frame these accounts of ideal masculine body-images, and furthermore, present a critical distance to the emerging subjects of this self and body construction.

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Discursive constructions of young South African men's ideal masculine body-images.

Interview Schedule:

I will begin by asking the interviewee to imagine the ideal male body and then ask various questions around these areas.

1.) Describe what this body looks like.
2.) Where do you find these ideas or images?
3.) Who is the man that you have described?
4.) What kind of a man is he?
5.) What sort of practices or behaviours is he associated with?
6.) How does he relate to how you think about yourself?
7.) What kind of a man are you?
8.) How would you describe your own body?
9.) What is your body used for?

<u>Appendix Two</u>

<u>Discursive constructions of young South African men's ideal masculine body-images.</u>

Dear Participant

I am conducting research for my Masters of Social Science Degree. This study seeks to explore young men's accounts of ideal masculine body-image and discuss the implications that these constructions have on their identities and self-image. You have been identified as a possible participant for the research as you fit the research selection criteria (young South African male between the ages of 18 and 25 from any socio-economic or cultural background).

This study aims to use a social constructionist perspective and discourse analytic method to challenge consumerist constructions of masculinity by exploring young male South African students' personal accounts of media depictions of ideal looking men, paying particular attention to the way in which young men construct their own bodies. In doing so, it aims to provide a comprehensive account of the ways in which young men explain and manage the conflicting notions of desirability they may encounter in their daily lives.

The data collection involves a single interview of approximately 45 minutes which will be audio-recorded and conducted in English. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Refusal to participate in the study, or withdrawal from the study, will involve no penalty or loss. All information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous. When working with the information provided, participants will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity is upheld. All collected data will be stored in a locked safe and will be destroyed via shredding of the interview transcripts after five years. Although no monetary or material compensation will be provided to individuals who participate, there is very little anticipated risk as the area of research does not delve into any traumatic experiences. The researcher and the supervisor will, however, be available to discuss any issues or concerns that you may have as they arise.

For any further information please feel free to contact the researcher or supervisor of the study. If you have any queries about the rights of research respondents please contact Ms. Phumelele Ximba in the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office. Please find all the relevant contact details below.

Kind regards,

_____
Simóne Plüg
208501780

<u>Contact Details:</u>

Dr. Anthony Collins	Ms. Phumelele Ximba	Miss Simóne Plüg
Supervisor: School of Psychology	Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office	Researcher
Tel: 031-2602539	Tel: 031-2603587	Cell: 0847219022
Collinsa@ukzn.ac.za	Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za	208501780@ukzn.ac.za

Declaration of Informed Consent

I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:

Discursive constructions of young South African men's ideal masculine body-images.

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent to take part in the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant:

_____
Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____
Signature   Date

Contact Details:

Dr. Anthony Collins	Ms. Phumelele Ximba	Miss Simóne Plüg
Supervisor: School of Psychology	Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office	Researcher
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18 June 2012

Ms Simóne Nikki Plüg (208501780)
School of Psychology

Dear Ms Plüg

Protocol reference number: HSS/0345/012M
Project title: The male body; another commodity: Constructions of young men's accounts of ideals of the masculine body-image

In response to your application dated 28 May 2012, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee
/ms

cc Supervisor: Dr Anthony Collins
cc Academic Leader: Professor JH Buitendach
cc Mr Praveen Rajbansi

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