A GENDERED STUDY OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE AMONG BOYS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES AT A TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

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DECLARATION

I Vijay Hamlall declare that :

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ABSTRACT

The study analyses instances of disagreement or conflict among boys at Sunville, a technical high school in Chatsworth, Durban. In many, cases these episodes escalated and became physically violent encounters. In other instances, they were resolved without any physical violence. Conflict developed in two phases which were not mutually exclusive. In the first phase a learner would give various forms of provocation (for example insults). The provocations gave rise to or expressed conflict but did not necessarily lead to violence. In cases where physical conflict emerged various causes were at work. These related to the way boys saw themselves in the school and the manner in which they constructed their masculine identities.

The major cause of fights (violence) was the hierarchal arrangement of masculinities in the school and the efforts used by boys to assert their power. Attempting to gain inclusion or hierarchical ascendancy led boys to jostle for position and this often led to physical violence. The competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity heightened the vulnerability of the boys. They responded to this vulnerability by forcibly and sometimes violently establishing their masculine credentials.

Heterosexual masculinities are organised and regulated to a large extent through trying to bolster fragile masculinities or avoid humiliation. Avoiding humiliation is reactive and defensive and bolstering fragile masculinities is aggressive and assertive. Boys try to bolster their own fragile masculinity by humiliating other boys and they can do this most effectively and easily by picking on boys who are vulnerable, those who are not part of the main gang (the peer group that is most influential in defining hegemonic masculinity). This masculine practice was at the core of bullying at Sunville and bolstered and perpetuated hegemonic masculinity in its assertive, intolerant, blustering and violent form. Boys frequently used vulgar and offensive language to humiliate other boys. They also behaved in ways that proved allegiance to their peer group, took revenge, and

involved themselves in acts of gambling to bolster their own masculinities. These actions often led to violence.

Boys who largely reject hegemonic masculinity may be forced defensively to protect their own masculine identities when they are subject to aggression (often by hegemonic masculine frontline troopers). This explains why some ordinarily peaceful boys at the school got involved in fights and physical scraps. While the school's hard boys were normally the aggressors they would also protect their own masculine identities (by reacting violently) if they felt vulnerable.

This study looks at gender relationships, with a focus on how conflict and violence feature in the construction of masculinities. Two issues are important: a) how do conflict and violence contribute to the makings of specific masculinities and b) how do existing masculinities legitimate and delegitimate the enactment of conflict and violence. This study therefore examines, on the one hand, mechanisms by which conflict is mediated or resolved and, on the other, the processes by which conflict and disagreement escalate into violence. While there were high levels of tension at Sunville, not all conflict situations led to violence. Some conflict situations had peaceful resolutions. This study examines the specific circumstances that gave rise to these outcomes. In short, this study examines how conflict occurred among boys, how boys handled this conflict (violently or non-violently) and how masculinities were implicated in handling conflict.

What was common in all the incidents of conflict and violence was that boys projected certain images of themselves and sought to live up to certain versions of what it is to be a man. I argue in this thesis that the form of masculinity that boys subscribe to influences the manner in which they deal with provocation and conflict. The escalation or peaceful resolution of conflict depends largely on whether a boy subscribes to or rejects the values of the hegemonic masculinity that exist at Sunville, which include heterosexuality, toughness, authority, competitiveness, maintaining peer group prestige and the subordination of other boys. Those boys who subscribed to the hegemonic values of

masculinity at Sunville in most instances were bound by its values to resolve conflict aggressively.

Some boys had an allegiance to particular constructions of masculinity which are at variance with the school's hegemony and this made it more likely that they would choose peace over violence in conflict situations. Their practices in handling conflict separated these boys from the hegemonic way of resolving conflict, which was to use force, aggression and violence. In those cases where the conflict was defused, different, alternative, non-confrontational understandings of masculinity were salient.

The values which they asserted included respect, being able to exercise restraint, and being independent, strong willed and individualistic in their thinking and actions. I have identified the modus operandi of this group of boys as being autonomous. These boys took up autonomous positions in situations of conflict that did not support the hegemonic imperative at Sunville to escalate conflict into violence. I have chosen the term autonomous masculinity to describe that masculinity that is performed at a particular moment of conflict, at which moment particular non-hegemonic masculinity (in terms of the school's masculinity) is drawn upon to avoid conflict.

Masculinity is itself a contradictory gendered phenomenon and it is possible, and indeed quite common, for contradictory positions to exist side by side and indeed to be occupied simultaneously by boys. It is unlikely that boys will choose non-violence in every situation. Individuals occupy multiple positions and therefore have a range of identities with different ones acquiring significance in different contexts. Boys take up different positions in different contexts; identities are multiple and fluid. In dealing with conflict at Sunville there are hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions that boys can inhabit and some boys inhabit one more than the other because they embrace particular masculine positions.

The study was undertaken using a qualitative methodology. I undertook research by observing cases of provocation, actual instances of conflict and the manner in which

conflict was defused or amplified into violence. My methods included observation and observation in class, around the school and during leisure activities, regular recorded informal discussions and formal interviews.

I identified 10 boys to be the main respondents in this study. All the boys were in grade 10 (and were aged between fifteen and seventeen) when I began the research process. I conducted research with these boys for three years, gathering data on an ongoing basis. In the course of the research I used a snowballing technique to draw in further respondents.

This study focuses on the uncritical conflation of conflict and violence in the existing literature on masculinities in schools. Conflict and violence are separate parts of a single process. The one does not automatically lead to the other, therefore this requires that we exercise caution when describing violent masculinities. Too often, in the desire to explain patriarchal violence, researchers have lumped aggression together with violence. In this study I witnessed aggression but show that it did not necessarily lead to violence.

Connell (1989) has noted that schools are major sites for the making of masculinities. She argues that schools have particular patterns of gender relations (she terms this the gender regime) which impact on and are played out in the lives of boys. Conversely, male learners themselves contribute to the gender regime of the school. While each school may have one form of masculinity which is dominant and which prescribes the ideal form that masculine behaviour should take, there are always other masculinities present within a school. These may be marginal. They may be silenced or complicit or may challenge the dominant, hegemonic masculine form. This study contributes to debates about school masculinities in the context of conflict and violence.

The study concludes that while there is a clear identifiable link between modes of the dominant masculinity and violence, there are other versions of masculinity that are being performed within the school that are democratic, peaceful and respectful. I propose that schools should be mindful and support these other versions of masculinity in order to reduce violence among boys in school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people helped me through my journey in completing this thesis. I wish to acknowledge these special people who have contributed to making the completion of this thesis a reality.

A very special thank you to the boys who participated in my research. I am grateful to you for speaking openly and candidly about your experiences of conflict and violence at your school. Your participation has not only made my study possible but your rich descriptions and stories have provided wonderful insights into how and why violence occurs at school.

A very big thank you to the principal for allowing me to conduct research at the school, and to the teachers for taking time out of their busy days to speak to me.

I am grateful to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for granting me permission to conduct research work in the school.

To my supervisor Professor Robert Morrell, I wish to extent my sincere thanks for your mentoring over the years, for expert guidance, insight and encouragement throughout the thesis and most of all for your unwavering support, patience and understanding. You have been my pillar of strength.

To my wife Daisy, for love and invaluable support through the challenges I faced in completing this study.

To the PhD gender research cohort, thank you for critiquing my work and sharing ideas and offering suggestions to improve the quality of this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study examines conflict, violence and masculinity in a technical school in Durban where I am currently a teacher. For the purposes of this study I use the pseudonym Sunville for the actual name of the school. In the last few years I have become interested in issues of gender and particularly in the twin features of violence and masculinity. Concern has been expressed in South Africa and elsewhere in the world about the problem of violence generally, but violence in schools in particular, and it has, in recent years, become a focal point of policy and media attention.

The focus of this study is interpersonal conflict and violence. While the definition of violence can be approached from many perspectives, this study adopts the definition of interpersonal violence advanced by Hearn (1998) where he argues that interpersonal violence refers to direct physical violence from one person to another in an identifiable situation. While violence is the major focus of the thesis, another key concept is that of conflict. Conflict is a state of disagreement which may lead to violence though does not necessarily do so. Conflict arises out of perceived divergences of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Rubin et.al, 1994). My particular focus in this thesis will be on how conflict occurs, how it is handled by those involved and how, in some instances, it escalates into physical violence, while on other occasions it is defused.

This study is primarily concerned with interpersonal conflict – situations that arise between individuals or groups of individuals (Folberg and Taylor, 1984). I investigate actual instances where conflict becomes violent and instances when it does not. I look at conflict in two phases which are not mutually exclusive. In the first phase I analyse the various kinds of provocations that produce conflict. Provocation is seen as an act of doing something to prompt a response or a physical retaliation. I describe the various kinds of

provocations that give rise to or express conflict but do not necessarily lead to violence. I then proceed to investigate what causes conflict to escalate into violence (or to be resolved peacefully) and identify the way in which escalation occurs (which is the second phase of the conflict situation). Later in this chapter I outline how these concepts are used in the context of this study. This focus is not only important for policy work and for teachers in schools who are confronted by violence. It is also important for the broader area of masculinity studies and it offers an optimistic view of the possibilities of reducing violence in schools.

There now exists a vast amount of international literature on various aspects of masculinity. Some of this literature will be reviewed in the next chapter. As a means of explaining/exploring configurations of masculinity in conflict situations this study adopts a social practice approach, more especially that offered by Connell (1987, 1989, 1995, 2000). Connell (1995) acknowledges that while there are many modes of masculinity, it is possible to identify certain configurations of masculinity on the basis of general social, cultural and institutional patterns of power and meaning, and to discern how they are constructed in relation to each other. Following Connell, these masculinities are identified as hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginal. However, it would be naïve to assume that boys' behaviour in conflict situations will fit neatly into these conceptualisations of masculinity. I will however be engaging with the literature and while the Connell framework does not neatly fit my work I use her framework as a launching pad in this study.

This project is particularly informed by the school-based literature which focuses on gender and violence. It has long been recognised that in order to understand (and combat) school-based violence it is necessary to understand masculinity and to work with boys. This project takes these two points as its starting position. While numerous international school-based studies of masculinities exist, only a few have been done in South Africa and none have been done amongst 'black' youth in a Technical school.

The Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) that was established in 1996 by the Education Ministry to study the gender state of education in South Africa drew attention to the very limited research into gender and schooling in South Africa and also noted the alarming extent of violence in schools (Department of Education, 1997). This violence receives a lot of media attention but research into violence remains under-developed. This thesis examines the relationship of masculinity to violence in the setting of a single school and in this way begins to fill the existing research lacunae.

The focus of this study is on relationships between learners, with a particular focus on how boys relate to and interact with one another. The study is located within an analysis of the gender regime of the school but attention is primarily given to the dynamics of disagreement or conflict. In dissecting how instances of conflict are enacted, I pay special attention to how constructions of masculinity both influence these dynamics and are themselves expressed and at play in these moments. Two issues are important here: a) how does conflict and violence contribute to the makings of specific masculinities and b) how does existing masculinities legitimate and delegitimate the enactment of conflict and violence. While I have indicated these issues as separate from one another, they are clearly inter-twined and 'happen' at the same time. The disaggregation here is purely for analytical purposes. This study therefore examines, on the one hand, mechanisms by which conflict was mediated or resolved and, on the other, the processes by which conflict and disagreement escalated into violence. While there were high levels of tension, friction and disagreement at this school, not all conflict situations resulted in violence. Some were peacefully resolved. This study examines the specific circumstances that gave rise to these outcomes. In other words, how conflict occurred among boys, how boys handled this conflict (violently or non-violently) and how masculinities were implicated in handling conflict.

This study focuses on conflict and violence among boys only. During my fifteen years at this school I had not heard of nor personally witnessed any violence between boys and girls. Although conflict did exist among girls at this school it seldom escalated into violence. However girls played a significant role in fuelling conflict between the boys.

There were often arguments and scuffles among the boys over girls at school. Girls were influential in the manner in which masculinities were constructed, regulated, maintained and contested in schools (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Frosh et.al, 2002). Different masculinities are constituted in relation to femininities through the structure of gender relations (Connell, 1987).

This study goes beyond the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator (Morrell, 2001). Everybody has the capacity for violence and has probably been violent to other people at some time in their lives. This study examines how boys themselves understand and explain violent behaviour in a context in which I had either heard about their explanations second-hand or had witnessed them personally. The global masculinities in school literature (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Sewell, 1997; Skelton, 2001; Martino, 1999; Frosh et.al, 2002; Reay, 2002) which focuses on boy-specific research that examines the intricacies of the methods boys use to construct gender identities was helpful in providing insight that was relevant to this study.

Every institution has a culturally authoritative form of masculinity and so too at Sunville there is a hegemonic form of masculinity. It is one that renders hyper-heterosexual behaviour as the norm and works with a gender hierarchy that places boys above and superior to girls. However, it does not automatically follow that all boys accept or aspire to meet the institution's norms for masculine behaviour.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

1.2.1 Autobiography of the Author

I was born in Chatsworth, the third of four children of an Indian[1] family. My parents owned a house in Unit 3A, Chatsworth (the third of eleven neighbourhood units)[2]. My father worked as a clerk and my mother was a stay-at-home mum and wife. Religion had a serious place in our lives. My mother and father are staunch Hindus and instilled the

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[1] The first group of Indian indentured immigrants arrived in South Africa in 1860. They were 20th century second class citizens, located primarily in KZN and divided between Hindu, Muslim and Christian.
[2] Chatsworth was built to accommodate the forced relocation of Indians according to the Group Areas Act of 1950. It consisted of eleven loosely structured neighbourhood units.

Hindu religion, values and culture in us. I still continue to go regularly to the temple and celebrate all the Hindu festivals and prayer days.

I attended a primary school that was situated on the same road that we lived in. Most of the learners that attended this school lived in Unit 3, so attending primary school was not much of a change for me since most of the children at school had similar lifestyles and values to me. My secondary schooling experience, however, was quite different.

For some reason my parents chose to send me to a secondary school which was situated in the heart of one of the poorer areas of Chatsworth. The school was surrounded by municipal flats which were occupied mainly by unemployed people and people who depended on social grants. This neighbourhood was called Westcliff but was informally known as 'Bangladesh'. I am not exactly sure why it was called 'Bangladesh' but I would assume that it was because of its similarities to The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, that has a rich Indian culture, tradition and religion but was, at that time, one of the poorest countries in the world. Westcliff was extremely overcrowded, populated by the poorer people of Chatsworth and there were social problems like drugs and alcohol abuse. Most of the boys who attended this school lived in 'Bangladesh'. They were ill-mannered, used vulgar language readily and did not strive for academic success. Many of the boys smoked 'dagga' (marijuana) and drank alcohol.

It was here that I consciously began to develop my own masculinity. Throughout my school years my parents stressed the need for me to be well educated and to excel in an academic field of study. I always tried my best to follow my parents' advice. While I did not join the other boys in their escapades of drinking and smoking, I spent a lot of time with these boys (in and out of school) and befriended many of them. I became part of their peer group. My relationship and experiences with them helped me to better understand the boys in this study.

The boys at my high school were proud to be Indian and often used the expression "Char ous are for real", (meaning Indian males are 'cool', exciting and classy).

I completed high school with a matric exemption and registered at Springfield College of Education to study towards a teacher's degree, which I completed with distinction. After a short teaching stint in Ladysmith I was transferred to Sunville Secondary. I met my wife at Sunville and we were married in the year 1993. We have two children, a girl (14 years old) and a boy (five years old). I am passionate about the sea and spend a lot of my spare time fishing. I subscribe to some of the philosophies of Ghandi, especially those of non-violence, and believe that strength comes from righteousness and not force. My Hindu religion also teaches that victory comes from moral courage and not imposed submission.

While at Sunville, I enrolled at UKZN and completed a B.Ed. Hons degree cum laude. I met Professor Robert Morrell at an orientation for M.Ed students at UKZN, and was inspired by his presentation on masculinities and schooling. I decided to study this phenomenon in my M.Ed dissertation in 2003 (Hamlall, 2003). My research revealed that the 'hard man' image of masculinity occupied a high status among the boys at Sunville. This 'hard man' image centred on violence, aggression and competitiveness, which often involved constant confrontations and challenges between the boys. The style of the confrontations often resulted in actions or behaviour where boys felt they had to 'prove' themselves as competent fighters.

While I completed my M.Ed. cum laude, I still had a number of unanswered questions about learner behaviour. These included: what were the origins of unruly male behaviour, what form did violence take in the school and what was the place of race, class and family background in the prevalence of school violence? My interest in these questions prompted me to offer myself for the role of Teacher Liaison Officer at Sunville. In this position I have been able to witness first hand how boys engage in and explain to themselves and others why violence comes about. But I have also been aware that not all disagreement and conflict escalates into violence. I developed insights in the area of masculinity, violence and schooling not only from postgraduate studies where I explored

feminist theories about gender and violence but also from my own experiences as an Indian male living, studying and working in Chatsworth.

I am currently the head of the Computer Science and Mathematics department at Sunville. I am a loyal servant to the school and the Education Department. Some of the many duties that I perform at school include timetabling, controlling exams and governance work with the school governing body, but the most rewarding for me is holding the position of Master Teacher Liaison Officer for the Education Department, which involves training other Teacher Liaison Officers to understand the importance of getting to know learners better and to consider the importance of gender when dealing with learner issues, especially those of conflict and violence.

This research study therefore addresses masculinities as everyday practices in which boys are engaged in order to understand how conflicts convert into violence. While I use the school as a basis for this study, I am mindful of the location and surrounding context of this site. Masculinities are not developed in isolation and the socio-economic environment and cultural milieu of the surrounding areas are reflected in the construction of school masculinities. Most of the subjects of my proposed study reside in the Chatsworth community.

1.3 The Suburb of Chatsworth

1.3.1 History

In 1843 Natal became a British Crown Colony ruled from the Cape and by 1856 it was a separate colony with a partly elected legislature. Virgin Natal offered tremendous opportunities to European farmers but they faced an acute shortage of labour since the African people were unwilling to work on European farms. There arose therefore, a demand for indentured labourers from India. The Natal Coolie Law, Law 14 of 1859 was passed which allowed immigrants from India to be imported into Natal. The first batch of indentured labourers arrived in Durban on 16th November 1860. There were 342 people including 75 women and 83 children, mainly South Indian Hindus with a sprinkling of

Christians and Muslims. Ten days later another shipload of Indians from Calcutta disembarked with 351 passengers including 61 women and 83 children from South and East of India (Pahad, 1972). Between 1860 and 1866 twenty shiploads of Indians arrived in Natal with a total of 6445 passengers and by 1911 a further 364 ships had sailed to Natal with approximately 146 000 new settlers from India (Henning, 1993).

At the end of the first five years, Indians (including the minors in the family) received a certificate of discharge which meant that they were free to work in the free labour market at the highest possible wage. Under section 51, Law 2 of 1870 they were entitled to a free passage to India. They were given grants of land in lieu of a return passage to India. Many Indians settled in Natal and became small farmers or entered various occupations like traders, gardeners and fishermen. In this way the social status of Indians improved considerably and the Indian population started to increase (Munsamy, 2004).

In the 1940s the Pegging Acts and the Ghetto Act were passed. These acts gave the government the right to remove and destroy shacks and small self-made shelters with the intention of improving sanitary conditions. Following the general election of 1948, the National Party put in place a programme of Apartheid by expanding existing policies and formulating new ones into a system of institutionalised racism and white domination. Apartheid legislation classified inhabitants into racial groups (black, white, coloured and Indian). This led to the formulation of the Group Areas Act No. 41 of June 1950. Chatsworth came into being as a result of this Act, which was passed in order to implement the new National Party's apartheid policy of racial segregation. The act forced a large number of Indian and coloured neighbourhoods to move into newly designated and created townships. Generally these people were removed from 'white' areas close to the city centre. Chatsworth was established south of Durban and some distance (26 kilometres) from the city centre. Tens of thousands of Indians were forced to give up their lives in the areas they called home and were packed off to the outer reaches of Durban (Desai, 2000).

Chatsworth was deliberately built to act as a buffer between white residential areas and the large African township of Umlazi. It officially opened in 1964 and consisted of eleven neighbourhood units. Modern-day Chatsworth has 64 suburbs that fall within its region.

1.3.2 Current Situation

Chatsworth lies 26 km to the south of Durban and covers 2000 hectares. Up to 1980, 22000 houses, designed to accommodate 160 000 people, had been built in Chatsworth (Department of Town Planning, 1999). According to the 1996 Census, Chatsworth had a population of 177 165 people. However Desai (2000) argues that Chatsworth currently houses about three hundred thousand people. Initially the population was exclusively Indian but, particularly since the end of apartheid in 1994, the area has become racially mixed with many Africans moving into the area. The abolishment of the Group Areas Act in 1991 permitted and encouraged an increasing number of African and coloured people to move into Chatsworth. The new African residents are mostly concentrated in informal settlements that have mushroomed in vacant and unused spaces in Chatsworth. The township is now severely overcrowded but it nevertheless remains predominantly Indian in terms of its demography and character.

1.3.3 Social Context

Chatsworth started off as a low-income area and although people in some areas have become more economically affluent, it remains primarily a working class society with working class ethics. There is an attachment to labour/work among the people of Chatsworth where there exits a mentality of an unofficial and informal preparation for the world of work. The worker is likely to acquire family, home and financial commitments. For most people there is an apparent willing acceptance of restricted opportunities. The community makes the best of the difficult and demanding conditions that confronts them. For example, many of the homeowners have built granny flats on their already small properties and sub-let them to supplement income. This not only reduces living space, but also adds to the overcrowding and social ills in Chatsworth.

This is however a simplification of working class ethics and it is important to realize that culture is not static or composed of a set of invariant categories which can read off at the same level in any kind of society. There are always alternative outcomes in cultural reproduction (Willis, 1977).

Chatsworth has recently been analysed by the sociologist Ashwin Desai (2000), who reveals the extent of the area's social distress. A major contributor to this social distress is the abuse of drugs. The following newspaper report highlights the drug problem in Chatsworth:

> *Sam Pillay (chairman of the anti-drug forum in Chatsworth) says that the problem is so bad that people queue at drug dealers' homes in the mornings to buy drugs. Logan Naidoo (president of the Chatsworth Child and Family Welfare Society) said that the scourge of drugs has far reaching effects like prostitution and theft to support their habit. Logan Chetty, chairman of the Chatsworth Community Policing Forum, said as far as the policing sector was concerned drugs were a major problem; addicts are prepared to do anything to support their habit. (Tribune Herald, March 8, 2009).*

Social distress among the youth is also very evident in Chatsworth. Many of them frequent the growing number of nightclubs in Chatsworth. These clubs are often overcrowded and there is little control over what goes on in them. Alcohol and drugs are readily available to youth at many of these nightclubs and there are frequent reports of violence and even killings that take place inside and outside them. The 'Throb' incident is an example, where thirteen teenagers were killed in a stampede in a local nightclub after someone ignited teargas canisters inside the club. The youth also spend a lot of their leisure time at shopping centers and malls in Chatsworth where they often visit 'sports bars' to consume alcohol. There are numerous Tattersalls (totes) and gambling houses in Chatsworth where many of the youth also spend their leisure time.

Desai (2000) highlights social distress that accompanies poverty and unemployment in Chatsworth. Housing evictions of 'unwanted' residents and the disconnection of water

and electricity utilities plague those who cannot afford them due to the high unemployment rate. The unemployment rate in Chatsworth is over 50%. Historically a large number of men and women in Chatsworth found work in clothing and textiles industries. As these industries started to shed labour, it was the men who went first. Many men became reliant on their wives' wages (Desai, 2000). Desai (2000) shows that many families are suffering severe marital discord. Many women have opted to be single mothers, often ostracized by the family and the community, rather than put up with abuse and exploitation by their male partners. According to Desai (2000) many women in Chatsworth suffer sexual violence quite regularly, either from fathers, elder siblings, lovers or rivals. Single parent families are common in Chatsworth. The crime rate has also grown to alarming proportions.

The economic and social distress of the youth, draws them into gangsterism. According to Huff (1992) needy youth are at greatest risk of gang involvement. It is difficult to convince the youth that there are options beyond unemployment. As a result, alcohol and drug abuse has escalated to alarming proportions. Shebeens (taverns), where violent masculinities are often enacted, have subsequently become lucrative sources of income and are frequented by boys and men.

Violence in this community has become normalised as many of the people have become desensitised to violence and often use violence to settle disputes. The Chatsworth police are very slow to respond to incidents of violence and are often involved in intimidation and violence themselves. There are many accusations of bribery and corruption against them. According to a newspaper report in the *Tribune Herald* (May 24, 2009) some officers of the Bayview police station in Chatsworth have been involved in cash heists (armed robberies) involving millions of rands and high ranking police officers have not infrequently accepted bribes. Another example of police involvement in crime is the SBV heist where an amount in excess of 31 million rands was stolen. In August 1996 the biggest cash robbery in South Africa took place where the Standard, Barclays and Volskas (SBV) banks cash deposits were stolen. Three Chatsworth policemen were found

guilty on charges of robbery with aggravating circumstances. Only five million rand of the stolen money was recovered.

Chatsworth has a rich and diverse culture and tradition and a number of landmarks highlight this. One of the attractions of Chatsworth is the impressive marble Hare Krishna Temple of Understanding. The temple is lotus shaped and features geometric designs, gold coated windows, spectacular chandeliers and is surrounded by a moat. Another attraction is the Chatsworth Centre. This mall attracts over 1.3 million shoppers per month and is argued to be the busiest mall in the southern hemisphere. Access to the Chatsworth Centre is via the Higginson Highway which is the only highway that leads into and out of Chatsworth. This highway is steeped with controversy myth and superstition. It is said to be haunted by a ghost known as 'Highway Sheila'. Many claim to be accosted by this female ghost that roams the highway at night. The highway is extremely congested and the accident and road death rates are very high. On Fridays and Saturdays people flock to the Bangladesh Market which attracts people from in and out of Chatsworth. This is an informal market where one can buy anything from nappies to fresh produce, poultry, meat, fish, compact disks, clothes and the like. Many of the items on sale are, however, counterfeit.

It is against this backdrop that I conducted my research into conflict and violence and its relation to the construction of different masculinities in a specific school setting.

In the next section I introduce the school as a research site. I discuss the social context of the school and explore political, socio-economic and demographic factors that inform relationships within the school.

1.4 The School Context

In this thesis I use the pseudonym Sunville Technical to refer to the school at which the research for this study was conducted. I chose Sunville Technical, which is situated in Chatsworth, as a research site because I am both very familiar with the school and have

ready access to it. I have been teaching at this school for 11 years as a level one teacher. In 2005 I was promoted to head of the Mathematics and Science department at the same school.

Sunville was established in 1969 and was and remains a coeducational school with a large majority of boys. Under apartheid, it took only Indian learners but since the early 1990s it has become multiracial although there are no white learners attending the school. Initially it offered a purely academic curriculum. However, with the political transition in 1994, there was an increased emphasis on offering technical and vocational training to all learners of all races. Skills training was regarded as being important in order to prepare learners for the world of work and self-employment. Since Chatsworth did not have a technical school, in 1995 Sunville was chosen to be transformed into a technical school.

Enrolment at this school has been steadily decreasing mainly because of its reputation of having violent, unruly and ill-disciplined learners. When I started this research in 2005 the learner population of 1238 was as follows: 1001 boys and 237 girls, of whom 218 are African learners (152 boys; 66 girls), 97 coloured (65 boys; 32 girls) and 923 Indians (784 boys; 139 girls). The current learner population is 884, of which 568 are boys and 316 girls. There are 270 African learners (150 boys; 120 girls), 26 coloured (19 boys; 7 girls) and 588 Indians (399 boys; 189 girls). While it is clear that the learner population is dropping the boys outnumber the girls among all the races. However the number of African learners enrolling at this school is steadily increasing.

Most of the teachers are male. The staff consists of 36 teachers, of which 34 are Indian and two are African. There are 22 male teachers including the principal and 14 female teachers. While women dominate the teaching fraternity in KwaZulu-Natal, men dominate the teaching of technical subjects at Sunville. The anomaly exists because the nature of the curriculum offered at Sunville involves design and technology. Research conducted on design and technology in five secondary schools in London reveals that these subjects have an association with physical skills and the body and are still under the influence of deeply gendered histories as being masculine subjects (Paechter, 1998).

According to Younger and Warrington "It has long been established that certain subjects are regarded as girls' subjects and other subjects as boys' subjects" (Younger and Warrington, 1996: 309) and this is indicated at Sunville by the large number of boys aligning to the trade subjects.

The Sunville curriculum provides boys with skills suited to blue-collar work and this orientation results in the school attracting a particular type of boy. The general perception in this community is that boys who cannot fit into other schools and boys who have academic and behavioural problems should attend Sunville. Boys who fit this description are generally from the lower-income groups and from the African population of Chatsworth who reside in the informal settlements. This resonates with Cockburn's (1991) findings from a study of men in the newspaper industry in London. She differentiated between the 'comps' (skilled craftsmen) and the 'nats' (labourers). She found that within the working class the craftsmen differentiate themselves from the less-skilled in terms of race, religion and social standing in the community. There is a clear distinction between labourers and craftsmen: "association with lower ranks brings you down to their level". The men say "Mother nature did not make us equal" (p130). There is a recognition of inborn natural superiority among the craftsmen while the labourers fit into the menial jobs without much resistance.

The technical subjects that are on offer at Sunville include Electrical, Mechanical and Civil Technology. Subjects like Hotel and Catering, Hair Care and Cosmetology are mainly considered as catering for girls' careers. According to the admissions register of 2008 there were 12 girls taking the technical courses of which four were doing Electrical Technology, seven doing Mechanical Technology and one doing Civil Technology. This shows that the technical subjects are mainly the domain of the boys.

I joined the staff of Sunville Technical in 1991 as one of a number of teachers 'hand picked' by the Education Department to deliver the specialised curriculum that was going to be offered to learners. I was selected to teach Computer Studies. At the time huge

interest was shown by the Education Department, NGOs and other education role players in technical and vocational education.

The stated goal of good final exam results was, I soon realised, compromised by the culture and climate of the school. Most of the boys had established a reputation of being unruly and ill-disciplined. Behaviour was dominated by nefarious activities especially amongst the boys. Staff-room stories about them were legion. Verbal harassment, threats, bullying and violence are part of daily life for learners at Sunville.

Violence is prevalent in the lives of boys at Sunville. In some instances it is sufficiently severe to result in physical injury or damage. I do not have absolute figures on the incidents of violence at this school. Exact figures of crime and violence are almost impossible to obtain but in recent years violence among learners has increased. My study however, is not a survey to quantify violence in school, rather its intention is to explore how conflict comes about and how it either escalates (into violence) or is resolved.

The gender regime of the school which I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter four celebrates a tough and rough masculinity with an emphasis on heterosexuality. Intimidation, bullying and violence are often used by the boys to produce and reproduce the dominant masculinity at this school. The argument made by Connell (1987) that within the gender order groups are related to one another in terms of power hierarchies, is very evident at Sunville. Boys who do not conform to, threaten or challenge, hegemonic notions of masculinity at this school are not only disadvantaged, but are also at risk of physical violence.

1.5 Current Measures to Deal with Violence at Sunville

Efforts to tackle violence at Sunville currently depend heavily on policing and imposing sanctions on perpetrators. Learners are often searched without notice or warning. Learners who do not comply with school times and leave regulations are locked out. The school is fully walled, since fences that were erected were constantly destroyed by

vandals and by learners looking for alternate routes in and out of the school during school hours. There are security gates and a very heavy presence of security guards.

Benedek (in Fitzclarence, 1995) explains that the approach of some schools to violence is that learners are seen as defiant. The problem child is seen as the wild creature in need of taming in order to produce a functional citizen rather than an opportunity to search for a better understanding of the general social factors involved in violent behaviour. This approach sees social violence as a lack of adequate social control and discipline and gears policy development to micro level control measures.

Sunville Technical adopts a similar approach to offenders. Defiant, disruptive or violent behaviour is dealt with by suspending the learner, normally for one week. There are no structures in school for guidance, counseling or pastoral care. Many teachers have surrendered to believing that the situation is hopeless.

The Education Department has policies in place to protect learners and teachers like the South African Schools Act No.27 of 1996 which states that every governing body must adopt a code of conduct for learners and outlines procedures for suspension and expulsion (Department of Education, 1996). Sunville has a very well constructed code of conduct that is followed strictly to maintain order at the school.

However, policies alone cannot solve the problem of violence in schools. Without understanding masculinities little headway can be made in this area. The current measures to deal with violence lack focus on masculinities (and gender more broadly) and those that do, see boys as potential criminals. Violent behaviour is handled by imposing heavy sanctions on the perpetrators and ignoring the role of emotions in the lives of adolescents. Therefore these policies fail to combat violence in schools and in fact, as I shall show in Chapter four, become complicit in producing violence.

I have endeavored in this introductory chapter, to explain the focus of this study. I have also attempted to describe the setting in which this research is conducted and clarify the purpose and motivation of this study.

1.6 Contribution of this Study

This study will address what has been, up until now, a neglected area of study – the links between and processes that link conflict and violence. Conflict and violence are treated as separate phenomena. In many cases conflict, which is understood to be a dispute or disagreement, escalates into violence and in other cases it does not. Conflict and violence are also considered from a gendered perspective. This means that the form of both conflict and violence is considered to be shaped by gender factors which will here be understood to be socially constructed, performative and meaning-making. Gender relations are present in all types of institutions. For example in a school, among both students and staff, there are practices that construct various forms of femininity and masculinity: sport, dancing, choice of subject, classroom discipline, administration and others (Connell, 1987). Gender is an active construction (Connell, 1996). Connell asserts that masculinities come into existence as people act. Thus agency accompanies the construction of masculinity. She suggests that boys freely choose between masculinities, but one must remember that institutions and other factors restrict their choices.

It is a widely held understanding in contemporary culture that violence primarily is associated with men and that women are the targets of men's violence (Messner, 1997). This means that violence is gendered by socio-cultural and historical discourses. Too often, in the desire to explain patriarchal violence, researchers have lumped aggression together with violence. In this study I will describe instances where I witnessed aggression but demonstrate that this did not necessarily lead to violence. These are separate parts of one process and the one does not automatically lead to the other and therefore this requires that we exercise caution when describing violent masculinities.

In various studies around the world, about one third of young people say they have been involved in fighting, with boys two to three times more likely to report being involved in fights than girls (WHO, 2002). In a study of youth in the Western Cape Region of South Africa 9.8 per cent of boys and 1.3 percent of girls interviewed in secondary schools reported having carried knives to school (WHO, 2002). A WHO (2002) study found that among 1 000 young men interviewed in low-income urban areas, 30 percent were involved in gangs and 70 percent were involved in some form of violence. However, in reports about this violence there has been little discussion on what is gender specific about it. Research findings by Griggs (1997) on ten schools in Durban indicate that violence is destroying the basic environmental conditions required to provide adequate education.

As mentioned earlier, conflict is understood to be a disagreement, dispute or difference of opinion. People approach differences of opinion and perceived interference from others in a variety of ways (Isenhart and Spangle, 2000). According to Wilmot and Hocker (1998) your own gender and the gender of those with whom you engage in conflict may affect your behaviour in powerful ways. They further argue that gender effects on conflict vary in different relational contexts. This study looks at the ways in which boys in a school setting handle conflict. Connell (1989) has noted that schools are major sites for the making of masculinities. I argue later in this thesis that the form of masculinity that boys subscribe to influences the manner in which they deal with provocation and conflict. Connell (1989) argues that schools have particular patterns of gender relations (he terms this the gender regime) which impact in specific ways on the lives of boys. Conversely, male learners themselves contribute to the gender regime of the school. While each school may have one dominant masculinity which prescribes the ideal form that masculine behaviour should take, there are always other masculinities present within a school. These may be marginal. They may be silenced or complicit or may challenge the dominant, hegemonic masculine form. This study explores these masculinities in the context of conflict and violence. While many studies explore the broad causes of violence in relation to masculinity construction this study goes beyond that in arguing that the first phase of conflict is provocation and while there is a link between conflict and violence

the one does not automatically lead to the other. Boys constantly negotiate their positions in conflict situations and the choices they make are largely influenced by the manner in which they construct their identity and in particular their masculinity.

1.7 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine conflict and violence and their links. In order to do this I use the standpoint of (and concept of) masculinity. Masculinity as a concept does not operate in isolation of other gender concepts including the important one of gender regime so this will also be one of my aims (to analyse the context (of the gender regime) in order to understand the way in which conflict happens).

The gender regime, like masculinities, is not static and unchanging. It is constantly changing and this study is careful to chart the ways in which and the moments at which the gender regime changed. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) argue that indigenous notions of gendered difference are constantly created and transformed in everyday interactions. Relations of power constitute parts of these interactions. The experience of hegemony lies in the repetition of similar, but never identical interactions. This experience is never comprehensive; it changes over time and space. Multiple gendered (and other) identities, each of which depends on context and the specific and immediate relations between actors and audience, are fluid and they are often subversive of dominant forms.

Scholars of peace and conflict studies have commented on the dual and contradictory nature of formal schooling. On the one hand, schooling is often a vehicle for the perpetuation of violence, both in terms of overt forms of physical violence and psychological and structural violence of dehumanising social relationships that harm the learners concerned. On the other hand, formal schooling is potentially a powerful vehicle for an education that is concerned with the peaceful resolution of conflicts through analysing the causes of violence and teaching values and skills that are congruent with peaceful behaviour (Harber, 1996). My study examines both the gendered dynamics of

situations of conflict and the way in which masculine identities are enacted in such situations. It is here that the role of the boys in provoking violence or defusing tension was particularly addressed.

The use of the body is an important element that I examine in investigating how and why conflict becomes violent. I investigate how the boys use their bodies in handling conflict and how they later explained it. Connell (1994) argues that there is an irreducible bodily dimension in social experience and practice. She further maintains that we cannot ignore either the radically cultural character of gender or the bodily presence and points out that there is a way of understanding gender and behaviour that is compatible with both. It is however important to note that bodies may not fit comfortably into the places or courses marked out for them by a given pattern of gender relations. Violence is a relationship between bodies and is often presumed to be determined by bodies. Bodies are both objects and agents of practice, with the practice itself forming the structure within which bodies are appropriated and defined. This pattern, which goes beyond the formulae of current social theory may be termed 'bodily reflexive practices' (Connell, 2000).

Further, this study analyses how situations of conflict and violence impact on school structures and processes and how, in turn, these structures and processes heighten or reduce the likelihood of violence. The aim is to explore the complex ways that boys participate in conflict in the schooling process.

My research will hopefully raise awareness of the importance of including a focus on masculinities in order to strengthen intervention strategies on violence in schools. It will expose the oversimplification of seeing boy learners as placed irrevocably in the camp of hegemonic and oppressive masculinity surrounding issues of violence.

It is hoped that the story-telling can serve as a 'release' especially for boys in a context where the dominant discourse of masculinity does not allow for the expression of emotions or deviations from hegemonic notions of being boy. This can be challenged by alternate discourse and voices emerging from boys themselves. The significance of the

boys' stories is that they provoke fresh insights about violence in the lives of school going boys in Chatsworth. .

1.8 Research Questions

Based on the aims of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Under what circumstances does conflict/disagreement escalate into physical violence? In order to answer this question, I have asked a range of subsidiary questions which foreground the importance of gender generally, and masculinity in particular.

2. To what extent did the gender regime of this school create conditions for, or reduce the possibilities of conflict and violence between and amongst boys?
    I addressed this question by investigating the gender regime of the school and establishing the ways in which the school (policies, teachers, ethos) influenced the course of actions. Guided by this question I asked how the school steered the manner in which conflict was handled by boys? And, flowing in turn from this question, I asked: how the practice of teachers encouraged or discouraged conflict resolution and violence. What measures were in place at this school to control learner behaviour? Did the school have a code of conduct? How much support did the code of conduct have from learners? How was discipline maintained: in the classroom, in the playgrounds, after hours? Did the school subscribe to an empathetic, compassionate and nurturing approach to handling learners? How did teachers relate to learners? What impact did this have on conflict and violence among the learners at this school? These questions are addressed in Chapter four.

3. How did conflict/disagreement occur at this school?
    Here, the emphasis is on the description of conflict and disagreement (it is a component of the broader, framing question I have identified above). To answer this question, I identified various constituent parts of the process and the ingredients of the conflict. These included: What were the causes of this conflict? What was the

balance of power between boys who were involved in conflict? How did conflict become violent? How was conflict peacefully resolved?

My previous gender research work at the school did not provide answers to these questions; however, on the basis of my experience at the school I looked at those areas that I suspected created tensions, conflict or disagreement among boys:

a) Conforming to or rejecting institutional expectations at school. Supporting or rejecting the school institution, that is, supporting or rejecting teachers, school rules and school values.

b) Relationships with girls.

c) Insults (about family, race, etc.).

d) Disputes over possessions/territory/academic work.

This was, however, a provisional list and, as will be seen as this thesis unfolds, there were other areas that I discovered in my observations and interviews that also created conflict and disagreement among the boys.

An omission from my research questions, that of the provocations that were part of the initial conflict, became apparent as I conducted my research. As I observed and analysed conflict situations I became aware that a provocation (an act of doing something to prompt a response or a physical retaliation) was effectively the first phase of a conflict situation. I describe and analyze the different types of provocations as a precursor to identifying the causes of conflict in Chapter five.

4. How do understandings of what it means to be a man influence boys either to resolve conflict peacefully or to become violent?

While I was concerned to identify the circumstances in which violence arose, I was also keen to understand how boys explained their actions in conflict situations and the interplay between social factors like race, class, ethnicity and religion. These factors are constituent parts of local configurations of masculinity and I was aware that they

played a part in the process by which conflict escalated into violence. Related questions were: To what extent is the construction of masculine identities racialised at this school? To what extent is the construction of masculine identities based on religion? (e.g. tensions between Hindi, Tamil and Muslim). How do these racialised masculinities influence the boys' behaviour at this school?

What is the link between male peer group cultures and violence in the school? How do hegemonic versions of masculinity among the boys at this school relate to violence in conflict situations? To what extent is violence associated with, or necessary for asserting or proving celebrated forms of masculinity?

When conflict did not result in violence, when disputes were peacefully resolved, I expected to find different perceptions about what it is to be a man. Although I suspected that the racialisation of conflict often led to violence, I was also on the lookout for contexts in which conflict across race lines was peacefully resolved. On the basis of international work on alternative, peaceful masculinities (Pease, 1997), I expected to find such configurations of masculinity in evidence when conflict situations did not end in violence (Chapter seven).

4. How are situations of conflict peaceably or amicably resolved?
   The purpose of this question was to examine the mechanisms by which conflict was steered away from violence. In order to answer this question I needed to analyse in detail how conflict occurred and how it was non-violently resolved. This required identifying the key moments at which non-violence was preferred over violence.

1.9 Overview of Methodology

This section provides a short overview of the qualitative methods used and outlines the analytical framework within which the data was examined. A more detailed discussion will follow in Chapter three.

The two main methods that I used to generate data for this study were observation and semi-structured interviews. As with most qualitative evaluations, this study utilised inductive analysis in order to analyse the data collected and to further synthesise the data I looked to the principles of discourse analysis which lends itself to the type of answers that I was looking for.

I identified 10 boys to be the main respondents in this study. All the boys were in grade 10. The boys were between fifteen and seventeen years old. There were four African boys, four Indian boys and two coloured boys. All the boys came from a working class background and lived in and around Chatsworth.

I selected grade 10 boys with the hope that was subsequently realised, that I would be able to follow them for three years, gathering data on an ongoing basis. I got to know the respondents quite well and was able to measure changes in their behaviour over the years and see how the school changed and whether my work in the school itself actually served to promote conflict resolution. I adopted the concept of snowballing where the number of respondents grew according to references made by the initial group in their interviews as well as from my continued observations. I also drew on my own experience and observation as a teacher in the school. I did not rely totally on what the boys said to gather my data.

Below I provide a biography of the 10 main respondents in this study in alphabetical order of their names. The names of all the boys have been changed to protect their identity. These biographies were compiled at the time my research began in 2006.

The racial categories that I use to describe the boys are in opposition to the racist classification of apartheid. Under the Population Registration Act of 1950 all persons in South Africa were designated to belong to one of the following races: White, Bantu, Coloured and Asian. Over time they have changed: Bantu has become African or Black and Asian has become Indian (Morrell, 2001). While is some situations racial classifications may be regarded as insulting and unnecessary and while I have sympathy

for this view it is necessary to give race a social and analytical weight when describing the boys as race has relevance in my analysis later on. I use the terms African, Indian and Coloured to describe the races of the boys in this study.

Cerwyn

Cerwyn is a 15 year old Indian boy who lives in Montford in Chatsworth. He lives with his mother and father and his grandparents. He has a younger brother who is in primary school. Cerwyn walks to school since the school is in close proximity to his home. Cerwyn's father is a postman and his mother is a housewife. Cerwyn admires and looks up to his mother. "I like to be a person like her because she cares for old people, she has a lot of respect for people, she is kind and strong." His grandfather, however, makes most of the rules at home since the house belongs to him.

Cerwyn had no choice but to attend Sunville since it is the closest secondary school to his house. Cerwyn is following a commerce course and hopes to become a chartered accountant. He believes that he is performing well at school and gets good academic results[3]. He attends all his classes and is committed to his school-work. During the breaks Cerwyn goes to the computer room.

Cerwyn does not play sport and spends most of his spare time at home practicing to play the keyboard and attending keyboard lessons. He sometimes goes out with friends. Most Friday nights the family goes out visiting other family members at the request of his grandfather. Cerwyn does not watch much television or go to the movies but likes romantic movies or comedies.

Chris

Chris is 16 years old. He is a coloured boy who lives in Montford, Chatsworth. He is an only child and lives with his mother. Chris's father passed away last year after a long struggle with cancer. Chris walks to school with his friends.

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[3] Most of the boys at Sunville believed that if they passed their grade and progressed to the next grade that they were doing well at school. They did not focus too much on the quality of the pass.

Chris is repeating grade 10. He is following the Hotel and Catering course because he feels it is much easier than the trade course he followed last year. He likes attending Sunville and enjoys spending time with his friends at school. He has coloured, Indian and African friends. He often gets into fights at school.

After school he listens to music and relaxes on the road with his friends. He goes to night clubs on the weekends: "We go with our friends to meet girls, sometimes we drink alcohol when we have money". Chris likes horror movies and enjoys the killing scenes: "I like when they are killing a person. The gory part where there is blood and the screaming and all".

Chris likes to play cricket and soccer but prefers hanging out with friends on the road and at the malls. He has no ambition to go to a tertiary institution and hopes to find a job after he completes his schooling.

Claude

Claude is 17 years old. He is a coloured boy who lives in Montford, Chatsworth. The family rents a granny flat which is near the school. Claude has a mother and a father and two sisters, one elder than him who is not employed and a smaller sister who is in primary school. His mother works in a local clothing factory. Claude's father is in prison for armed robbery. Claude mentioned that his mother and his father are his role models.

> "My mother works hard to support us. She is not a rude person and she is kind to people. I see my dad once a month now but before he went to prison he used to give us everything and was always there for us. He is inside for nine years and he is coming out next year".

Claude is repeating grade 10. He is following the Hotel and Catering course because he finds it fun and easier to do. Claude likes the atmosphere of Sunville and enjoys spending time with his friends at school. He is however unhappy with the teachers and believes that they are too strict:

"You do a small thing now and they talk down to you and discipline and all that. Say if you got earrings on or you walk around with your shirt out or I don't have a tie, then they catch you".

Claude spends most of his time after school on the road with friends, coming home mainly to sleep. On Friday nights he also goes out with friends. They go to the races (drag racing). They drive around and often go to Blue Lagoon[4] (a common hang out for teenagers) where he and his friends consume alcohol and sometimes take drugs. On weekends Claude and his friends hang around the shopping malls. Claude enjoys watching action and physical contact movies.

Claude does not place much emphasis on academic success and believes that his friends are more important and will help him to become a successful person.

Lindo

Lindo is a 16 year old African boy who lives with his parents in Klaarwater which is a suburb on the outskirts of Chatsworth. Klaarwater is populated mainly by African people. Lindo travels to school by bus. Generally at Sunville the more affluent learners travel to school by private transport while the poorer learners use public transport, usually the bus. He is following a commerce course and rates his academic progress as good. He had the following to say about his course: "Very few black people are doing this course. This is the only way that I can improve my future and show that black people can also do this course. I can get a good job".

Lindo has a brother and two sisters. His brother and one of his sisters have completed their schooling and his younger sister is in a primary school. Lindo's father works as a

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[4] The estuary of the Umgeni river. Historically a place where Indian fishermen congregated and still a popular meeting place for Indian families and groups of friends.

machine operator in a glass factory. His mother is a housewife and sometimes sells blankets to supplement the income at home.

Lindo is particularly close to his mother and spends most of his spare time with her at home. His hobbies are reading and watching television. He watches the programmes that his mother watches because he enjoys spending time with her since his father is hardly ever at home. He did not give reasons as to why his father spent little time at home. Lindo likes to play volleyball and basketball but gets little opportunity to play these sports because of a lack of facilities in Klaarwater. He plays when an opportunity arises in school.

Lindo enjoys watching sports movies, particularly movies around basketball. He does not enjoy violent movies and avoids them if he can. He spends his weekends in the following way: on Saturdays he cleans up his room and washes his clothes and on Sundays he goes to Church because he says "it is compulsory to go to church".

Lindo likes attending Sunville Secondary. He believes that most of the teachers are very dedicated. He works hard to achieve academic success.

Sohail

Sohail is a 16 year old Indian boy who lives in Montford, Chatsworth. He lives with both his parents. Sohail has a twin brother and a sister who is younger than him. His twin brother also attends Sunville but was not happy to be part of this study because he felt that he could not spare the time. Sohail lives close to the school and walks to school with his friends. Sohail's father does not have a stable job. At the time of the interview he was working part time as driver for a local supermarket. Sohail admires and prefers the company of his uncle to that of his father: "My uncle is older than us but he understands us and likes the same things as us".

Sohail is repeating grade 10 and is following a commerce course for the second time. Although he is often in trouble with authority he enjoys school: "The teachers help you. I like it here. I bunk classes. I run around the school, threaten other boys and take money from them. It is all good". Sohail has many female admirers at school but says that he likes to keep away from girls as they "give me too many problems".

Sohail is an ardent sportsman. He plays rugby and volleyball and excels at cricket, which he plays for the Chatsworth Sporting Cricket Club. He feels that he may have a chance of playing for the KwaZulu-Natal Dolphins. Sohail's role model is the cricketer Brett Lee: "I like him because of his stamina. He is energetic. He is fiery and takes on other players". Sohail spends most of his time after school and weekends playing cricket. When he is not playing sport he spends his time with friends on the road. He has little time to watch movies but enjoys violent movies where there is fighting, blood and killing.

Sohail does not focus on school-work. If he does not succeed as a cricketer he wants to become a businessman.

Patric

Patric is a 17 year old African boy who lives in Kwasanthi on the outskirts of Chatsworth. Kwasanthi is populated mainly by African people. Patric mentioned that the crime rate is very high in this area. Many of the residents of Kwasanthi abuse alcohol and take drugs. He is also pressurised to consume alcohol and take drugs but abstains from it.

For these reasons Patric works very hard at school in order to succeed academically and get a job and earn a good salary so that he can move out of this area. He is following a commerce course at Sunville. Patric believes that he is an average student but needs to improve his English. This is the main reason for him transferring from an isiZulu-medium school to Sunville, which is an English-medium school. Patric likes to attend Sunville because he says that the teachers can "motivate the learners". He believes that the teachers are committed and teach well but that many of the learners take advantage of some teachers. Patric socialises only with African learners at school and has no Indian

friends because he feels insecure about his inability to speak English fluently and stays away from the Indian learners.

Patric never met his father, who died when his mother was pregnant with him. He has three sisters and two brothers, none of whom are in school (they are older than him). His eldest brother lives in Cape Town and is the only one in his family who is employed. He sends money for the family to buy groceries, pay for Patric's schooling requirements and other things. Patric's other brother is not employed and spends all of his time with friends drinking and smoking. None of his sisters are married but they have children. They use their social grants and whatever money the fathers of their children give them to support themselves and their children.

Patric spends most of his spare time at his cousin's house where he plays computer games. He likes to play soccer and cricket and does not visit night clubs. He likes movies about cars, including 'The Italian Job', 'Too Fast - Too Furious' and 'Gone in 60 seconds'. His favourite actor is Nicholas Cage because he feels that he has a good personality.

Patric has a positive outlook of life and believes that his hard work at school will deliver him from his poverty and hardship and enable him to acquire a better standard of living.

Sai
Sai is a 15 year old Indian boy who lives in Arena Park, Chatsworth. He lives with both his parents. He has a brother who is a year younger than him and who also attends Sunville. Sai and his brother have a good relationship and walk to school every morning together. Sai's mother is a nurse and his father is a driver for the post office. He has a good relationship with his father and admires and respects him.

Sai is doing Mechanical Technology as his specialist learning area at Sunville. He enjoys the course and is doing well academically. He feels that Sunville is not a good school. He

is unhappy about the drug peddling, fighting and ill-mannered learners. He feels that the school should do more to ensure that there is order and discipline.

Sai spends his spare time doing body building and kick boxing. He takes part in kick boxing competitions. He likes body building because: "It builds up your body and gives you a muscular appearance. It attracts the girls and you get respect from the other boys". Sai is also a very good classical dancer. He has taken part in many dance recitals and has twice travelled to India to represent South Africa in dance competitions. Sai enjoys watching movies that have a lot of fighting but does not get into fights himself: "I like martial arts movies where there is a lot of fighting. But I am not aggressive. I like to watch but I don't normally get involved in fights. I only do kick-boxing".

Sai works hard at school and wants to get a good pass in matric in order to go to a tertiary institution where he wants to study mechanical engineering.

Sandile

Sandile is a 17 year old African boy who lives in Klaarwater. He mentions that the crime rate in Klaarwater is very high, "there are robbers, everywhere there is robbers". Sandile says that most of the people living in Klaarwater are poor but that there are wealthy people as well: "there are people with big houses with deep freezers in this area". Sandile and his mother live with his mother's brothers who are 23 and 24 years old and are not married. He has not seen his father for many years and does not know where he is. His only sibling is his brother who is older than him. Sandile respects and admires his brother and aims to be like him. "I am following my brother's footsteps – he is working on his own business with his partners in the Pavilion – it is called Music Warehouse. If I do well I will join him".

Sandile came to Sunville with the intention of doing a trade but changed his mind after a week because he says, "I don't like the boys in these courses". He is now following a commerce course. He believes that he is not academically good but gives of his best and hopes to improve his results. He likes the teachers at Sunville. He believes that they are

fair and treat all learners equally. Sandile does not have any Indian friends because he does not live in an area where there are Indians. "At home we are not close to Indians and in school it is also hard – but if there were Indians in our area I would have Indian friends".

Sandile spends his spare time playing soccer with his friends and working on his business plan to start a business like that of his brother. He also likes to watch sitcoms and soapies on television. Sandile does not like violent movies.

Sandile does not have career ambitions and believes that he must start his own business in order to be successful in life.

Shivern

Shivern is a 16 year old Indian boy who lives in Montford, Chatsworth. He lives with both his parents. He has a sister who is in university. The family lives close to the school in a semi-detached house which they own. Shivern walks to school with his girlfriend. His father works in a furniture factory and his mother is a housewife.

Shivern is repeating grade 10. He is following the Hotel and Catering course and is optimistic about his academic success. His ambition is to become a chef. In spite of his failure Shivern likes it at Sunville. He enjoys the company of his friends at school and admits that he does not follow the school rules and this has led to his failure: "I join my friends and get up to mischief – we do wrong things. You see I was in standard eight (Grade 10) last year and I failed because of things I used to do. I used to bunk. I never used to go to class. So I failed – it was like a wake up call. I am now a better person".

After school Shivern joins his friends on the road. They take a walk to the mall (Chatsworth Centre) and smoke cigarettes. Over the weekends Shivern spends his time in the following way: "I spend a lot of time with my friends at the mall. We go to the club, we drink alcohol and we get into trouble with other guys and sometimes we fight."

Shivern and his friends also watch movies over the weekends. He enjoys action movies where there is a lot of fighting. Shivern does not participate in organised sport.

Sipho

Sipho is a 17 year old African boy who lives in Mariannhill, which is situated on the outskirts of Chatsworth. Sipho does not like to live in Mariannhill: "It is a bad place, there are thugs there, I want to improve myself and leave the area because it is not a good environment. There is violence, drugs and there are robberies". He travels to school by bus. He lives with his mother, grandmother and two sisters, both of whom are older than him. One of his sisters is employed. Sipho is the only male at home. Neither of his sisters are married but they both have children. His father passed away in 2006 but was not living with Sipho's family at the time of his death. He was living with his other wife and family.

Sipho came to Sunville to pursue a trade course and is doing Civil Technology.
He likes to work with his hands and wants to become a civil engineer. Sipho believes that he is performing well at school and is happy with his progress. He likes Sunville and thinks that it is a good school. He is impressed with the teachers and believes that they are doing a good job.

After school Sipho and his friends go to the grounds and play soccer. On Fridays he goes out with his friends. On Saturdays and Sundays he works as a casual at the clothing retail store, Mr Price. Sipho does not smoke, take drugs, drink alcohol or go to night clubs. He likes to watch soapies and action movies.

Sipho wants to become successful in order to help his mother and sisters and one day move them out of Mariannhill.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

In this final section of the Introduction, I indicate how the thesis unfolds.

Chapter two reviews the global and local literature on conflict, violence and masculinities, which includes constructions of masculinity, gender power and how race, class and socio-economic conditions relate to violent behaviour in boys and men.

Chapter three describes the research methodology that I used to conduct the research. My investigation of violence and masculinities was qualitative. This chapter describes how the research was operationalised by giving an account of the fieldwork. The methods of data analysis, namely content analysis and discourse analysis are discussed. Ethical issues that were considered in order to ensure that the interests of the participants were safeguarded are discussed.

Chapter four investigates the gender relations that existed at Sunville. This chapter explores the patterning and activities within the school setting that helped to constitute gender relations concentrating on different experiences of males and females in the classroom, assemblies, playgrounds, subject take up and how discipline and control was maintained. The patterning of all these relations within an institution (such as a school) is regarded (in the context of this study) as the gender regime. The gender regime that I describe in this chapter is not static and fixed. Members of the school community constantly negotiated gender meanings, identities, relations and norms and in this way influenced the form of the gender regime.

Chapter five discusses provocations which are seen as the first phase of a conflict situation. In this chapter I describe the provocations that I witnessed and recorded as a researcher. Informal and unstructured interviews also served as an important source of data. I describe the various kinds of provocations that gave rise to or expressed conflict but did not necessarily lead to violence. In some instances the provocations I describe had the potential to become heated and violent resolution featured more strongly in some of these provocations than others because the particular boys involved invested in particular kinds of masculinity.

Chapter six discusses the causes of conflict. In this chapter I show where the provocations discussed in chapter four led by analysing how and why conflict occurs and escalates to violence. While the causes of conflict are numerous and varied this chapter engages with the causes of conflict among boys who relate to issues of masculinity. This chapter outlines how boys at the school created and consolidated heterosexual hierarchies in male peer groups through: regulation of self and others, enhancing and disparaging reputations, and maintaining pride and proving loyalty, and in doing so, came into conflict with each other.

Chapter seven focuses on those boys who did not cultivate hyper-masculinity through violence. I focus on the voices of resistance to traditional, patriarchal versions of manhood and the variations in boys' discourses and ways of being, and highlight through these voices of resistance that masculinities are not inherently violent but are situationally and contextually constructed. This chapter also gives an insight into how these boys avoided violent school cultures.

Chapter eight summarises the main findings and makes some concluding comments which include reflecting on the implications of the study for promoting non-violence in schools. I close with some thoughts on future research agendas and the prospects of working with boys in schools.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will be examining a range of related literatures that have a bearing on the main research question of this thesis which is: why do some conflicts involving school boys result in violence, while others do not? The literatures reviewed here have largely been developed in what has been called the Critical Men's Studies approach to gender and the question of men. This approach, pioneered by, among others, Connell (1987, 1995), Kimmel and Messner (1989), Kimmel et al (1995) and Kimmel (2006) has, over the last thirty years, provided concepts that are useful in understanding men's power in relation to women and other men.

Violence is nearly always gendered as it takes place within specific dimensions and conditions of power (Barker, 2005). Violence is often seen as men's power in operation. The issue, however, is not simple and there is no consensus as to whether men use violence to enforce power aggressively, or use violence as a means of defending their honour, identity and authority.

The research problem of this study is to find out why schoolboys resort to physical violence. We don't yet have answers to this question, not least because nobody has yet tried to work out why disagreements become violent (which is one of the main questions of this study and will be my contribution to this question). But there is a huge amount of literature on masculinity, school masculinities, violence and violence in schools, as well as non-gendered literature on conflict resolution.

While this study focuses on the construction of boys as active subjects in the production of their masculine identities the review is not confined to boys only, because masculinities are constructed in social interactions and achieved through the use of

cultural resources available to the boys. For the boys in this study these include the ideologies of masculinity prevalent in the school, the social structures in which they live and their own social positions. In this chapter, the theoretical framework through which masculinities can be explored is highlighted. I develop a framework, which allows a distinction between different expressions of masculinity and the relationship of violence to and the location of violence within the constructions of gender identities.

I start this literature review by highlighting the surge of institutional violence, especially violence in schools.

2.2 Institutional Violence

Over the past decade school violence has increased and not just in terms of homicide. The problems of violence include physical conflicts among students, verbal abuse, robbery, vandalism, alcohol abuse and possession of weapons. In the past decade each one of these areas has escalated to a level of severity that seems difficult to manage. The problem does not exist solely in urban settings but has extended to suburban and rural. Because of the growing intensity of violence public schools are becoming less and less safe (Villani and Ward, 2001). Violence against children has increasingly been viewed as a violation of their fundamental human rights especially their right to physical safety and psychological security and well-being. There has also been a growing concern to understand the roots of violence in schools and to find constructive ways to reduce it and if possible prevent it (Cowie and Jennnifer, 2007). The World Health Organisation's (2002) report on violence recommended the following in reducing and preventing violence: Gathering as much knowledge as possible about the phenomenon at local, national and international levels, investigating why violence occurs and exploring ways to prevent violence by designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating interventions. This study attempts to understand why violence occurs at school level and makes recommendations for intervention that can reduce violence in schools.

In a study of violence in American schools Elliot et al (1998) report that on a daily basis many students, parents and teachers are aware of threats or bullying and they experience pervasive anxiety about violence in schools. They argue that the violence on the streets and in some homes have spilled over into schools. The societal response to this epidemic has been largely limited to increasingly harsh and lengthy sentencing with little evidence that this approach is deterring violence or rehabilitating young offenders. Elliot et al (1998) argue that what is needed are new insights into the causes of this epidemic and new intervention strategies for making our schools safer places for learning. This study contributes to the understanding of these issues by looking at violence in school from a gendered perspective and how the construction of masculinities is implicated in the causes of violence at school. It points the way to implementing a range of integrated approaches for the prevention and reduction of violence in schools.

In South African schools violence has also reached alarming proportions (Department of Education, 1997, Griggs, 1997, Stevens, 2000). Conflict and violence has plagued South African schools since the 1970's. The involvement of school children in violence can be tracked back to the 1976 Soweto uprising where learners protested against unfair education policies regarding African learners (Morrell, 2001). Other schools around the country were also affected by this action. In the 1980's schools were used as sites for mobilizing communities in protest against apartheid. These protest actions often turned violent and involved school children (CSVR, 1994). The transformation from the apartheid education system to an inclusive one has created new challenges for the youth of this country. Many of the youth are stressed by the new challenges and a new struggle has begun which include identity definitions, competition for resources, cultural intolerance and dealing with economic and social ills, like crime and substance abuse (Independent Projects Trust, 1999).

Violence is however nearly always gendered. In much of the world young men between the ages of 15 to 24 are the perpetrators and often the victims of violence (Barker, 2005). In analyzing data from more than 45 countries and 12 tribal societies Mesquida and Wiener (1999) attribute young men's violence to competition with other males for access

to economic and political resources. More recently newer questions in the field of gender studies have emerged. Women and men have recognized that there are often negative consequences for men and boys in some of the ways that manhoods are traditionally and rigidly constructed. Most advocates and researchers are now saying that it is vital to examine how certain versions of masculinity bring with them negative outcomes for boys and men. One of which is using violence to achieve their ends (Barker, 2005). In the next section I examine literature that relates to masculinity and violence.

2.3 Masculinity and Violence

The literature on the relationship of masculinity to violence by and large focuses on the causal links between masculinity and violence. Flowing from this work are policy deliberations to reduce men's violence against women, but also to contribute to building a climate of non-violence, peace and democracy (Breines, Connell and Eide, 2000). This work has found expression in the field of education as well, where numerous studies have analysed violence, homophobia, misogyny, bullying and other forms of gender inequitable behaviour (Connell, 1996; Swain, 2005). I will return to this school-focused literature later (in Section 2.5 below), but in this section will explore how studies of masculinity and violence have contributed to our understandings of men and boys' behaviour.

In recent years, questions about men and boys have aroused remarkable media interest, public concern and controversy. Questions about men's identities and remedies for troubles in men's lives have been offered. There have been vigorous debates about men's violence, men's health and boys' supposed disadvantage in education.

According to Connell (2000) there is no doubt about the historical source of these debates. The new feminism of the 1970s not only gave voice to women's concerns, it challenged all assumptions about gender systems and raised a series of issues about men. Over the decades since, the disturbance in the gender system caused by the women's

movement has been felt by large numbers of men and the growing concern with questions about men and boys is now worldwide.

In this chapter I review the literature in the following way:

- An overview of conflict and violence
- Causes of conflict and interpersonal violence
- Context of violence
- Construction of masculinity
- Boys, masculinity and violence
- Masculinity and non-violence

My study has a twofold purpose: (1) It will examine actual instances and occurrences of conflict and violence. (2) It will explain how these occur from the point of view of the boys themselves. The next section examines the definitions and dynamics of conflict.

2.4 Overview of Conflict and Violence

2.4.1 Conflict

Conflict, which is a central concern of this chapter, has not received much attention in the gender literature, where the focus has largely been on violence and the assumption has been that conflict leads automatically to violence. This thesis is intended to analyse how conflict emerges and the processes by which conflict situations are either peacefully resolved or escalate into violence. In undertaking this, I want to link the literature on constructions of masculinity with the observed (researched) processes of conflict at Sunville.

Conflict has received increasing attention in the organisational literature during the last two decades because of a shift in attitudes towards conflict in organisations. However, this view of conflict has not passed into the gender and masculinity literature. In this study I will be drawing on this neglected literature, in which the traditional view of

conflict as being only harmful has changed to a view of conflict as a reality of organisational life. Conflict exists wherever incompatible activities occur (Deutsch, 1973). An activity that is incompatible with another is one that prevents, blocks, or interferes with the occurrence or effectiveness of the second activity. A conflict can be as small as a disagreement or as large as a war.

My chosen definition of conflict is that it is synonymous with disagreement. In this study conflict is seen as a neutral stage that precedes either escalation to physical violence or de-escalation to peaceful resolution and I am concerned with how this occurs.

The term is often used in a 'bigger' broader way (as I indicate below) and it is in this context that peace scholars talk about non-violent or violent conflict.

Rummel (cited in Folberg and Taylor, 1984) defines conflict using three levels: (1) conflict structure – interests that have a tendency to oppose each other (2) conflict situation – opposing interests, attitudes or powers that are activated (3) manifest conflict – a set of behaviours or actions – demands, threat, aggression and physical violence. Conflict becomes manifest when one or more of the parties involved seeks to resolve the incompatibility by forcing the other to change (Tillett, 1999). The outbreak of manifest conflict behaviour therefore can result in violence. However, conflict is often confused with manifest conflict (harmful) and is lumped together with violence. The most extreme method of conflict resolution is by one side conquering the other which puts an end to the conflict by coercion and force. These working definitions, like most definitions, are imperfect but will serve as a practical basis for this study.

Because of its overlapping dynamics and processes, conflict is complex. It often involves a struggle for power, the way decisions are made, the way we talk to each other or unresolved problems from past interactions. Several of these factors may be accruing at the same time, so that we are not sure what the real problem is. Thus, defining conflict in a specific situation can be a difficult task (Isenhart and Spangle, 2000).

Conflict can be divided into two categories: intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonal conflict is conflict within the individual. Intrapersonal (or intrapsychic) conflict is usually not obvious to another person (unless disclosed by the individual), and does not depend upon a relationship with someone else (although it is often the result of a relationship). Intrapersonal conflict often relates to moral and ethical issues. Individual decision-making about if and when to undertake certain actions - for example to lie or tell the truth, to steal or not to steal – can cause considerable intrapersonal conflict (Tillett, 1999).

This study is primarily concerned with interpersonal conflict – situations that arise between individuals or groups of individuals (Folberg and Taylor, 1984). According to Edelman and Crain (1993) conflict occurs when two parties cannot agree on the actions that are taken or that they don't want the other party to take. Bush and Folger (1994) argue that conflict exists because of a real or apparent incompatibility of parties' needs or interests. Coser (cited in Folberg and Taylor, 1984) defines conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponents is to neutralise, injure or eliminate others. Conflict means perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Rubin et al, 1994). Interpersonal conflict can be between two, four, a dozen, a hundred or a thousand parties. However, where the parties are not individuals the conflict will be acted out by individuals and resolution usually depends on the actions of individuals (Tillett, 1999).

Often conflict is linked to values and needs, which are themselves closely related. Values are those beliefs that have significance for an individual; they can include religious, political and moral beliefs, and holding of particular beliefs probably meets particular needs. Besides physical needs (often the most popular accepted use of the term), there are needs related to psychological and emotional well-being and self esteem, and to group identity and acceptance. Conflict is often related to status, power, prestige, self esteem and religious or political belief rather than to what would usually be thought of as 'actions'. Essentially the incompatibility can be summarised as: You interfere with my

doing or being what I want to do or be (Tillett, 1999). In this study I found that many boys felt a strong need to belong and be accepted by their peers, that is, the need for group belonging. These boys wanted to be respected by their peers and were prepared to 'fight' for this respect. As we will see in Chapter five, the ensuing conflict around group identity and acceptance were highly gendered.

2.4.1.1 Dynamics of Conflict

In order to broaden my understanding of conflict in different contexts and settings I looked at a number of theories reviewed by Isenhart and Spangle (2000). Each approach reveals assumptions about the importance of internal and external forces, behaviour that triggers or sustains interactions, or the impact of competing goals or interests. Many of the theories are not relevant to my particular study but I name them here without going into a detailed explanation of them.

Attribution Theory looks at the explanations that people have for the causes of events. **Equity Theory** views conflict from the perspective of distributive justice. In **Psychodynamic Theory** psychologists such as Freud explain that people approach problems from one of many internal, unconscious states, such as anxiety, ego, fear, aggression or guilt. **Transformational Theory** focuses more on change and process than on explanations about why conflict occurs.

For the purposes of this study the Interactional and Field theories were important and helpful in analysing and explaining the dynamics of conflict among the boys at Sunville.

Interactional Theory

Interactionalists view conflict as a process of ongoing negotiation about what is valued, how behaviours are interpreted and the meaning of events. Folger and Poole (1984) explain that people create the positions they perceive and what they perceive is also influenced by what they do. Strauss (1978) views each negotiation as larger than the specific context in which it occurs. It is a fundamental process where culture is formed, refined and remade. Interactional theory revolves around role, expectation and authority

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and how these influence perceptions. Interactionalists view conflict as a process of ongoing negotiation about what is valued, how behaviours are to be interpreted and the meaning of events.

Field Theory

Based on the work of Lewin (cited in Isenhart and Spangle, 2000), this perspective views people's actions as a product of contextual forces. Lewin stresses that these forces are seen in impulses to do something and impulses not to do other things. There is a push and pull based on expectations, commitments and loyalties. Each context, such as family, community group or working setting serves as a psychological field where antagonistic interests or competing attitudes create safe or hostile climates. Different forces motivate or inhibit behaviours. Field theory explains why someone regarded as cooperative by friends becomes competitive in a work climate. Competitiveness serves as a tactic to combat the perceived threats at work. This theory provided insight and helped me to analyse why certain boys were violent at particular times under particular circumstances, an argument that I make in Chapter eight.

Isenhart and Spangle (2000) argue that in analysing conflict, the definitions and perspectives we choose will affect the claims and conclusions we make about conflict.

For the purposes of this study (as I have indicated earlier) I adopt the definition of conflict to mean a perceived divergence of interest, a disagreement. Conflict is often linked to values and needs. It exists because of a real or apparent incompatibility of parties' needs or interests. In Chapter five and six I outline how the values of certain boys and particular types of needs caused 'conflict' at Sunville and how the boys handled the conflict. Conflict is often related to status, power, prestige and self esteem. In my analysis of provocation, conflict, violent and non-violent behaviour among the boys (Chapters five, six and seven) we see how these are inextricably linked to conflict.

It is postulated that all forms of violence share one characteristic, namely conflict (Setiloane, 1990. Van der Merwe (cited in Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990) considers

conflict to be neutral, but people are conditioned into regarding conflict as negative or destructive. Conflict generates energy and if such energy is constructively channelled, violent action is avoided. However, if conflict is destructively managed, violence may result. This argument resonates strongly with my findings in this study. I found that in most cases, conflict among boys led to violence (Chapter six), but in many other cases conflict was resolved peacefully (Chapter seven). I argue in these chapters that values of maleness have a strong influence on the manner in which boys manage/handle conflict. In any conflict situation at Sunville there was a constant threat of violence. The escalation of conflict into violence depended largely on whether a boy subscribed to or rejected the values of the hegemonic masculinity that exists at Sunville.

As I have discussed in the Introduction chapter, in the process of doing my school-based research I became aware of the processes which developed out of conflict (situations of tension or disagreement). In the next part of this section I begin to analyse the phases through which conflict passes on its way to the dissipation or resolution of the conflict or towards the escalation of conflict until it erupts in physical violence. I offer a theoretical framework for understanding the steps which lead from a situation of conflict to either physical violence or some form of non-violent resolution.

A conflict situation generally has two phases. The first phase is the provocation and the second phase is the possible escalation to violence or peaceful resolution of the conflict.

A provocation is a moment in time – an act that may cause a response. Provocation is seen as an act of doing something to prompt a response or physical retaliation. A provocation can be verbal (speech) or non-verbal (action). While in many cases the intent may be to incite a response, the response is not necessarily automatic. Provocation is a stimulus for a reaction in someone. A provocation can be accidental or hostile (Ray and Cohen, 1997) but this is difficult to establish. Ray and Cohen (1997), in their study of provocation between peers in a primary school, found that peers often interpreted actions as provocative and hostile even when there was no intention. Such interpretations are possible in social situations which are structured in tense, oppositional and distrustful

ways. In a study of provocation among male undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology class at the University of Massachusetts, Taylor (1967) found that intention was not a key element in the reaction of the males to provocation. What was more important for them was that they believed that they were competing against an aggressive opponent. While the above studies are concerned with psychological analysis they still served to inform my understanding of provocation and helped in the analysis of provocation in this study. My study does not focus on the intention of the provocateur (aggressor) but on the reaction or the response to provocation by the recipient. I found that the boys in my study regarded all provocation as intentional and hostile and the manner in which boys reacted did not depend on the perceived intentions of the provocateur but on other factors that I outline in Chapter five.

In the next section I examine possible definitions and explanations of violence that provided useful insights in analysing the causes of violence among boys at Sunville.

2.4.2 Violence

There are many definitions of violence and since I am concerned with the escalation of conflict into (physical) violence, my search for a definition had to take into account the specific needs of this thesis. I will therefore briefly review the different definitions of violence that exist and then explain why I selected a particular definition to operationalise in this thesis.

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) argue that violence is a slippery concept – nonlinear, productive, destructive, *and* reproductive. It is mimetic, like imitative magic or homeopathy. "Like produces like," that much we know. Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence – or, as we prefer – a continuum of violence." (pg1). The World Health Organisation (2002) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or depravation.

As I have mentioned earlier the definition of violence is contested (Hearn, 1998). What is meant by violence and whether there is a notion of violence at all, is historically, socially and culturally constructed. While there is no concrete definition of violence, Newman (cited in Fitzclarence, 1995) notes that violence is behaviour which leads to physical injury or damage. "It always involves the abuse of power in unequal relationships" (Galbraith, 1998: 6). According to Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) violence occurs along a continuum and involves physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse of power at individual, group and social structural levels.

My study is conducted in a school setting. According to Curio and First (1993) different forms of violence take place at school, including student against student, teacher against student, student against teacher and against oneself. The violence at Sunville mostly took the form of student against student and more especially of boys against boys (Chapter six).

So far, I have provided a general overview of the various definitions of violence. These explanations are important in order to highlight that understanding of violence is very context-specific and even though there are attempts to produce universal definitions of violence, these often do not translate easily into specific contexts. In the next section I review the definition of, and approach to violence that I have adopted for the purposes of this study.

Subjectivist views of violence show that experiences of violence are gendered. Rather than simply using a perspective that regards anything that a person experiences as 'violent' as an act of violence, I wish to go beyond such a relativist or experiential approach to identify the particular features of a situation which render it within the frame of this study as 'violence'. While there is no one simple definition of violence and the range of violences are immense, the elements in the definition of interpersonal violence is relevant to this study. Interpersonal violence refers to direct violence from one person to another in an identifiable situation and is often physical in nature (Hearn, 1998).

Physical violence is therefore often referred to as 'beating' which, according to the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, includes acts such as hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, stabbing or any other act that causes physical pain or injury to a person (Government of South Africa, 1998). Violence in this study is therefore understood to be physical in nature, that is, the infliction of bodily harm on another person (Archer and Browne, 1989).

In adopting the above definitions of violence I was aware, in the context of this study, that violence emanating from conflict was mostly physical in nature. I was also alert to the fact that virtually all people, both men and women, have the potential to be violent to others and may choose to be violent in certain situations and non-violent in others. I therefore proceeded with caution in constructing an explanation of violence that is relevant to this study, rather than being caught up in the macro explanations regardless of context and situation.

In this study, a cause is seen as a principle or a phenomenon that boys were prepared to defend, advocate or subscribe to that gave rise to an action which was usually physical violence. Causes of violence were often related to the way boys saw themselves in the school and the manner in which they constructed their identity. In other words, 'cause' here refers to the boys' rationale for a violent response and does not refer to the process of causation identified by the researcher.

In this study I investigate the relationship between the social construction of boys and masculinities and the way in which the boys understood, talked about and explained their actions in conflict situations. An important aim of this study was to investigate the causes of interpersonal violence among boys in this particular setting and why some boys used violence or got involved in violence and others did not.

'Causes' of violence in this study refers to the levers that convert provocation into physical violence. The first part of the next section focuses on these levers, which centre on boys' rationale for violent responses. The second part looks at some of the background

causations, the structural factors, which can be seen as contextual factors that may increase the likelihood of violence.

2.5 Causes of Conflict and Interpersonal Violence

Extensive literature on violence exists and a lot of it 'explains' the connection between masculinity and violence (Willis, 1977; Connell, 1987,1995, 2000; Skelton, 2001; Barker 2005). There is no reason to believe that the studies mentioned above all relate to a common cause of violence and certainly are not all the result of a commitment to dominant masculinities since these studies relate to different contexts and eras. Willis for example conducted his study among working class lads and is moulded in an English comprehensive high school setting. Skelton's research was conducted in two economically disadvantaged inner city schools in the United Kingdom while Connell draws on research conducted from a wide range of locales which include: a highland community in Papua New Guinea, a private school in England, a high school in rural Texas, two body building gyms in California, a gold mine in South Africa, an urban police force in the United States, two gay communities in Australia, the US navy, drinking groups in Australian bars and garages in an Australian working-class suburb. Barker traces the challenges facing young men in a variety of low income urban settings worldwide in countries such as Jamaica, Brazil, Colombia and South Africa.

While the contexts in the above studies of violence vary masculinity is connected with them all and a key argument in this section is that understanding these connections is necessary and important. As I argue later we cannot generalise findings from research in other countries and assume that they will be relevant to the South Africa context. The causes of violence discussed in this section do not apply to all men everywhere.

The studies above highlight the physicality of male violence and identify broad structural causes which I will outline towards the latter part of this section. While my study focuses on the link between violence and masculinity it is however a micro-analysis of conflict and violence among a particular age group in a particular setting.

The causes of interpersonal violence in my study, which I discuss in Chapter six, resonate with the findings of Kehily and Nayak (1997) who found in their study of two secondary schools in predominantly working class areas in the United Kingdom that the boys exhibited their heterosexual masculinities through a series of male competitive styles which included frequently resorting to physical gaming. They argue that competition for status was the stage for the performance of masculinity. I also found strong evidence of competition among the boys at Sunville and I argue in Chapter six that the major cause of violent fights is the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity. Other researchers have documented the relationship between various types of competition more generally, linking them to forms of masculinity (Willis, 1977; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). Frosh et.al. (2002) writing about masculinity and routine violence in schools note that there is a dominant form of masculinity that influences boys' and men's understandings of how they have to act in order to be 'acceptably' male and that this dominant mode is associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power and authority and competitiveness. As will become clear later in this chapter (in the section on masculinities) hegemonic masculinity is the standard bearer of what it means to be a 'real' man. I found in my study that many boys drew on their understanding of what it meant to be a real man in their handling of conflict.

Kehily and Nayak (1997) found that consolidating male peer group cultures played a significant part in conveying masculine identities among boys. Male peer groups, by their very existence consolidate male collectivity. I found that at Sunville peer endorsement was a key element in the construction of hegemonic masculinity and that the loyalty that boys had towards members of their peer group often led to violence. Peer groups were a key feature of the boys' micro-culture that served to validate and amplify their masculine reputations (Chapters five and six). Mills (2001) argues that boys feel a need to demonstrate their loyalty to hegemonic forms of masculinity in order to be accepted by their peers. For the boys in Mill's (2001) study engaging in acts of physical violence was an effective way of affirming manhood among peers. Holland et al (1996) found that young men experienced the single sex peer group as a competitive space in which they were expected to prove themselves. Frosh et al (2002) found that in most cases boys were

susceptible to peer pressure and this susceptibility influenced their behaviour in public settings. However, we should be careful not to demonise male peer groups. Some encourage fighting, sexual conquests and violent versions of manhood, but others encourage the opposite. For some men the male peer group can be a place to reinforce a non-violent identity and cope with the violence around them (Morrell, 1994b).

My later discussion on masculinities further reveals how boys' investments and subscription to a particular type of masculine ideal are linked to how and why conflict is generated.

So far I have discussed causes of violence in the literature that parallel some of the causes of violence in my study. The literature suggests other causes that are not at the heart of how masculinity is created, received and performed at Sunville since this study is a micro-analysis of violence in one school setting. However a discussion of these other causes is important in that many of these causes influence masculine norms and values that may exert pressure on a boy to behave or act in a certain fashion, which in turn become relevant in the processes that follow a provocation and escalate into violence. I now discuss some of the broad causes of violence among boys and men.

Some researchers suggest that boys living in violent neighbourhoods and communities learn that violence is a way to resolve conflicts. They are often not exposed to other ways of resolving conflicts and, in turn, use the violence they learn in their homes to resolve conflict outside their homes (Barker, 2005). Studies in the United States suggest that violent and delinquent boys, when compared to less violent and non-delinquent control groups, are more likely to perceive or attribute hostile intent in the action of others (McAlister, 1998 cited in Barker, 2005). Boys who use violence have learned to believe that individuals in their immediate environment often have hostile intentions toward them and thus these young men may inappropriately attribute hostile intent in others even when none exist. In other words, boys who use violence may have shorter fuses and see the world as a mostly hostile place. In Chapter one I mention that in the Chatsworth community violence has become normalised as many of the people are desensitised to

violence and often use it to resolve disputes. While I do not have conclusive proof, it may well be that the boys adopted a similar mentality to resolve disputes in school.

Labels and stereotypes affect the lives of individuals in direct and real ways. At Sunville labels were often applied to learners, by peers but especially by teachers (see Chapter four). Sampson and Laub (1993) (cited in Barker, 2005) argue that young men who are frequently accused of violence may be more likely to use violence. Further, low-income young men who have been told by teachers, parents and the media and the world around them that they are violent are more likely to become violent. Studies confirm that boys who have attention deficit problems or other school behavioural problems are more likely to use violent behaviour. However, attention deficit problems do not cause violent behaviour, although parents and teachers often label these behaviours as troublesome and react in authoritarian or controlling ways. The cycle often goes like this: a boy acts out in a minor way but is punished disproportionately for his actions. Chafing at this discipline, he acts out even more, and the punishment the next time around is more severe, causing him to act out again in even more dangerous and violent ways. I also found that boys who were labelled as 'troublesome' at Sunville often got into fights.

Poverty can be seen as a contextual factor that may increase the likelihood of violence. However, interpersonal violence and exclusion does not necessarily flourish in conditions of poverty and social exclusion. More important than poverty is the issue of income inequality. Violence seems to be highest in those settings where a few wealthy individuals control the lion's share of goods and resources and the poor majority have access to less than their share. In short, frustration and anger over unequal distribution of opportunities is the breeding ground for violence, rather than abject poverty per se (Barker, 2005). The situation in Sunville however was quite different. The income discrepancies between learners were not huge. However in South Africa the broader national or regional setting are characterised by large income differentials which are still highly racialised and live on in memory. This may have increased the risk of violence in the Chatsworth community and the school.

It is important to understand that in conflict situations, while individuals do the acting, they do so within institutional settings and thus their actions cannot be understood in purely voluntarist terms, or (in other words) out of context. The setting of this study is a high school in a low-income urban area with a focus on boys and their handling of provocation and conflict. The purpose of the next section is to provide a framework for thinking about gender issues in the education of boys, focussing on the school as an agent in shaping the manner in which boys handle conflict and vis à vis shaping masculinities.

2.6 The Context of Violence

The school context is an important setting in which various gender relations are enacted. In Chapter four I investigate the school's gender regime, which played a role in shaping the behaviour of boys. I discuss the school's styles of governance and policies on discipline, how teachers handled discipline and the role of the curriculum in shaping the gender dynamics of a school.

As mentioned above the totality of gender arrangements within a school is the school's gender regime. It is important to distinguish between the *gender regime* and the *gender order* because they are conceptually distinct and because many authors lump them together and treat them as being conceptually synonymous. The overall patterning of gender regimes, together with the gender patterning of culture and personal life, may be called the *gender order* of society. It is important to highlight that the critical distinction between gender regime and the gender order is the issue of power. In the case of the gender order, Connell's (2000) argument has been that it reflects patriarchal relations (the subordination of women by men, the differentiation of men amongst one another (along lines of race, class, age and so on). Connell allows that a gender regime may not necessarily reflect gender inequalities or, at least, may reflect more equitable arrangements that might be a harbinger of gender change. She is always concerned to identify the possibility of change in gender relations and the concept, 'gender regime' allows this (Connell, 2000). While I highlight the gender oppression that existed in Sunville (Chapter four) I am also careful to pick up on cases and instances in the gender

regime that did not lend themselves to being explained as part of a system of gender oppression. The gender regime at Sunville had a contradictory totality and this is important in explaining why some boys did not respond violently to provocation (Chapter seven).

Gender regimes differ between schools, though within limits set by the broader culture and the constraints of the local education system (Kessler et al, 1985). Among the relationships that are involved in developing the character of a school's gender regime are power relations and the division of labour. Power relations include supervision and authority among teachers; and patterns of dominance, harassment and control over resources among pupils. A familiar and important pattern is the association of masculinity with authority, and the concentration of men in supervisory positions in school systems. Division of labour includes work specialisations among teachers, such as concentrations of women in domestic science, language and literature teaching, and men in science, mathematics and industrial arts. At Sunville the sexual division of labour was prominent, as I discuss in Chapter four.

We will never have a simple way of measuring the relative influence of different institutions; however, there seems to be good case for considering schools as one of the major sites of masculinity formation. To understand this we must explore the structures and practices by which the school influences the construction of masculinities among its pupils (Connell, 2000). Gender is embedded in the institutional arrangements through which a school system functions.

Several troubling issues in education concern boys, men and their place in gender relations. Discipline problems in schools most often concern boys and violence in schools is mainly enacted by boys (Martino, 1999). The next section looks at the school's role in promoting and hindering violence through its discipline structures and policies.

2.6.1 School Styles of Governance and Discipline

Schools can actively promote violence even though they are supposed to be peaceful, stable and supportive environments (e.g. through corporal punishment) (Harber, 2002). It is more usual, however, in the context where old forms of violence like corporal punishment are illegal, for schools to promote violence more passively. If schools avoid and discourage empathetic, compassionate, nurturing and affiliate behaviours and do not promote emotional responsibility, but instead, favour heavy handed discipline and control then they are in some or other way complicit in the production of violence. To ignore the emotional world of schooling and of students is to contribute to the repressions which recycle and legitimate violence (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997).

Sunville adopted heavy handed disciplinary measures as I outline in Chapter four which included sanctions, suspensions and expulsions, aggressive control measures by the guards and an unsympathetic tribunal system.

According to Skelton (2001) there is evidence to suggest that aggressive forms of discipline are related to the development of particularly 'tough' forms of masculinity. Mac an Ghaill (1994) has shown how the 'Macho Lads' in his study linked teacher and police authoritarianism and, as a consequence, developed their particular 'tough' version of masculinity around collective strategies of counter-interrogation, contestation and survival. Other writers (Willis, 1977; Walker, 1998; Connell, 1989) argue that a violent discipline system invites competition in 'machismo' among boys and sometimes between boys and male teachers. More recent work has suggested that rigid educational systems, particularly systems that focus more on maintaining order than engaging students in meaningful ways, reinforce behaviour that chafes at authority (Barker, 2005). Sunville had a rigid discipline system (Chapter four) and there was fierce competition among most of the boys (Chapter six). While I do not seek to prove (in this study) that a rigid discipline system invites violent male competition the literature suggests that there is a link between these two phenomena.

According to Fitzclarence (1995) in many obvious and subtle ways, schools model, permit and shape violent attitudes and behaviours. However this is not necessarily always the case. Searle's (1981) two year study of a school in Mozambique offers a very different picture. He found that the school's new structure and culture and the manner in which the school was organised promoted peace, co-existence, democracy and non-violence. This was largely achieved through structures of participation, justice, equality and fairness within the school.

In the next section I examine the link between the manner in which teachers handle discipline and the construction of masculinity.

2.6.2 Teachers' Handling of Discipline

The idea that discipline and punishment are part of the role of being a male teacher is one that has been raised in many studies of boys and teachers (Skelton, 2001; Martino, 1999). There is also evidence to suggest that aggressive forms of discipline are related to the development of particular 'tough' forms of masculinity. When teachers (male or female) adopt more authoritarian types of discipline with male pupils they are helping to create the macho modes of masculinity identified in practically all studies of masculinity and schooling (Willis, 1977; Walker, 1998; Connell, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). In this thesis, I show in Chapter four that many male teachers used overt physical action and aggression to restrain, control and dominate the boys.

In South Africa teachers have been excluded to a large extent from the discipline arena, which is now the preserve of policy like the code of conduct, governing bodies, hearings and tribunals. As I mentioned in Chapter one, the South Africa Schools Act (Act 10, 1996) prohibits corporal punishment of learners at schools. According to The South African Schools Act (Act 8, 1996) the governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners. It must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment and must contain provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of learners involved in disciplinary proceedings. The governing body of a school may,

after a fair hearing, suspend a learner as a correctional measure for no longer than one week.

Where counseling and pastoral care of learners is limited issues of discipline are likely to be handled insensitively or mechanistically. Distancing teachers from the learners means teachers are denied the opportunity of communicating firmly but consistently what is not acceptable in terms of behaviour and challenging adolescent beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. Devine (1996) suggests that the distancing of teachers from the discipline process creates and fosters a culture of violence in school.

As I argue in Chapter four, while Sunville made an equal formal offer of learning to boys and girls, it promoted segregation in choice of subject areas. Certain subjects were seen to be the domain of boys while other subjects were the domain of girls. At Sunville, the technical subjects were the domain of the boys and the male teachers. The next section looks at the role that the curriculum plays in shaping gender patterning and gender boundaries.

2.6.3 The Role of the Curriculum – Gender Patterning and Boundaries

A particularly important symbolic structure in education is the gendering of knowledge – the defining of certain areas of the curriculum as masculine and others as feminine.

Riddell (1992) found that both genders actively reinforced gender boundaries through their perceptions of certain subjects as being male or female; boys tended to emphasise the importance for girls of the stereotypically feminine subjects, while defending their dominance of science and technology on the grounds of mental ability and physical strength. I provide strong evidence of this in Chapter four.

Riddell (1992) further argues that both girls and boys use each other as a negative reference group in the maintenance of gender boundaries; girls saw doing stereotypically male subjects like Physics as a threat to their feminine identity and similar issues were

faced by boys opting for home economics. Attar (1990) found that boys studying Home Economics had a very different attitude to it from that of girls, taking it much less seriously and treating it as a fun activity; this was reflected in teachers' low expectations of boys' performance. At the same time the teachers in Riddell's (1992) study encouraged boys to opt for girls' subjects by saying that they would be better at them than the girls. In my study I found that the female teachers in particular, discouraged boys from taking girls' subjects citing reasons such as behavioural and attitude problems. However, I found that in many cases boys at Sunville that took Hotel Keeping had previously failed their grade and were looking for something enjoyable and easy.

Schools do not merely reflect the dominant sexual and gender ideology of the wider society, but actively produce gender and heterosexual divisions. At the same time, schooling may be a potentially significant public site that enables individual young people to develop non-traditional gender identities (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). In this study I found evidence for both arguments and was careful not to polarise gender differences (Chapter four).

The work by gender theorists discussed in the next section allowed me to be sensitive to the existence of the different types of identities and behaviour among the boys and the different ways of talking about masculinity.

2.7 The Construction of Masculinities

Connell (1995) suggests that rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a character, type or norm), we ought to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gender. This study adopts the above approach in investigating the construction of masculinity in a school setting.

2.7.1 Theories of Masculinity

There is a range of ways of conceptualising masculinity. It must be noted that although conceptions of masculinity convey different meanings and understandings within and

across traditional disciplines, they are rarely explicitly defined (Skelton, 2001). Different theoretical perspectives have their own contributions to make in understanding men and their experiences. While the theories below are not relevant to my study I acknowledge them without going into a detailed explanation of them.

Psychoanalysts look at the feelings, thoughts and fantasies of their clients in order to make sense of how these various psychic phenomena might be explained in terms of the individual's experience of early social relations – particularly with their parents. Male domination is explained with reference to an individual's psychological development (Mac an Ghaill, 1996). Role theory draws attention to the fact that most people for most of the time behave in ways that are socially prescribed. To be a man, they suggest, is to play a certain role. Masculinity represents just a set of lines and stage directions, which males have to learn to perform (Hargreaves, 1986). Although it is important to note the contribution of these theories to understanding masculinity, my study operates from a position which treats subjects in complex and fluid ways taking into account the individual's interaction, dynamisms and contradictions in handling conflict. As a means of explaining/exploring configurations of masculinity in conflict situations it would be useful to adopt a social practice approach, more especially that offered by Connell (1987, 1989, 1995, 2000). In this study I do not use psychoanalysis or role theory. Role theory is fixed and does not take into account power and a range of other issues, and psychoanalysis pays little attention to group dynamics and contexts (especially institutional ones) and my study is keenly interested in these elements.

Connell's (1995) starting point is that gender is a way in which social practice is ordered. In sex role theory, socialisation is transmitted from a culture to its inhabitants, and tends to be something of a one-way process. But for Connell (1995), social practice interacts with, and is responsive to particular situations as well as being generated within different structures of social relations. She further argues that we find the gender configuration of practice however we slice the world and whatever unit of analysis we choose. The most familiar is the individual life course, the basis of common sense notions of masculinity. This approach is useful and insightful in my study of masculinities, conflict and violence.

Connell (1995) acknowledges that while there are many modes of masculinity, it is possible to identify certain configurations of masculinity on the basis of general social, cultural and institutional patterns of power and meaning, and to discern how they are constructed in relation to each other. She offers four categories of masculinities (dominant or hegemonic, complicit, submissive or subordinate, and oppositional or protest). However it would be naïve to assume that boys' behaviour in conflict situations will fit neatly into these conceptualisations of masculinity because these are just categories designed to make sense of difference rather than fixed 'types' into which individuals or actions can be slotted.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is now widely used in discussions of masculinity and refers to those dominant and dominating forms of masculinity which claim the highest status and exercise the greatest influence and authority. Hegemonic masculinity makes its claims and asserts its authority through many cultural and institutional practices – particularly the global image media and the state, and although it does not necessarily involve physical violence, it is often underwritten by the threat of such violence (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997). Hegemonic masculinity is associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power and competitiveness and the subordination of gay men (Connell, 1995). The interviews conducted by Frosh et al (2002) with 11-14 year-old boys in a London school, on features that boys identify as making for popularity reveal striking similarities to those identified by Connell (1995) and other researchers as features of hegemonic masculinity.

Subordinate masculinity stands in direct opposition to hegemonic masculinity and is both repressed and oppressed by it. As Connell (1995) says, it is 'expelled from the circle' of masculine legitimacy. Gay masculinities feature in this category. Any major attachment to 'the feminine' is likely to propel its owner into this category and make him the subject of various forms of violence. In interviews with gay men about their experiences and identities at school, Epstein (1997) found, that homophobia was expressed towards non-macho boys and that these boys were termed, 'wussie' and 'girl'. Willis's (1977) study of

white working class boys (the 'lads') also found that the boys placed strong emphasis on heterosexual sex and behaviour that challenged this orientation was seen as 'sissy' behaviour.

Hegemonic masculinity is the standard bearer of what it means to be a 'real' man or boy and many males draw inspiration from its cultural library of resources. Nonetheless, few men can live up to its rigorous standards. Many may try and many may not, but either way, according to Connell (1995), they benefit from the patriarchal dividend. "The advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women and … without the tensions of being the front line troops of patriarchy" (p79). In this sense Connell says that in the politics of gender they are complicit with hegemonic forms of masculinity even if they fail to live up to and do not draw moral inspiration from their imperatives.

There is a growing body of literature on 'black masculinity' in the United States and Britain. What this literature has in common is the way it locates this form of masculinity as oppositional. This masculinity was forged as part of the process of adolescent psychosexual development in a context of survivalist peer group culture. It is an inversion of the dominant white adult masculinities (Morrell, 1998b). In a multiracial, unequal society like South Africa, race continues to be important in that configurations of masculinity are still highly raced. However, the category 'black' is complex because it may sometime refer to all people who are not white, but at other times may refer only to Africans (and this excludes Indian South Africans and Coloureds). I will take this up further in the next section.

Kenway (1995) argues that masculinity is not static but historically and spatially situated and evolving. It arises through the individual's interaction with both the dynamisms and contradictions within and between immediate situations and broader social structures. Issues of social class, ethnicity, age, race and sexuality influence these broader social structures and create an imbalance of power between males and females and males and males (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

In contemporary society, the construction of gender identities involves a narrowing of choices which takes place in the context of other overlapping layers of identity construction, most notably and obviously those of class and, especially race (Frosh et al, 2002). Race and class are central to the process of generating masculinities. In the next section I review literature that examines how gender intersects with class and race in the formation of masculinities.

2.7.2 The Relevance of Race, Ethnicity and Class in the Construction of Masculinities

More recent international school-based ethnographies on boys, for example Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Sewell (1997) have examined how gender intersects with race in the formation of masculinities and have found that identities of particular boys have been produced collectively as a way of dealing with and connecting with their particular race and environment. However it is essential to note that race (understood in biological terms) is not important in and of itself; rather it is an element of identity that it plays a role being mobilised in various ways. The place of race in identity construction occurs within a national context in which space remains racialised and against an historical backdrop of apartheid and racial oppression.

There are clear relations between race, ethnicity and social class and the construction of masculine identities (Connell, 1995; Skelton, 2001; Pattman et al, 1998). In this review I will explore the role of race, ethnicity and class in inscribing masculine ideals and attitudes. According to Morrell (1998a) race in the metropolis is not the same as race in South Africa. He further argues that while there are obvious similarities between the experiences of black people and the development of racism in say, the USA and countries like South Africa where rule has been exercised by white settlers, there are equally significant differences. The most obvious is that indigenous social institutions continue to exert a residual influence (Morrell, 1998b). White minority rule (especially as apartheid) was removed in 1994 and now the ANC (an African majority party with an aggressive racial and nationalist policy that promotes African interests in politics and the economy)

is in power. Although the ANC was initially explicitly committed to non-racialism, it has shifted in the last decade. Racial rhetoric is now strident and has re-opened racial divisions which the concept of the 'rainbow nation' was designed to heal.

The divided history of South Africa has left the region with a highly complex mix of gender regimes and identities. Race, class, geographical location and many other factors are constitutive of gender identities and affect the gender regimes which exist in the institutions and milieu of this country. These have to be central in any gender analysis and are helpful in showing how misleading masculine essentialism is.

The study of Indian masculinities has been very limited both internationally and in South Africa. 'Indian' is an invented term that conceals massive economic and religious differences. My study has some connection with Vahed's (2004) analysis because many of Chatsworth's residents are relatives of indentured labourers – and have the memory and the current poverty to link them to this gendered masculine legacy. The Indian population has a number of religions which include Muslim, Hindu and Christian. Muslim gender relations are likely to be very different but there have been no recent studies of this in South Africa.

While Morrell (1998b) refers to the indigenous masculinity of African men in South Africa as African masculinity, Vahed (2004) refers to the masculinity of Indian migrants as indentured masculinity. I highlight the diversity of the Indian population, especially that of Chatsworth, in Chapter one. Denied entry into the settler society, Indian immigrants developed a form of indentured masculinity, which reflected the conditions under which they lived and worked. Hard physical labour, constant threats of physical beatings, isolation, inadequate housing, abuse and extortion had major implications for the ways in which 'being a man' were understood and legitimated. Vahed (2004) maintains that palliatives like alcohol, Indian hemp (dagga) and gambling were key features of indentured masculinity. Drunkenness often resulted in violence. Violence was

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a feature of indenture in the workplace and in leisure time pursuits. For many the family was another arena of violence, with gross exploitation of women by men.

Contact between African and Indian men created tension and distrust in the early decades of the twentieth century. The colonial state employed Africans, for example, to track down Indian deserters, while individual white employers often used Africans to carry out beatings on Indians. The structure of domination on plantations was racialised as it pitted Africans against Indians, creating racial tensions which manifested themselves on several occasions during the twentieth century (Vahed, 2004). It is impossible to predict how many of the ideas developed from historically and culturally mediated codes were carried into contemporary emerging masculinities, but race and ethnicity are embroiled and invested in ways in which masculinities are experienced. The tensions between Indians and Africans however have an historical background that dates back to the 1900s.

Since the arrival of the first Indians in Natal in 1860 there had been a steady increase in the population of Indians in Natal and by 1897 the Indian population outnumbered the whites. Whites however, considered Indians to be more akin to themselves than Africans in terms of physical appearance, lighter skins and straight hair and valued many Indian skills like the cuisine. At the same time opportunities being given to Africans were diminishing. This served to widen the racial divide and create tensions between Indians and Africans in Natal (Lambert and Morrell, 1996).

The pressures for economic space and political rights between Africans and Indians continued to mount during the decades 1900 to 1940. The communal violence between Indians and Africans in 1949 was an expression of these pressures (Chetty cited in Morrell, 1986). The violence in 1949 was concentrated mostly in Inanda and Cato Manor where a substantial Indian community lived among Africans. Since then, new sets of pressures continue to emerge, most of them around political rights, access to resources and competition for employment which feeds into the current tensions between Africans and Indians in the post apartheid era.

The impact of colonialism on the construction of African masculinity is not well documented but there is every reason to believe that it was quite severe (Connell, 2000). Structures of indigenous society and the indigenous gender order were disrupted by a number of forces, notably the gendered phenomenon of migrant labour (Moodie and Ndatshe, 1994). The varied course of resistance to colonisation is also likely to have affected the making of African masculinities. According to Morrell (1996) this is clear in the region of Natal in South Africa, where the sustained resistance of the Zulu kingdom to colonisation was key to the mobilisation of ethnic national masculine identities in the twentieth century.

Morrell (1998b) argues that the old orthodoxy that colonialism swept all before it, profoundly transforming life and shaping societies on its own terms, is no longer tenable. New research which highlights cultural (rather than political or economic) contestation, finds that the colonised were not powerless, nor did the coloniser operate exclusively on his or her terms. In South Africa particularly when agricultural production still sustained the household as a productive unit and thus entrenched patriarchal relations in the world of work, white masculinity was not hegemonic. African masculinity was hegemonic. It will require close examination of existing hegemonic anthropological texts to flesh this out. The process by which boys became men (including importantly initiation/ circumcision) will give a sense of how masculinities were formed. The sexual division of labour, the male dominated social and political hierarchies, the organisation of leisure time and the gendered nature of space will be important in establishing the nature of hegemonic masculinity. However, the great differences between societies in South Africa will need to be taken into account when refining the concept of African masculinities.

According to Morrell (1998b) discussions of African masculinity have to take into account both critical changes and continuities. In the decline of the indigenous age cohort we find two important themes: the age-old challenge by the young of the old and the emergence of new black masculinities in new (urban) contexts. The generational struggle involved open defiance of the authority of elders and flagrant disregard for custom. This

process was accompanied by a challenge to the authority of elders and, in the cities, with a rejection of traditional ways. Yet in many of these associations boys were still brought to manhood in a process that involved teaching of ritual and respect. Mchunu (2007), in his study of young Zulu males in KwaZulu-Natal, found that there was a struggle between younger males and older males emanating from a competition for respect. He argues that respect is a key feature in constructions of traditional Zulu masculinity. This confrontation seems to have been similar to the sub-cultural opposition of the (white) Ducktails in that it flouted convention and put a premium on independence rather than fealty. The Ducktail youth subculture that emerged in South Africa in post world war two was a vehicle for youth to indulge in and express their various and often ambiguous identities and develop their own code of respect (Mooney, 2005).

According to Ratele (2001) the Black man in South Africa today is yet to receive any serious attention and that such attention should form part of the recent attempts to understand local masculinities and male behaviour in general. In his study of Black men who are professionals in South Africa after apartheid, Ratele (2001) found that their outlook reflects the material ambitions of a new middle class but they still have strong connections with the apartheid past. Not only were their formative life experiences framed by apartheid, but they remain immersed in a symbolic and cultural world that was until recently distinct from the White world of business and other professionals. Ratele argues that while there can be no question that conditions in apartheid South Africa have affected constructions of masculinity it is dangerous to view such conditions in a deterministic way. Ratele found that far from being free of the structures of apartheid, Black men are still caught up and support oppressive discourses which that structure also supported.

According to Frosh et al (2002), ethnicity and racialised difference are powerfully intertwined with emerging masculinities, not because of pre-existing and immutable differences between cultures but because constructions of cultural diversity are crucial elements in social contexts out of which masculinities emerge.

Scholars of masculinity note that there are divisions of interest among men. These interests are influenced by various social factors – race, class, ethnicity, etc. – but are also context and time specific which means that men can and do occupy different subject positions from time to time. Constructions of masculinities are individual projects as well as collective efforts.

Several studies (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Redman and Mac an Ghaill, 1997; Sewell, 1997) have focused on how masculinities are constructed around opposing discourses and have found varying and different ways in which boys construct their masculinity.

Male friendship is an important contributor to the construction of masculinity. In this study many boys placed a great deal of emphasis on friends. They mentioned that they liked school because of their friends, they readily defended their friends (sometimes unconditionally), they sought to impress and win approval from friends and they enjoyed spending time with them in and out of school. As we shall see (in Chapters five and six) I found that in many cases the boys who I met during the course of this research project used the term 'friend' loosely and often the relationships they formed lacked depth and intensity. In these contexts 'friends' were members of male peer groups to which boys were attached and owed allegiance. Morrell (1994a) in a study of white secondary school boys in colonial Natal differentiates between close friendships, friendship groups and gangs. He found that boys belonging to the friendship groups enjoyed doing things together like breaking bounds at night, gorging on food, gossiping and generally spending time together. He distinguished this informal collective from gangs, which were more organised and often associated with bullying. At the other extreme he noted that boys sometimes developed close relationships with one or two other boys, which provided support and involved sensitivity, trust and intimacy. Gang membership stressed solidarity and loyalty while close friendships involved warmth and support. In my study, boys tended to be members of friendship groups or gangs rather than having close relations with one or two other boys.

2.7.3 Masculinities and Friendship

Friendships are established by mutual consent between two or more people and represent an attraction based on personal choice. Yet such choices are a consequence of each individual's location in the social structure. Friendships tend to occur between people with similar social characteristics (Allan, 1989).

Allan (1989) argues that friendship is influenced by gender, but exactly in what way depends on the interaction with other factors that collectively shape the personal space for sociability that people have. Much of the early writing on friendships expresses the view that women's friends are seen as expressive and men's as instrumental. Bell (1981) interviewed about 200 men and women in the United States about their friendships and found that women were likely to seek a friend who could be a confidante, a friend who would help them grow as a person, while men were more likely to seek a friend with similar interests, someone to have fun with. Caldwell and Peplau (1982) found in their study in California that young men and women showed similar differences in their expectations of friends. The majority of young men sought friends who liked to do the same things rather than a friend who felt the same way about things. The majority of young women wanted friends who shared the same feelings. But as men's friendships have become domesticated and reshaped their emphasis has changed. Private intimacy has replaced public sociability. Men's friendships have come to be defined as women's always have been – relations of emotional support and companionship. Men are therefore now being raised in a culture with a mixed message: Strive for healthy, emotionally intimate friendships but be careful – if you appear too intimate with another man you might be negatively labelled as a homosexual (Nardi, 1992).

When examining men's friendships from the perspective of other cultures the situation is quite different. Not enough research has been done on this subject to draw valid generalisations but what investigation has been done shows different patterns from one culture to another. Within any particular culture there are variations based on class, ethnic background, sexuality and other differences. Masculinity, no less than other aspects of

personality is a socially constructed achieved status. The lack of intimacy and demonstrated affection among Western men is unlike the situation in many other cultures. While there is no dearth of media portrayals of black men as sexual superstuds, athletes, and rapacious criminals, research on heterosexual black men's same sex friendships is virtually non-existent. The work done by Franklin (1992) sheds some light on black men's same sex friendships in the United States. According to interview responses with working class black men and informal conversations about same sex friendships Franklin found that expectations of loyalty, altruism and closeness were essential features of their friendship associations. These men often spoke quite seriously about their feelings for their friends, which reflected that their friendships were holistic, intense and empathetic and seemed to be high in self-disclosure and intimacy.

For the purposes of this study (which does not focus explicitly on men's friendship) I have reviewed literature that sheds light on how different groups manifest different patterns of friendship and highlighted that there are a variety of perspectives on the issue of men's friendships. In Chapter six we see the way in which disagreement and conflict escalated into physical confrontation at Sunville and this had a lot to do with pre-existing constructions of masculinity which in turn impacted on the way the boys related to one another, in friendship and enmity. In the next section I look at the link between masculinity and violence with a focus on how boys construct their masculinity.

2.8 Boys, Masculinity and Violence

Much of the work on masculinity has assumed that masculine gender role socialisation intrinsically fosters aggression and violence. Even works that avoid linear and deterministic assumptions about masculinity nevertheless assert a close relationship between hegemonic masculinity and violence. This literature, for example, includes insightful work on how boys and men talk about violence. The literature, by and large, assumes that aggression automatically leads to violence, that violent masculinities are only violent (rather than violent at particular times under particular circumstances).

Indeed, according to Messerschmidt (cited in Mac an Ghaill, 1996), even those specifically aggressive, competitive, controlling and dominant masculinities express themselves differently in relation to violence depending on prevalent structural potentials and constraints. The literature on masculinity, however, seldom examines the way in which violence occurs, is initiated or defused. The micro-dynamics of violence have largely been ignored. This study looks at the way in which physical violence happens, arguing that it is generally the culmination of a process, but that violence is never the automatic outcome of disagreement or conflict.

According to Barker (2005), young men in Brazil, the United States, Nigeria and the Caribbean answered in common ways when asked what it meant to be man. Showing a firm attitude and standing up for yourself was a popular mandate. This mandate almost always involved the use of violence.

Recent British school-based ethnographies on boys, for example those of Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Sewell (1997) have examined how gender intersects with violence and aggression in the formation of masculinities. Both illustrate how these masculinities are structured as relations of power and how they are mediated by sexualised constructions of masculinity. Addressing black masculinities as a collective response to a racist culture, Sewell (1997) explored how black boys in London survive modern schooling. The black boys were often harassed, threatened and even beaten up by their white working class counterparts but distanced themselves from violence and aggression. He found that many of these boys located themselves in a 'phallocentric framework', positioning themselves as superior to white and Asian students in terms of their sexual attractiveness, style, creativity and hardness. They referred to white boys as 'pussies' (female) and 'batty men' (homosexuals) and, in support of this, spoke of white boys' fears about doing 'daring' or 'up front' scams. The black boys developed a type of hyper-masculinity with emphasis on appearance, style and gesture. These findings parallel some of the findings of my own study (Chapter seven) where the 'non-violent' boys saw themselves as superior to the 'violent' boys and focused on other things (for example sporting prowess, clothing and

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appearance) that they believed were more important than violence as an indicator of masculinity.

Connolly (1998) in a study of white working class adolescents boys in London, found that whereas white and black boys fought and had cussing matches in public places, they would 'swoop' on Asian boys, hitting them and calling them names. The style of such confrontations prevented the Asian boys from effectively defending themselves and therefore "proving" themselves as competent fighters (p126). The Asian boys however constructed their masculine identity in different ways, rejecting violence although many of them were competent fighters. These findings informed my analysis of some of the violent incidents that occurred at Sunville, as we will see in Chapter seven, where some of the African boys refused to use violence when provoked by the Indian boys, although the African boys were physically bigger and stronger.

The literature reviewed above is based on research in the United Kingdom and other countries which by and large does not readily fit into the South African setting. We cannot generalise findings from research in other countries and assume that they will be relevant to the South African context. While research in South Africa is not as extensive as in the United Kingdom and other countries, researchers of masculinity working in South African schools have drawn similar conclusions regarding the link between violence and the construction of masculinity. For example, Gibson and Lindegaard (2007) researching school-boys in Cape Town, South Africa, reveal that for boys in their study being a man was about being perceived as a man, which for these boys meant being bold, speedy and strong. To be accepted as masculine also meant being able to react violently or use violence, otherwise you were perceived as feminised, as a 'soft boy'.

Lindegger and Maxwell's (2007) study of adolescent school-going boys in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, reveals findings that are much more complex than those of Gibson and Lindegaard (2007). The boys in Lindegger and Maxwell's study are part of a particular middle class masculinity and have a very ambiguous relationship to violence,

which they both reject and embrace. When the boys were asked in focus group interviews what the desirable characteristics of a man were, their response was often first in negative terms. Violent behaviour was prevalent in the list of negative behaviours provided by the boys. The boys offered insight into aspects of masculinity which included expressing aggression but not hurt or weakness. The boys were under enormous pressure to conform to public standards of hegemonic masculinity which included being in positions of power and being able to use violence as a controlling mechanism. Peers were mutually involved in participating in the endorsement of hegemonic norms, pressuring peers to conform to these norms, and giving others the impression of personal conformity to these gendered norms as criteria of acceptable masculinity. The boys in my study and that of Gibson and Lindegaard (2007) were working class and the boys in Lindegger and Maxwell's (2007) study were middle class. However there are parallels between the findings of the above two studies and my study (Chapters five, six, seven).

Alternative masculinities are not vested in asserting control over other boys, buying into peer pressure and trying to prove manhood by using violence. I focus on these types of masculinities in Chapter seven. In the next section I review literature that explores versions of manhood that are resistant to the traditional patriarchal, violent and rigid versions of manhood.

2.9 Masculinity and Non-Violence – Alternative Masculinities

While it is important that research draws attention to the oppressive ways in which masculinities are constructed, it also needs to be attentive to the ways, contexts and times in which men inhabit alternative (not necessarily subordinate) masculinities. For much of this century there has been a gradually increasing awareness of the possibility of change in gender (Connell, 2000). The popular commentators on masculinity such as Connell (1995; 2000), Mac an Ghaill (1996), Frosh et al (2002) and Morrell (2002) have made substantial contributions to the new generation of social research on masculinities and change in masculinities. Although this study is not about gender politics per se it is

important and useful to have some conception of where the politics is heading and what impact it is having on male behaviour.

In the1970s a genre of books gave resonance to modest reform proposals and a vague rhetoric of change. In the next 20 years these beliefs gained support and momentum and a new 'male role', began to emerge. It is not hard to show that there is some connection between gender and violence and that men in general gain the patriarchal dividend; however, not all men are corporate executives or mass killers. According to Connell (2000) specific groups of men gain very little from it. For instance, working class youth, economically dispossessed by structural unemployment, may have no economic advantage over the women in their communities. Other groups of men pay part of the price, alongside women, for the maintenance of an unequal gender order. Gay men are systematically made targets of prejudice and violence. Effeminate and wimpish men are constantly put down. Black men in the United States (as in South Africa) suffer massively higher levels of lethal violence than white men. Morrell (2002) argues that men have a vested interest in gender change because they, along with women, also suffer the consequences of the present gender order.

There are, then, divisions of interest among men on gender issues. There are individual as well as collective efforts to create new models of masculinity and new ways of 'being men' (Morrell, 2002). Further, many interests are relational rather than egotistic. That is, they are constituted in the social relations one shares with other people. Most men have relational interests that they share with other women. For instance, as parents they need child-care provision and good health services for children, or as workers, they need improved conditions in terms of job security and health and safety. Aboriginal men share with Aboriginal women an interest in ending racism. Gay men share with lesbians an interest in fighting sex-based discrimination. Very few men have a life-world that is blocked off from women – that is genuinely a 'separate sphere'. In each of these relationships men have an interest in gender equitable reform.

Barker (2005) argues that there are always voices of resistance – young men who are able to see the gender matrix for what it is: a flimsy sometimes harmful way to organise the world and their personal lives. These young men who 'resist' these rigid or violent versions of manhood often like being boys or men in some traditional ways, such as participating in sports, but they question the notions that women deserve to be beaten, or that caring for children is the work of women or that a man must fight if he is insulted. The boys in my study who resisted the violent versions of masculinity also mentioned other ways in which they asserted their masculinity. Barker (2005) stresses that it is important to listen to these voices and to seek to understand what factors make it possible for young men to become respectful, non-violent and caring in their interpersonal relationships.

Frosh et al (2002) found that one strategy used by boys to resist the notion of hegemonic masculinities was to claim to be above it. Boys did this in a number of ways: they asserted their authenticity (in contradistinction from acting), claimed a particular skill, or made claims to maturity or to being egalitarian or enforcing justice. One boy in particular gave accounts of identifying with girls and constructed himself as different from, and better than boys in general. In my study (Chapter seven) the 'non violent' boys positioned themselves as being morally superior to the 'violent' boys.

Sewell's (1997) study of black boys in London refers to strategies used by boys who disparaged others' obsessive interest in sport and similar signifiers of hegemonic masculinity because they believed it was a fool's option leading nowhere. These findings resonate with the research of Edley and Wetherell (1997). They report how non-rugby playing boys challenged the domination of rugby players at a private single-sex school by portraying them as "unthinking conformists, incapable, or even scared perhaps of doing their own thing" (p211). While there is a constant process of reproducing and defending the gender power of men, there are also moves to create new models of masculinity and new ways of 'being men' (Morrell, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, anybody has the capacity for violence and can be violent. So non-violent masculinities should not be understood as suggesting that there are people around who are intrinsically non-violent or will never be violent. This is the naïve thinking which can also be found in writings on 'new men'. As Farrell's (1994) (rather right wing) tome argues, men often need to be physically assertive (their protector role) and playing this role may well involve violence. Historically men have defended children, women and so on. Men often play the role of bodyguard and use violence to defend their subjects. So we need to get away from the idea that there is a magical ideal of the totally non-violent man.

Pacifists offer Gandhi and the Dalai Lama as non-violent models of male behaviour. They link the goal of peace directly to the choice of refraining from violence. While I am in sympathy with this message, my thesis explores the minor miracle of peace when the expectation in conflict situations is of violence. If we all have the capacity for violence, then equally we all have the capacity for peace. If we look at power and violence then we forget and don't see that men are caring, have emotions and probably want peace and security as much as all other sentient beings. As Morrell (2002) points out, referring to a United States research project (the five in six project), five out of every six men were not violent towards their partners. Morrell (2002) further reports that his survey of men's movements and gender transformation has found evidence that men are already engaged in reaching out and embracing qualities of caring, respect, non-violence and peace thereby breaking free from the patriarchal models of men in charge (boss), the aggressor and extollers of violence. There is evidence of new models of masculinity and new ways of 'being men'.

2.10 Schoolgirl Identities

In this section I review gender research on femininities. While girls are not a focus of this study it is important to understand how they negotiate their identity since girls are active players in the construction of boys' identities (Frosh et al, 2002). According to Redman

(2001) girlfriends provide boys with a means of locating themselves as heterosexual. We therefore cannot underestimate the role that girls play in shaping masculine identity.

The heterosexual masculine identity of Sunville boys was heavily invested in romantic relations with girls. Having a girlfriend and fighting over girls was one way for boys to distance themselves from homosexuality and construct a heterosexual masculine image. Fighting for girls was an effective way to publicly validate their masculinity, especially with male friends (Chapter six). As we will see in this section boys play an integral part in the manner in which girls construct their identity. In examining how girls construct their identity I gained insights into girls' expectations of boys and this helped me to analyse boy's behaviour in conflict situations when girls were involved.

Since the early 1990s young womanhood has become a topic central to debates about cultural and economic change within Western societies. Popular culture, public policy, academic enquiry and the private sector now place unprecedented interest in the fortunes of young women. Recent times have seen a fiery generational contest within feminism, sociological interest in young women as the new professionals and educational discourse and policy preoccupied with girls outperforming boys (Harris, 2004).

Currie and Kelly (2006), in their study of adolescent schoolgirls in the United Kingdom, found that the girls placed significant value on popularity. Popularity was often measured by how a girl interacts with boys. Currie and Kelly (2006) found that at virtually all the schools the girls claimed that having attention from boys was a source of power. Although it is not mentioned here fighting over a girl is a formidable way of showing her attention. As mentioned earlier, at Sunville, boys fought over girls and although it might have been for different reasons the result was that the girl got attention and this increased her popularity (Chapter six). At the same time getting rejected by a boy made a girl unpopular. On the other hand, the popular girls did not date certain type of boys. This section shows that relationships between boys and girls are important to the way in which they construct their identity.

Seven going on Seventeen: Tween Studies in the Culture of Girlhood (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2005) offers an excellent account of the development of girlhood in teenage girls and throughout the volume there is a range of disciplinary interests and contrasting theoretical perspectives that question received assumptions about girls, girlhood and girl culture. From all the contributions in this volume, it is apparent that developing girlhood in a school setting involves overt and covert negotiations that are contingent upon the meanings that are created within its social world, meanings that differ from city to city, neighbourhood to neighbourhood and school to school.

While boys are an important component in developing girlhood in a school setting, I found that girls played an equally important role in the construction of masculinities among boys at Sunville.

2.11 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the presentation and analysis of the research data which follows shortly. This thesis proceeds from some, by now fairly standard starting points: that there are varying ways in which masculinity is performed and that we can make sense of these different performances by using a framework that distinguishes different collective expressions of masculinity and associates these with differences in gender power (Connell, 1995).

The theoretical frame in much of this chapter is cast in a socio-constructivist approach which is guided by the perspective that gender is socially constructed, based on a growing body of evidence suggesting that masculinity and femininity are constructed differently according to the social conditions in which people are situated.

Two of the key concepts of this thesis are conflict and violence. Conflict is understood to be a disagreement, dispute or difference of opinion. Violence is taken to mean 'physical violence'. Physical violence is therefore referred to as 'beating' which includes acts such as hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, stabbing or any other act that causes physical pain or injury to a person.

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology used in order to gather and analyse the data in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This research was conducted between January 2006 and December 2008 in Sunville Secondary situated in Chatsworth. I have discussed the research site in Chapter one. As mentioned earlier I have been a teacher at this school since 1993 and I drew on my experience of 15 years at this school to gather and analyse data . The interviews and in-depth observations however were conducted between 2006 and 2008. I identified 10 boys to be the main respondents in this study. All the boys were in grade 10 and between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. There were four Indian, four African and two coloured boys in the sample whom I have already introduced to the reader in Chapter one. In addition, there were other boys who I spoke to informally especially after violent incidents. These boys also made valuable contributions to this study.

This chapter outlines the research methods and design that was used to generate answers to my research questions. This study is a qualitative ethnography which uses various methods of data gathering, data making and data analysis. I provide theoretical justification for the design and indicate how the methods were applied practically in the process of conducting the research.

In trying to find a methodology that would suit the research goals of this study I contemplated many approaches and instruments before coming to the realisation that no one method could provide answers to the questions. Among the methodologies I considered were survey and other questionnaire type approaches but I realised that this would not be able to capture important data like body language, facial expressions, pauses and tone of voice. Nor do these quantitative approaches provide an opportunity to follow up on responses to elicit deeper understandings of interviewees' responses. In light of these limitations I chose qualitative research methods to generate data for this

study. In the next section I outline the research design of this study and then go on to discuss the research methodology.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Design

In this study I adopted a qualitative approach enabling me to engage inter-subjectively and dialogically with the subjects in ways that would generate insights that are central to the configurations of masculinities in relation to conflict, violence and peace (Davies, 1982). Qualitative researchers are concerned with how things work in a particular context (Mason, 2002). Qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data (Mason, 2002), thus providing a further rationale for choosing this method.

Qualitative research should be strategically conducted, yet flexible and contextual. This means that researchers should be sensitive to the changing contexts and situations in which the research takes place (Mason, 2002). In analysing the data I was sensitive to the constellation of contextual factors which were or could be themselves implicated in the causes of provocation and violence and I was mindful that behaviour is not static and that boys will behave in different ways in different situations. I argue that there are a number of contextual factors (for example tone of voice, existing relationship between the boys, the presence of an audience, history or prelude to the provocation) that feed into the events that follow a provocation and which explain whether provocation leads to escalation of conflict and violence or whether the conflict is peacefully resolved and fizzles out. Therefore the contexts influence how provocations are received and whether this provocation leads to conflict and violence.

Qualitative research should produce explanations or arguments rather than offering mere descriptions. A researcher should not simply describe something, or explore what is happening. Qualitative researchers must recognise that they are producing arguments and are explicit about the logic on which these are based (Patton, 1990, Mason, 2002).

Throughout this thesis I sought to eschew a conception of qualitative inquiry where the researcher simply 'tells it like it is' representing social reality in an unproblematic fashion. One of the arguments I make, is that while there were high levels of tension at Sunville, not all conflict situations led to violence. Some conflict situations had peaceful resolutions. I argue that aggression does not automatically lead to violence. I also argue that while it is assumed that masculine gender role socialisation intrinsically fosters aggression and violence, boys who subscribe to hegemonic versions of masculinity are not always violent but rather may act violently at particular times under particular circumstances.

Qualitative design involves a depth of understanding of human behaviour rather than quantity, as well as a thick, rich and deep interpretation and description of behaviour as related by the participants (Henning et al, 2004). In keeping with the concept of thick description I spent sufficient time in the setting where the participants carried out their everyday tasks and their daily conversations. I was able to capture the everyday practices of the boys and the climate and culture of the school through observations and interviews which allowed me to render a thick description.

The qualitative research process involves the generic activities of epistemology and ontology (Patton, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Mason, 2002). The knowledge or evidence of the social world can be generated by observing, or participating in, or experiencing 'natural' or 'real life' settings, interactive settings and so on. Epistemology may also be based on the premise that different kinds of settings, situations and interactions 'reveal data' in multidimensional ways, and it is possible for a researcher to be an interpreter or 'knower' in these circumstances precisely because of shared experience and participation. In other words they know what the experience of the social setting feels like, although of course not necessarily from the perspective of all participants and actors involved. The researcher in this sense is epistemologically privileged (Henning et al, 2004). In my study, to a certain degree, I had epistemological privilege since I had been a teacher at the school for the past 15 years. I had knowledge of the climate and culture of the school and a fairly good idea of the gender relations that

existed in this school. I was aware of the internal set of gender arrangements of this school. In other words I had prior knowledge of how the gender regime operated as well as experience of the social settings of Sunville.

A qualitative approach to research has ontological perspectives which regard as central the interactions, actions and behaviour and the way people interpret these and act on them as central (Mason, 2002). Researchers working in this tradition assume that people's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This approach suited my study in that I strove to obtain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the boys' behavior, especially in conflict situations, through the methods of observation and interviewing.

Researchers have for many years been practising qualitative research in the form of ethnography (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This study also adopts a qualitative approach in the form of ethnography.

3.2.1.1. Ethnography

As mentioned earlier I used an ethnographic approach to collecting data. Like many other approaches to social research, ethnography does not lend itself to short pithy definitions. However I have used the following definition of ethnography which is apt in an educational setting:

> An approach to social research based on the first hand experience of social action within a discrete location in which the objective is to collect data which will convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of those which inhabit the location (Pole and Morrison, 2003: 16).

Ethnography requires researchers to get up close in order to describe and interpret meanings, behaviours, events, institutions and locations. Getting up close has specific implications for the ethnographer. These include particular types of association between researcher and research informant, and data collection methods that prioritise 'rich' and

'deep' understandings of, and immersion in, the educational 'field' or setting that is the topic of interest (Pole and Morrison, 2003). This approach suited my project as I needed to get up close in order to describe and interpret behaviours in conflict situations within the gender regime of the school. It further allowed me to use methods that provided rich and deep understandings of the educational setting and of the data collected, for example, to look beyond the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator in a conflict situation. A deep understanding also allowed me to discover that conflict and violence were separate parts of one process and that one does not automatically lead to the other. Face-to-face data collection methods (observation and interviews) and a detailed interrogation of 'talk' and 'interaction' Silverman (2001), which is a hallmark of ethnography Denzen (1970), enabled me to witness aggression but demonstrate that this did not necessarily lead to violence.

Ethnography is concerned with detail, first hand experience and with what might broadly be termed 'an insider perspective' (Pole and Morrison, 2003). From this I was able to yield knowledge about the particular rather than the general, about the processes rather than trends and about interactions rather than generalisations. This required me to be active and reflexive in the data generation and analysis.

3.2.1.2 Reflexivity

Qualitative research should involve critical self-scrutiny by the researcher or active reflexivity. This means that researchers should take stock of their actions and their role in the research process. This is based on the belief that a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating (Mason, 2002). Reflexivity in this sense means thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions and recognising the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) stress the importance of social context of the research in recognising the role of the researcher, not simply in constructing the research but also in taking account of the ways in which he or she undertook the construction. Brewer

(2000) has offered a wider definition of reflexivity to include a critical approach to many aspects of the research process:

> Reflexivity involves reflection by ethnographers on the social processes that impinge upon and influence data. It requires a critical attitude towards data, and the recognition of the influence on research of such factors as the location of the setting, the sensitivity of the topic, power relations in the field and the nature of the social interaction between the researcher and the researched (Brewer, 2000: 127).

By subscribing to the principles of reflexivity of reflecting on the social process and adopting a critical attitude towards the data enabled me to coin the concept of 'autonomous masculinity'. My observations and field notes indicated that some boys chose non-violence in conflict situations. My interviews with these boys confirmed this deduction. At first these boys seemed to adopt a position that challenged the hegemonic masculinity of Sunville but on close reflection of the data and adept observation over a period of time I discovered that they were in fact behaving independently and adopted autonomous positions especially when handling conflict. By using ethnography and reflexivity I was able to unearth this non-hegemonic masculinity, that did not challenge or oppose the hegemonic versions but rather functioned autonomously, which is to say independent of and from the prescriptions of hegemonic masculinity.

In the context of this research, reflexivity was key to the manner in which I conducted the research and to the knowledge constructed from it.

On the one hand, my role as a social scientist was to record what was seen, heard and experienced and to interpret and analyse it; on the other, my role as a teacher was to ensure that there was order and discipline. Later in this chapter I discuss my position as a teacher and researcher and the ethical considerations around this 'dual role'. The importance of reflexivity is highlighted in these sections.

3.2.2 Interpretative Research Approach (Paradigm)

It is common for researchers to conduct interpretive ethnographies. Interpretive approaches see people and their interpretations, perceptions and understandings, as the primary data sources. Interpretivism does not have to rely on 'total immersion in a setting' and can happily support a study which uses interview methods for example, where the aim is to explore people's individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, social norms, and so on. As Blaikie puts it:

> Interpretivists are concerned with understanding the social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities. This everyday reality consists of the meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's actions, social situations and natural and humanly created objects. In short in order to negotiate their way around their world and make sense of it, social actors have to interpret their activities together, and it is these meanings, embedded in language, that constitute their reality (Blaikie, 2000: 115).

An interpretive approach therefore not only sees people as a primary data source, but seeks their perceptions or what Blaikie (2000) calls the 'insider view'. That is, they are concerned with presenting an account that recognises the subjective reality of the experiences of those people who constitute and construct the social world (Pole and Morrison, 2003). Other data sources are also possible according to this approach, for example, texts, but what an interpretivist would want to get out of these would be what they say about or how they are constituted in people's individual or collective meanings.

The interpretive approach helped me to make strong, meaningful and reasonable arguments after searching my data for, and organising it around relevant, interpretive categories or themes. Furthermore, this approach helped me to weave sections of data together (by theme) and to present an argument that was fallibilistic (Seale, 1999).

So far I have outlined the design I adopted to conduct this study. In other words I have discussed the plan that was used to acquire the data as well as to analyze the data. In the next section I discuss the methods that I used to gather and to analyse the data.

3.3 Overview of the Research Methods Used in this Study

Brewer (2000) outlines that the generally accepted view is that method refers to the tools that the researcher might use to gather data, for example, interviews, questionnaires, observation and so on, and to the techniques by which the collected data are analysed, for example close reading of text, content and discursive analysis and computer-aided qualitative data analysis. Methods refer to the rules and procedures that are followed to conduct empirical research consequently. Methods can be seen to relate to the bag from which the researcher selects the most appropriate instrument with which to gather data and subsequently to analyse it.

The two main methods that I used to generate data for this study were observation and semi-structured interviews. These methods proved most useful and produced rich data. Below I discuss these methods and their relevance to my study, after which I proceed to explain how these methods were used specifically to answer the research questions of this study. While I discuss these methods separately, the reality is much less clear cut and insights developed in relation to one method can very often be usefully applied in relation to another (Mason, 2002). Throughout this study I used methods in a fluid and flexible manner. I start with a discussion of observational methods.

Observation allows the researcher to experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting (Mason, 2002). Observational methods usually coincide with the view that social explanations and arguments require depth, complexity, roundedness and multidimensionality in data rather than surface analysis of broad patterns. Explanations are built through some form of grounded or interpretive data analysis. This approach lays some considerable emphasis on the claim that the data were naturally or situationally occurring or at least generated through a contextual setting

rather than being artificially manufactured or reconstructed. As mentioned earlier I conceptualised myself as active and reflexive in the observation process in order to render a thick description. This description is not just an integrated set of facts transcribed from field notes but should capture the everyday practices, the rituals and actions that bind the group of people, the signs and symbols they use to present and represent themselves and the language or variations of language they use.

I started my observation on the first day of the 2006 school year. I tried to take note of as many variables as possible which included learner dress (school uniform, hair and shoes), learner behaviour, teacher attitude to learners, learner's attitude to school and the procedures for the school day. All my observations were written into my journal in detail. I included as much detail as possible in order to generate enough data to render thick description during my analysis. In a similar manner I recorded my observations of episodes in the school over the three year period, 2006 to 2008.

An example of how I conceptualised myself as active and reflexive in the observation process in order to render thick description was my observation of the morning assembly. I carefully observed the assemblies for a three year period (2006 to 2008) making careful notes of the behaviour of the teachers and learners. I wrote down as much detail as possible during my observations. I later reflected on these field-notes in order to gain an understanding of how teacher and learner practices in the assembly influenced the school's gender regime.

I chose observation because the data that I needed to answer some of the research questions (for example: what is the gender regime of the school?) was not readily available in other forms or ways. Retrospective accounts of interactions would have been inadequate or impossible to fully achieve because the situational dynamics of the school setting can never be fully reported by people who have participated in them because they will only have a partial knowledge or understanding of them (Mason, 2002).

In order to capture all or some of these aspects of people's lives, more than one method of data collection and analysis is needed (Henning et al, 2004). Mason (2002) also argues that in practice the observational method is often one element in a broader ethnographic approach involving the use of a range of other research methods. In keeping with these views I also used interviews to gather data in order ensure that my discussions are more than mere descriptions of what I observed and data collected from interviews helped to strengthen the arguments that I make in this study.

Interviews are one of the most commonly recognised forms of qualitative research methods (Mason, 2002). I used semi-structured interviews extensively in this study to gather data. Below I highlight some of the core features of semi-structured interviews. They have a relatively informal style, for example, face-to-face interviewing takes the form of a conversation or discussion rather than a formal question and answer format. Burgess (1984) calls this type of interview, conversation with a purpose.

The researcher is unlikely to have a complete and sequenced script of questions, and most semi-structured interviews are designed to have a fluid and flexible structure that allows researcher and interviewees to develop unexpected themes (Mason, 2002).

Most qualitative research operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual, and therefore the job of the interviewer is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced. For some, that extends into the assumption that data and knowledge are a constructed dialogic interaction during the interview. Most would agree that in interview settings, knowledge is, at the very least, reconstructed rather than facts simply being reported. According to this perspective, meaning and understanding is created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving researcher and interviewees. Qualitative interviewing therefore tends to be seen as involving the construction of knowledge more than the excavation of it (Kvale, 1994).

As mentioned earlier I used other methods together with observation and semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions of this study. It is useful to engage directly with questions about how and why particular methods and sources might yield data that will help to answer your questions. Linking your research questions and your methodology with a specific set of research methods and techniques adds strategy to the research approach, thereby enhancing the quality of the data (Mason, 2002). Before I proceed to discuss the methods used to specifically answer the research questions of this study I provide details of the interviews conducted with the boys and the teachers.

I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each of the boys in the study. Each of these interviews lasted for approximately forty five minutes. The first interview served to provide biographical information on the boys and to locate the boys in this study. The second interview provided data around issues of provocation and causes of conflict. The second interview also provided insights into the complexities of the school's gender regime and shed light on the process of negotiation, rejection, acceptance and ambivalence in the construction of the school's gender regime. It also helped me to explore alternate ways of doing boy. The third interview enabled me to gain richer and deeper insights into the respondent's unique meanings and I was able to pick up on incoherent links that allowed me to make more sense of the respondent's earlier responses. The third interview also gave me an opportunity to seek further evidence to test my emergent hunches and provisional hypotheses (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The third interview also provided valuable information that helped me to address the role of various social factors like race, class, ethnicity and religion in the configurations of masculinity and how this impacts on the causes of conflict and violence.

All three semi-structured interviews with the boys were conducted in the first year of the study and spread over the school year. The unstructured interviews and the informal discussions with respondents spanned over the three year period of the study.

I conducted one interview with each of the teachers in the first year of the study. Since all the teachers were not readily accessible the interviews spanned over a one month period. The interviews with each teacher also lasted for approximately forty five minutes.

3.4 Methods Used to Answer the Research Questions

The research questions which guide this thesis were outlined and discussed in Chapter one. In this section I will indicate the methods used to answer these questions.

To what extent does the gender regime of the school create conditions for or reduce the possibilities of conflict, and violence between and amongst boys at this school?

My starting point here was to gather whatever field documents were available. Two of these were important:

- The school's policy documents on discipline
- Records and results of tribunals

As the school had been selected by the Education Department in 2005, in their quest for quality assurance in education, as one of the schools to be evaluated in the Whole School Evaluation Programme (WSE), I did not encounter much difficulty gaining access to these documents because the school had to have all their policies on hand for evaluation. Records and results of the tribunals, in any event, are circulated to all staff members.

It has to be emphasised that schools do not produce a gender regime in a direct overly deterministic way. The construction of a gender regime in a school is a process of negotiation, rejection, acceptance and ambivalence. There is always a danger of reifying the gender regime, therefore it is important to be reminded that the gender regime is fluid and changing and that a school's gender regime is not a naturalness and inevitable of process. In order to discover certain key features of the school's gender regime I used continuous observations. I observed classroom and school practices of keeping discipline,

interactions between teachers and learners and the nature and manner in which school policies were implemented, especially to control learner behaviour, in order to develop an understanding of how the school's gender regime changed.

Much of this involved observation in an ethnographic format.

These techniques were suited to this type of study and have a sensitivity to meanings and values as well as an ability to represent and interpret symbolic articulations and practices and allow a degree of activity, creativity and human agency (Willis, 1977). I knew from the beginning that in observing learner behaviour I was sure to observe conflict among the boys who might or might not spill over into violence. My supervisor Professor Robert Morrell and I discussed this at length and we grappled with the challenges that I would face as a teacher researching conflict and violence amongst learners.

There is undoubtedly a tension in this study between my role as a researcher and a teacher. On the one hand the researcher is gathering data and is an observer and on the other hand, the teacher is a paid employee and is bound by the rules of the profession and the school and this includes preventing violence and assisting those affected by it. Although I discuss this problem later in this chapter, in the section on Ethical Issues, I feel that it is important enough to warrant some discussion here as well. In my quest to gain more insight into solving this dilemma I have gone through volumes of texts on research methodologies (especially observations) and my supervisor consulted with renowned and established scholars in the field of researching children, including Professor Debbie Epstein (Cardiff University). We came to the realisation that as a teacher I would be duty bound to intervene in any violent situation among learners. On the one hand, prevent a conflict situation from escalating into violence in my role as teacher had the potential to interfere with my research; on the other, however, it created an opportunity for me to collect data in a reflexive manner and to engage with the boys involved in conflict.

Reflexivity involves an awareness of the aspects of positionality and a recognition of subjectivity as a resource in the research process (Johnson et al, 2004). Therefore my subjectivity as a researcher and the intelligent use of reflexivity served as an effective means of gathering the data that I needed to understand and gain insights into the schools gender regime. Using reflexivity in this way also served to assist with analysing the data more effectively (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In practice the observational method is often one element in a broader ethnographic approach involving the use of a range of other research methods. In order to obtain further insights into how the school's policies and practices influenced the gender regime, I interviewed teachers and learners using semi-structured interviews.

I found semi-structured interviews to be an effective means of verifying and challenging some of my own conclusions, from observing the day-to-day activities that took place in the school and on the role of the school in steering the manner in which conflict was handled. These interviews further served to inform me about the teachers' role in conflict resolution and violence at this school.

How does conflict/disagreement occur at Sunville?

In order to investigate the actual instances or situations of conflict, I again adopted the ethnographic approach of observations, making notes and conducting informal interviews (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I observed learner behaviour in the classroom and playground in order to document actual conflict situations and, where possible, interviewed the disputees immediately. In the first instance, this enabled me to identify learners who were violent and those who were non-violent in conflict situations and further, helped me to gain insights into how conflict occurs, the causes of the conflict, the power relations of the boys who were involved in conflict and how the conflict was diffused, defused or became violent. I also interviewed these boys subsequently in order to establish if they had changed their understandings of the violent situations. As already mentioned, I faced a challenge in functioning as a teacher and a researcher in this context.

When conflict does escalate into violence, it is a role function of teachers to engage in pastoral care. Using this as a point of departure in my observation, I found that in many cases I had to comfort a learner and in other cases act as mediator, rather than interrogate the boys about their versions of what happened in the conflictual or violent situation. As anticipated by Professor Morrell, this served to be most effective in gathering the relevant data that I was looking for. After each incident I spent some time reflecting on what had transpired and made careful notes of the goings-on before, during and after the incidents. Observation and reflexive means of gathering data served to be very useful in these situations. It is incumbent on the researcher to reflect on the role of his/her own viewpoint, experience and role in conducting research (Bannister et al, 1994). The important features of subjectivity are creativity and intuition. During this study I was mindful of the tensions of the processes and constantly reflected on my position as a teacher /researcher and that of the subjects. Keeping reflexive personal notes that documented my understanding of the incidents was also significant in helping me to analyse that data at a later stage.

During my interrogation of the methodological literature, both local and abroad, I found that many researchers used interviews effectively to gather data especially around issues of gender, violence and schooling. I interviewed my respondents to find out why and how conflict occurred among the boys at school. I also interviewed as many stakeholders as possible surrounding each conflict situation that I became aware of. In Chapter six I describe two incidents of conflict that escalated into open physical violence. In the first incident I arrived at the scene when the fight was over and in the second while the fight was in progress. However I recorded what had happened in as much detail as possible in my observation notes and spoke to the boys who were involved in the incident and learners and teachers that witnessed the incidents in order to establish how and why the fights occurred.

I did not anticipate a need for group interviews, especially since studies (Reay, 2002; Thurston, 1996; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) indicate that group interviews, particularly on sensitive subjects, are not very productive. My own experience of research in this

school (Hamlall, 2003) revealed that boys are more willing to talk about things which might be described as wimpish or soft in individual interviews rather than with other boys present. However, others have used group interviews (Willis, 1977; Pattman and Chege, 2003) in studies of masculinity quite effectively.

According to Kvale (1994), interviews allow the interviewer an empathetic access to the world of the interviewee; the interviewee's lived experiences may be immediately accessible in the situation, communicated not only in words, but by tone and voice, expressions and gestures in the natural flow of a conversation.

Observations, making notes and informal interviews proved most helpful in investigating how and why conflict occurred at Sunville. These methods generated rich data which led me to establish that provocations played a major role in producing conflict among the boys. I then explored provocations of violence and described the various kinds of provocations that gave rise to or expressed conflict (Chapter five). In subsequent chapters I argue that there is a correlation between the particular forms of provocation and whether violence occurs or not.

How do understandings of what does it mean to be a man influence boys either to resolve conflict peacefully or to become violent?

This question aimed to investigate boys' thinking about the place of violence in their lives. It aimed to understand how boys understood violence and how they described and located it in their constructions of being man[5]. At the same time it sought to investigate the place of non-violence and peaceful behaviour in the ways that the boys negotiated different masculinities.

Through the use of semi-structured interviews I explored the ways boys in this secondary school conceptualised and articulated their experiences of conflict and violence. In this

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[5] The boys in this study were not men, understood as 'adults', but aspired to be men. Here I am really talking about their construction of masculinity. For convenience I will use the shorthand, 'man' to refer to this process.

process I examined and addressed the role of various social factors like race, class, ethnicity and religion in the configurations of masculinity. In this type of interview, the researcher's responsibility is to be a good listener. I allowed the boys to speak freely and the interviews often took a story-telling approach. This is not uncommon where the story told is constructed within the research and interview context (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The story telling also included life histories and therefore adopted elements of the biographical approach.

Connell (2000) argues that for the analysis of masculinity, life history methodology is particularly relevant because of its capacity to reveal social structures, collectives, and institutional changes at the same time as personal life. Westwood (cited in Thurston, 1996) has suggested that life history work might provide a focus for challenging and transformative research. Thurston (1996) argues: "The life history method is proving to be an accessible and relevant practice method for practitioners working with men. I have been involved with colleagues in introducing the method to practitioners through training in order for them to gain a more in-depth understanding of the links between masculinities and violence" (p148). This study is not about the life histories of boys, neither is it a biography of the subjects, therefore while I have adopted principles of the life histories and the biography approach, I have not used these approaches in their entirety. For German biographers, the biographical method entails a single question which is also an invitation: 'Please tell me your life story' (Rosenthal, cited in Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In this study I turned my questions into story telling invitations. This involved careful planning of the interview schedule where questions were constructed in an open-ended manner and framed so as to elicit narratives.

> Research practice implies that we must develop our own approach and methods suited to our specific aims and questions. We do not do this in isolation, of course, but in relation to debates about method and methods others have used. Often, we find ourselves using techniques and familiar arguments, but tailored and tuned in subtly different ways. Small adjustments may be just what are needed to accommodate the logic of a specific enquiry process (Johnson et al, 2004: 3).

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In this study I was alert to these facts and used the various methods discussed in relation to the context in which I found myself.

3.5 Validity and Credibility of Data

In order to increase the validity of data collected in this research study, I used different types of data collection methods. As discussed above, I incorporated observation, unstructured interviews, free association narrative interviews and the principles of life histories and biography. This is in keeping with the principles of triangulation of methods. The word triangulation comes to mind because it has been used by many scholars of qualitative methodology to validate research findings (Babbie and Moulton, 2001). However triangulation does not really fit the methodology of this study, which has more to do with interpreting and sourcing in various ways (in order to understand the constructions of multiple masculinities), than with calculating a position from three different vantage points (Henning, et al, 2004). However, the principles of triangulation that I adopted in this study served to increase the validity of data.

In order to do justice to the subject's participation, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed in a way that reflected accurately how, and what the interviewees were saying, including pauses, changes in emotional tone, gestures, and other body and non-verbalised language (Frosh et al, 2002). However, self reported information received from respondents can be flawed with confounding variables that may influence the validity and reliability of the interview data. These variables can include: words may not mean the same thing to the interviewer and the interviewee (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), the motivation to lie, and inability to trust the researcher. In order to further maximise the possibility of obtaining data that was true and valid, I took a number of precautions. A helpful tactic to address the problem of different meanings attached to words, that is, the question asked is not necessarily the one that is understood, is to use the method of counter-suggestion, for example, "some of the other guys we interviewed told me x while others told me y. What are your thoughts/feelings?" (Hutchinson et al,

1995). Adopting this techniques, which interviewers use to pose the same question in different ways, helped me to minimise reporting inconsistencies.

In an effort to generate trust in my interviewees and to enhance the truthfulness of responses, I used the following strategies: I selected a private comfortable setting, provided upfront time for discussion and informed consent, emphasised anonymity and confidentiality of data, and provided participants with an opportunity to ask questions before and after interviews. I also told them they could choose not to answer any questions, and at the end of interview asked them about their psychological comfort with the questions and the interviewer during the interview (Hutchinson et al, 1995).

Learners may think that they need to know all the right answers and may not tell the truth. A certain amount of deception may be present in their responses (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In order to address this problem, I adopted an expansive interview strategy by not focusing immediately on their accounts of incidents that I had observed or heard about. I included questions about their own, personal beliefs and attitudes about issues surrounding violence and peace. I constantly reminded participants of the option not to answer any question that they were not comfortable with.

Repeated interviews served as a means to increase the validity in the collection of interview data (Hutchinson et al, 1995). By using repeated interviews I was be able to gain richer and deeper insights into the respondents unique meanings and I was able to pick up on incoherent links that allowed me to make more sense of the respondents responses. The repeated interviews with the respondents enabled me to interrogate critically what was said, and to pick up on contradictions, inconsistencies, avoidances and changes of emotional tone. Repeated interviews not only allowed me to gather rich data but also served as a check in various ways by allowing me to seek further evidence to test my emergent hunches and provisional hypotheses. It further gave the interviewees a chance to reflect on what they had said (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Repeated interviews also gave the respondents a chance to comment on and engage with their own views.

3.6. Sampling

There are basically two types of sampling methods, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling technique involves the selection of a random sample from a list of everyone in the population you are studying. Probability sampling is a primary method for selecting large representative samples for social science research such as political polls. Non-probability sampling is often used in situations where you can't select the kinds of samples used in large scale social surveys. In non-probability sampling some members of the wider population are excluded and others are included (Babbie and Moulton, 2001). Non-probability sampling was appropriate for this study since I had to select a particular section of the learner population to be included in the sample.

There are many types of non-probability sampling of which I used two in this study. Based on my judgment and my research aims it was appropriate for me to select purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used to study a small subset of a larger population who fit the criteria of desirable participants (Henning et al, 2004). I also used the concept of snowballing as a second sampling technique. The need for 'extra' sampling may also arise during the process of interviewing and preliminary theorising. In such an instance purposive sampling may be adjusted to accommodate snowball sampling, a technique in which the data collected thus far indicates which other interviewees are needed (Henning et al, 2004).

The boys who I interviewed were identified from my observation of conflict situations at the school in the classroom and the playground. This was in keeping with the concepts of purposive sampling. I identified boys who were violent in conflict situations and boys who defused the conflict or disagreement non-violently. These boys formed a group that I interviewed for purposes of sampling and screening. I identified 10 boys to be the main respondents in this study. All the boys were in grade 10 and were aged between fifteen and seventeen years. I selected grade 10 boys with the hope that I would be able to follow them for their three remaining years at school, (on the assumption that they would

matriculate after completing grade 12) gathering data on an ongoing basis. In this way I also got to know the respondents quite well and was able to measure changes in their behaviour over the years and see how the school changed and whether my work in the school had itself actually promoted conflict resolution.

While many of the boys in this study mentioned that they liked violence I was careful not to label any of them as 'violent boys'. Although some boys may routinely resort to violence it is problematic to assert that a 'boy is violent'. A boy may be violent in one situation and non-violent in another. My purpose was to investigate the dynamics of a conflict situation in order to establish how the conflict arose, circumstances that led to it, and reasons and causes of it. From my interviews with the boys I wanted to determine how boys explain, justify and make sense of their behaviour. I employed selective sampling and screening interviews to identify themes that would capture boys' diverse experiences of conflict and violence, as well as their age, grade, race/ethnicity and willingness to tell their story (Hutchinson et al, 1995). This is in keeping with the idea of process consenting where the boys have the option of not answering any questions that they are not comfortable with. I was aware that while some boys may initially have agreed to be subjects in this study, they may not have been comfortable with the types of questions they were asked. Informed consent is a process rather than a static, once-off event and the initial screening improved the quality of the data that I obtained from the interviews.

I adopted the concept of snowballing where the number of respondents grew according to references made by the initial group in their interviews as well as from my continued observations. I was also alert to the fact that one or more of the respondents might withdraw from the project for various reasons (expulsion, transfer, leaving school, etc,). This did in fact happen; two boys in this study left the school because they failed grade 10. I used the reference technique to replace these respondents.

The above approaches to sampling proved most effective in providing me with techniques to select the most suitable candidates for the study.

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Aside from interviewing boys I also conducted interviews with teachers in order to examine their agency in shaping the school's gender regime. I also used purposive sampling in order to identify the teachers. I chose the more experienced, senior teachers who had been at Sunville for at least ten years, and would have had a good knowledge base of the school's culture, climate, policies, ethos and behaviour patterns of learners. I also tried to include teachers from various subject disciplines.

Below I provide a list of the teachers that I interviewed.

Teacher	Gender	Race	Subject Specialisation
Mr Ray	Male	Indian	Mechanical Technology
Mrs Carrie	Female	Indian	Afrikaans
Mrs Ronnie	Female	Indian	English
Mr Vinesh	Male	Indian	Accounting
MrsTammy	Female	Indian	Hair Care and Cosmetology
Mr Dlamini	Male	African	Civil Technology
Mrs Smith	Female	Indian	English

In the next section I discuss the process of ethical clarification.

3.7. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues in social science research are important to ensure that the interests of the participants in research are safeguarded. Under 'interests', issues of both rights and welfare are subsumed (British Psychological Society, cited in Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

Before embarking on this study I obtained permission from KwaZulu-Natal's provincial Education Department, and the principal and governing body of the school to use the school as a research site. All human research should begin with informed consent of all participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). All respondents were asked to sign a consent form in which confidentiality and anonymity were stipulated and permission for learner participation was also obtained from parents.

The participants were also informed that the interviews would be tape recorded and every effort would be made to protect their identities during and after the research. Interviewees were given pseudonyms and, as discussed in Chapter one, the name of the school was replaced with a pseudonym.

The interviews were conducted in the computer room, which was situated away from the classrooms further protecting the identity of the boys. The room had blinds, air-conditioning and was normally very quiet. This created an atmosphere in which the boys felt safe and comfortable enough to talk freely about their experiences. From the first interview, the boys became deeply involved with their own stories and those of their peers in animated, often highly entertaining and sometimes deeply moving ways.

Throughout this proposal I have noted my awareness of the tension that exists between my roles as a teacher (peace-maker and authority figure) and researcher (data gatherer and analyst). Being a teacher and a researcher at this school had important implications for the way learners presented themselves in interviews and other contexts. I was mindful of the fact that my position as a teacher might influence the way in which learners related to me as a researcher. Below I outline how I addressed these ethical issues.

It was in the process of observing learner interaction in the context of conflict that the tension between my role as observer and teacher was greatest. I could not sit back and watch violence happening or foment violent behaviour. As already mentioned, I was duty bound to intervene in violent situations, maintain peace and protect the security of all learners. In many instances when a teacher arrives at the scene of a fight or scuffle the violence usually stops. In the performance of my duty as a teacher in conflict and violent situations I gathered the data that I needed reflexively. In order to work successfully for peace we need to use understandings of violence which are not moralistic and prescriptive. This subjective, reflexive approach of observation allowed me to get inside the conflict and violence to see how learners were implicated (Morrell, 2001). The challenges that I faced were not unique to this study. Thorne (1993); Fitzclarence (1995);

Epstein (1998); Davies 1989; Frosh et al (2002) reveal similar concerns about the adult role in researching learners in schools. They all reveal that they had to grapple to varying extents with specific methodological considerations which included reflexivity.

Epstein(1998) reveals the following from her experiences as an adult researching children:

> I worked hard to adopt the 'least adult role' possible, but ended up feeling that, as an adult, a teacher, a researcher, observing and writing about children, I was constantly re-inscribed within the discourse of adult in school, which is primarily, that of a teacher (p31).

> The discursive space of the school is one in which there are a small number of adults responsible for the care and control of a large number of children. Those adults who are regularly present in schools often insert themselves or are positioned within the discourses through which this space is organised – as instructors, demonstrators, discipliners, carers, first aiders, comforters and substitute mothers. As a researcher one can resist these discourses but it is impossible to refuse them completely or to step right outside them (p30).

There was a danger that learners might have related to me in ways that they thought were expected of them during the interviews. They might have feared that they would appear inadequate among the other respondents and this would have influenced the validity of their responses. According to Cohen (1999) for many working class pupils there is never a time throughout their school lives when someone is not defining them in some way as inadequate. Therefore the respondents might have been tempted to present what they thought I wanted to hear rather than their true feelings and attitudes. I was aware that my position of power as a teacher might compromise the honesty of learners' answers. Feminist researchers have long argued that research always involves power relations and stress the importance of negotiating these power relations (Epstein, 1998). I therefore needed to win the students' confidence and get them to trust me. This was achieved

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through my first informal discussion with them, when I encouraged them to speak about their backgrounds. This relates to the life histories and biography approach that I discussed earlier. Another technique that I used was to allow respondents to take the role of collaborator. I informed them that my aim was to learn from them and that they could think of themselves as teachers in this process. This strategy facilitated collaborative behaviours (Hutchinson et al, 1995).

These strategies did not equalise power but made it negotiable, rather than an inevitable effect of status difference (Cohen, 1999; Hollaway and Jefferson, 2000). In my view I do not think that the interviewees changed their stories to suit me as a teacher. I felt that the boys were honest in their responses as the interviews were fluent and took on a conversational style. Some of the boys were not very eloquent or articulate but they gave it a good try. In many cases I felt that the interviews could have gone on for longer. The boys became very involved in the interviews and produced accounts of their experiences that were expressive and convincing.

I also constantly reassured the boys of confidentiality and impartiality and, as already mentioned, constantly reminded them of the option of not answering questions that they were not comfortable with. However, in the context of the invitation to 'tell their stories' this was not a problem that occurred often. I further reassured them of my role as a researcher and not a teacher in this process. This helped to build their trust in me and dispel any reservations that they may have had about participating in the project.

I was also alert to the fact that, as an Indian interviewing African boys. I may have encountered difficulty establishing rapport with them. Race can become an important variable and could have been influential in the kinds of responses I received, especially from the African and coloured boys. Frosh et al (2002), in their interviews with black boys, found that at first the boys were reluctant to answer and seemed in a hurry to end the interview. However, as the interviews progressed and the boys found that I was in no way partial or biased towards them they became extremely engaged and elaborated on a range of issues. Mac an Ghaill (1994), a white man studying black students, also points to

the significance of being seen to be concerned about racism: he was told by the black students he was interviewing at the college where he was teaching that his "anti-racist stance within the college was of primary significance in their deciding to participate in the study" (p.181). While I enjoyed a similar relationship with the learners at Sunville, I was also cautious to tune in to the needs and anxieties of all the respondents, to present a non-judgemental attitude, and to convey my belief that their responses were worthy and valuable. This facilitated rapport, served to build trust, and encouraged honest answers from all the boys who I interviewed, regardless of race.

Pattman and Chege (2003) argue that, rather than in attempting to create conditions of 'objectivity' by minimising our presence and influence as researchers, we should recognise that we will inevitably affect the behaviour of the people that we are researching. They further argue that we should be reflexive and examine how the people we are researching are positioning themselves in relation to us. This should provide us with powerful insights into their behaviour and assumptions about the issues at hand.

In the interviews I gave the boys a chance to 'say their masculinity' and therefore, actually be an agent of changing masculinity. I took this into consideration when analysing the data.

My position as a teacher/ researcher was a challenge in this study. However, because I addressed the concerns in the manner discussed above, this challenge was not insurmountable. By taking careful heed of the above ethical issues, this study revolved around the criterion of guarding against harm in which issues of honesty, sympathy and respect were central.

3.8. Analysis

In this section I discuss the two methods of analysis that were used to analyse the data. According to Henning et al (2004), using different approaches when working with data serves to strengthen an inquiry.

As with most qualitative evaluations, this study utilised inductive analysis as one methods of analysis, in which "patterns, themes and categories emerge from the data rather than being developed prior to collection" (Marlow, 1993: 324). In the inductive approach, theories about what is happening are grounded in direct programme experience rather than being imposed on the setting by pre-determined constructions (Patton, 1986). In my analysis of observations and interviews I looked for recurring regularities in the data which represented patterns that could be sorted into categories (Patton, 1990). According to Patton (1990) the analyst has the task of working back and forth between the data and classification system to verify the meaningfulness and accuracy of the categories and the placement of data in categories.

It is important to mention here that the data collected must relate to the focus of inquiry. I therefore foregrounded the purpose of this study throughout the data collection process (Henning, et al, 2004). As with any study, I needed to code the raw data into another form for the purpose of analysis. I realised that the system of using numbers and colours to code the data (Neuman, 2000; Babbie and Mouton, 2001) would not work in a qualitative study of this nature. Below I outline the system of coding that was used.

I looked for meaning from the words and actions of the participants in this study, keeping in mind the research questions and focus of inquiry. This search for meaning was accomplished by first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data, which later served as a basis for defining larger categories of meaning.

The search for meaning was not left until the end of the data collection process but began from the moment I wrote down the first line in my journal and from the very first interview (18/01/06). This process of discovery (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) occurred throughout the data collection process as recurring ideas were recorded and this began the

formal process of data analysis. As already mentioned, I was on the look-out for recurring words, phrases, topics, emerging themes and patterns in the data. This allowed me to uncover what was salient. This is the first pass in coding the data referred to as open coding. Open coding brings themes to the surface from deep inside the data (Neuman, 2000).

Through this process I accumulated an array of recurring concepts, phrases, topics, patterns and themes drawn from the interviews, field notes and documents. The second pass through the data involved combining any ideas that overlapped with one another. This process involved organising ideas and identifying the axis of the key concepts. I now had a series of provisional categories. I then devised broad categories from my familiarity with the research data and field of study. This process is commonly known as axial coding (Neuman, 2000).

The last step was to closely examine the many propositional statements that emerged from the data categorisation and develop core generalisations or ideas. Some of the propositions were more important than others in contributing to the focus of inquiry. These propositions were the major themes of the study and roughly formed its outcomes. Below I provide an example of how I derived one of the major themes of this study.

One of the major themes of this study was the existence at Sunville of non-violent, non-aggressive, peaceful masculinities – what I refer to as autonomous masculinity. The process started with coding where I identified words, phrases and sentences like: "I will not fight"; "I walk away"; "I go pass when they interfere"; "They do not know what they want"; "I won't even care when they start"; "I am not aggressive". The key concept or axis I derived from these phrases was that these boys chose not to be violent when provoked or in conflict situations. From other sets of codes that relate to the theme of autonomous masculinity I came up with broad categories like: being a man; voices of resistance; individualistic identities; acceptance of humiliation, etc. These core categories led to non-violent masculinities becoming a major theme in this study.

The method described above relates to the constant comparative method of data collection and analysis where hypotheses are not generated beforehand; thus relevant variables for data collection are not predetermined. The data are not grouped according to predetermined categories. Rather, what is important is to analyse emerges from the data itself out of a process of inductive reasoning (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

I had the good fortune to be selected by the University of KwaZulu-Natal to attend a South Africa-Netherlands research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) methodology training programme in 2006/2007. This programme focused on training delegates in various methodologies of research. During the programme we were given opportunities to present some of the data we had collected relating to our PhD studies. Together with a number of research experts (Professor Essed, Dr W.van Rensburg and Professor Elizabeth Henning), we realised that in some instances the data required further synthesis in addition to an inductive analysis and we looked to the principles of discourse analysis, which lends itself to the type of answers that I was looking for in this study. I then began to interrogate literature on discourse analysis. I looked at guidelines offered by several authors such as Fairclough (1989, 2003); Foucault (1970, 1972) and Janks (1997) on discourse.

While discourse analysis is an analytical strategy which is inductive in nature it is a complex process and many varieties of discourse analysis exist. The approaches promulgated by the above authors did not fit the nature of this study. Since I did not use these approaches of discourse to analyse the data in this study, I will not discuss them here, suffice to say that I gained valuable knowledge that helped me decide which approach to discourse would be appropriate for this study. What proved useful was the understanding that discourse analysis is about both meaning and structure of and in language and can function as a platform to mount an understanding of social action and the human condition. In analysing the data in this study, I borrowed from the principles of discourse analysis in the following manner.

I searched the data for signs of language that indicated the way in which the participants tried to make sense of their reality. I went through the data for a second time and highlighted the discourse markers that is, the words or phrases exemplifying the discourse, and checked whether this was a recurrent pattern or whether the examples were isolated instances. The main question to be asked was: What discourse frames the language action and the way in which the participants make sense of their reality, how was this discourse produced, and how is it maintained in the social context (Henning et al, 2004). This helped me to understand that I needed to consider the broader economic, political, social and cultural contexts of the discourses related to conflict and violence. This process of analysis helped me to gain an understanding of how some of the discourses related to conflict and violence, and I was able to reflect on how the user made meaning with the discourses. Below I provide two examples:

Many boys indicated in their interviews that they were prepared to fight to defend their 'girlfriends'. By using the principles of discourse analysis discussed above I was able to establish the discourse from which the boys spoke. By drawing from the discourse of competition for supremacy amongst males, I concluded that the cause of violence was not the girls, but the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity. Another discourse that boys spoke from was allegiance to the male peer group. The approach of discourse analysis discussed above helped me to establish this by identifying the recurrent words and phrases that boys used which were, "I must protect my friend", "my friends are here", "I get upset when someone interfere with my friend" to mention a few. On the surface it would seem that friends caused violence at school; however, the cause of violence here was not the friends but the allegiance to male peer groups, which was a discourse produced in the construction of masculinities at Sunville.

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a detailed account of how I gathered, organised and analysed the data in this study. I have outlined the methodologies that I selected and used that allowed me to make arguments beyond the obvious towards the language and forms of meaning that lie below the surface. The next chapter focuses on the gender regime of Sunville and how it impacted on the manner in which boys constructed their identity and handled conflict.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GENDER REGIME OF SUNVILLE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the patterning and activities within the school setting that help to constitute gender relations, concentrating on different experiences of males and females in the classroom, assemblies, playgrounds, subject take up and how discipline and control is maintained.

The principal axis around which the variety of masculinities is organised is the overall social relations between men and women, that is, the structure of gender relations as a whole (Connell, 2000). Masculinities are configurations of practice within these gender relations, although they are also one of the constitutive elements of these relations. We can therefore speak of specific kinds of masculinities being embedded in the gender regime of an institution such as a school. Masculinising practices can be governed by the gender regime of a school; in fact broad features of co-educational schools' gender regimes sustain particular definitions of masculinity (Connell, 2000), and alternatively the gender regime can show the potential of a school as a masculinity-making device. For the most part the capacities of a school's gender regime impact on the making of masculinities in an unreflective, inchoate way. Kessler et al (1985: 43) use the term gender regime to describe how the "pattern of practices that construct various kinds of masculinity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour within the institution".

I analysed Sunville's gender regime from two angles. In the first instance, I examined the 'agency' of the school in shaping the gender regime. In order to do this, I explored the structures and practices by which the school formed gender relations among its pupils, teachers and other role players. In the second instance I examined the school as a setting

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in which other agencies, especially of pupils and teachers, were at play. However these two aspects are inextricably linked and have overlapping dynamics and processes.

I start my discussion by describing the physical structure of the school the interrelatedness and the gendered implications of the school's structural milieu.

4.2 The Physical Structure of the School - Symbolism

Although Sunville Secondary had not been officially classified by the Education Department as a Technical School its philosophy was firmly grounded in a technical ideology. The curriculum offered included a number of technical subjects and a large amount of resources had been used to promote and develop these subjects.

This technical imagery was evident from the moment one entered the school gates. Before one were huge portentous looking workshops, each entrance clearly marked by the workshop's name and the name of the teacher (all male) in charge. These workshops were used mainly by the boys of the school. The kitchens, salons and beauty rooms (controlled by female teachers), and mainly used by girls, were at the back of the school and were not easily visible and accessible.

Female teachers and learners had to walk a considerable distance to their learning centres, which were situated towards the back of the school and had no views and very little direct sunlight.

This preferential access to school resources for the boys and male teachers created an ideology of privilege of males at Sunville and this has had deep implications for the social relations of gender in this school. It acted as an apparatus to promote the importance of males in this setting.

It must be pointed out that because I am a student of gender I specifically paid attention to the imagery, physical setup and the construction of school buildings as signs of

mediation of masculine and feminine typifications. My observations were probably not shared by the male teachers and boys, who did not recognise that they were privileged. Some of the privileges mentioned above may even have been considered to be a disadvantage by many boys. For example, while the workshops were in close walking proximity, they were in full view of the principal's office and the boys were subject to scrutiny at any time. Not all boys enjoyed these advantages, however, since some of them were taking subjects like Hotel Keeping and these learning centres were not in the foreground. Also, a growing number of girls were taking trade subjects and enjoying the privileges mentioned above. However, boys' increased freedom of movement was evident in other areas of the school as well.

There were two soccer fields in front of the school and a netball court between buildings. Although soccer was rarely played, the soccer fields remained a domain of the boys and were used as a playground during breaks, mainly by boys. The girls rarely ventured into this territory, usually hanging around the fringes and along the banks of the soccer fields. However, on occasion I did observe groups of girls walking on the soccer fields, not engaging in any games but just wandering around, as if to make a statement that this was not exclusively male territory. The soccer fields were also not a safe domain for all the boys. Some boys, especially the smaller and 'softer' boys, were often threatened and assaulted in this area. A case in point was reported to the office where a grade 8 boy was stabbed twice apparently for venturing too far onto the soccer field. After his wounds were treated I informally asked him what had happened. His response was as follows:

I was walking towards the bottom of the ground near the goalposts. Sohail called at me saying if you run I will catch you and you will be in bigger trouble. Another boy flicked the knife and gave it to Sohail. He then picked me up and put me against the pole and poked me. He said that this was a small hole as last month he poked another boy who had a bigger hole.

This incident serves to highlight the fact that although boys enjoyed the exclusive use of certain areas, not all the boys had this dominance and some of them paid a price in order

for other boys to convert this privilege into power. I suspect that many other boys who played in this area suffered similar threats but took the chance anyway for fear of being labeled or teased.

The recreational area for boys' sports seemed to be a desired place for both boys and girls. While the boys dominated this space the girls hung around the edges. There was evidence of extensive separation of space by gender. Thorne (1993) found similar separation and gender differences in the use of outdoor play areas in her study of two elementary schools in the United States where boys controlled the large fixed spaces designated for team sports, baseball diamonds, grassy fields used for football or soccer, and basketball courts. In Oceanside School there was also a skateboard area where boys played with girls occasionally joining in. The fixed spaces where girls predominated – bars and jungle gyms and painted cement areas for playing four-square, jump rope and hopscotch – were closer to the building and much smaller, taking up perhaps a tenth of the territory that the boys controlled.

The physical structural milieu of Sunville had patriarchal implications. It reflected a gender arrangement where boys and male workshop teachers were elevated to positions of importance. The arrangements of workshops symbolically benefited the school's males.

The school naturalised male privilege in terms of representation of space as well and it appeared at times as if it was normal and indeed desirable. The cover of the school brochure, for example, depicted only boys in overalls and dust-coats using various machines in workshop settings. Although Sunville was co-educational and girls played an integral part in its corporate life, limited attention was given to girls in the brochure. The unequal gender patterning was depicted un- problematically in the brochure and other material that was used to promote the school.

Any gender regime is socially constructed. The plans that an architect has in his (rather than her) head reflect an understanding of space and facilities which is gendered. I cannot

'prove' that the architect of Sunville had a gendered mind and I cannot show that he actively set out to privilege boys over girls, but in this section I show that the arrangement both in patriarchal and symbolic ways has the effect of reinforcing a society-wide pattern of gender relations which does, in effect, contribute to patriarchal power. Boys are more visible, their facilities are given more prominence and their pursuits are regarded as more important than those of girls.

4.3 The Curriculum

While Sunville made an equal formal offer of learning to boys and girls, it promoted segregation in choice of subject areas. In grades 8 and 9 (the average age of learners in these classes was from 14-15 years), all nine subject learning areas were compulsory so there was no detectable gender bias in subject 'choice'. The gender patterning became more pronounced, however, from grade 10 onwards when learners were able, indeed could not avoid, making subject choices. The segregation along gender lines became overt in the practical subjects. The boys aligned themselves with the technical subjects as discussed in Chapter one and girls with the Hotel Keeping and Hair Care and Cosmetology.

These findings are supported by evidence from other studies of how subjects are rated as either stereotypically masculine or feminine in schools (Archer and Freedman, 1989; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Paechter, 1998; Head, 1999). These studies reflect common findings that boys' significant preferences (i,e, those that are seen to affirm masculine identity) are technical subjects and the sciences. The subjects rated as feminine usually include languages, Humanities and Creative Arts. Paechter (1998) further argues that research in schools in the United Kingdom reveal that despite some movement towards equality of take-up of subjects, it remains the case that secondary school students perceive at least some subjects as being gendered and that stereotypical choices only become noticeable later on when statutory requirements no longer apply.

Teacher stereotypes and expectations were also significant at Sunville. At the beginning of the academic year the learners were given a choice of three courses. A Technical teacher (male) placed learners in one of the three courses that they chose. The workshop subjects were presented as being subjects that required physical strength and bodily prowess in order to operate machines, car hoists, gas bottles, etc. (masculine domain), while Hotel Keeping, Hair Care and Cosmetology were depicted as being to do with women's concerns. While the subjects were presented to learners in the above manner it is difficult to argue that teachers were intentionally trying to ensure that gender boundaries remained or whether these boundaries just 'happened' through learner choice. In an interview with the Hair Care teacher, however, it was interesting to find that she did not want boys in her class:

Tammy: *I don't think that they will be interested in this subject. They will fool around and will not take the subject seriously. I will have all sorts of behavioural problems. I'd be better off without them.*

While some female teachers shared this view others had different views:

Ronnie: *I actually encourage girls to do the technical subjects. I am disappointed that more girls are not doing the technical subjects because they can excel, because I find that girls are brighter. Some people say that in terms of power the girls cannot pick up machinery, etc. but now they have so many things that can do this, therefore I cannot understand why more girls are not getting into that field. Girls are still aligning themselves with the softer subjects. I find even the boys, although there are one or two boys who do Hotel Keeping there should be a larger number of boys doing these subjects. They got the opportunity but they are not using it.*

I think that the problem lies with the perception that society has and the views of the parents in this community. Lots of parents are not bringing up their daughters with the idea that they can get equal jobs if they make an effort. They want them to get the

secretarial jobs, receptionists, hairdressers, cooks and stuff. They don't want their girls to go into the male dominated areas of jobs.

This discourse, where certain subjects are seen to be the domain of boys while other subjects are for girls, is not confined to Sunville. Riddell (1992) found similar evidence in the two schools that she studied. She argues that subjects were presented to students in such a way as to ensure that gender boundaries remained; Physics for example was presented as abstract, while Home Economics (HE) courses were depicted as being to do with women's concerns.

While teachers have different views about the gender dynamics of subject choice, it must be emphasised that the favoured subjects at Sunville were the technical subjects, which were the domain of the boys and the male teachers. I found strong evidence of the promotion of technical subjects in the various programmes that the school embarked on, one of which was SWEP (School Work Experience Programme). In this programme learners were sent out to industries to gain on-the-job work experience for two weeks of the year. Although boys and girls were asked to participate in this programme, the gender dimensions were clearly visible in the manner in which the programme was presented and implemented. The convener of the programme was a male workshop teacher and the SWEP committee was all male and spent most of their energies securing jobs for boys rather than girls. Consequently, the boys participating and benefiting from this programme outnumbered the girls to a large degree. Some corroboration for these findings lies in the arguments made by Paechter (1998) where she argues that, having defined whatever is important in a particular society, males are thus enabled to conduct that activity (starting from a school setting) in such a way that is unwelcoming to females, who may have different ways of working. The females are then encouraged to see their lack of fit with this dominant paradigm as a lack in themselves rather than a result of the exclusionary practices of the in-group.

Learners make stereotypical subject choices for a number of reasons. I found that peer group pressure was one of the reasons why boys and girls at Sunville chose certain

subjects. Boys were often ridiculed for choosing 'girl's' subjects. Girls also scoffed at other girls who chose the workshop or technical subjects, calling them "guy wannabes". Unfortunately the subjects that girls tended to reject as 'masculine', particularly technology and electrical subjects were those with far more social prestige and market value than those rejected by boys such as Hair Care and Cosmetology. Archer (1992) reports that 'masculine' subjects are seen as 'difficult' by girls but 'interesting' by boys, while girls see feminine subjects as 'easy' and boys see them as 'boring'. Several studies (Paechter, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Head, 1999) reveal a similar pattern. As indicated in Chapter one, in 2008 only 12 girls out of a total of 316 were doing trade courses at Sunville. The school as a broader overarching structure, however, created the conditions for subject segregation by its own gender structures and its involvement in gendering the teacher division of labour. In the next section I discuss the school and its agency by examining the major policy makers and those charged with the responsibility of implementing school policies.

4.4 Management Structure of Sunville

The senior management of this school consisted of the principal and two deputy principals, all of which were male. The school had five Heads of Department of which only the language HOD was female. The concentration of men in supervisory positions at Sunville was not uncommon, and reflected an association of masculinity with authority. The skewed gender representation in the school's management structures influenced the existing gender relations. Almost all studies of gender issues in the workplace have found that managers exercise formal power and that men are in control of this power (Mac an Ghaill, 1996). Further, social patterns of gender relations construct the idea that men are better leaders and better at making decisions (Connell, 1987). The management setup at Sunville further served to reify the common notion that women had better aptitudes for language and social skills and corroborated with the view that men dominated the more prestigious subject areas like Technology, Maths and Science. The gender dynamics of management at Sunville accentuated the male role at this school and trivialised the female role to a certain extent.

The fact that the only female in management was the Head of the languages sent out the message that females were diligent and excelled in languages only, while men were competent in the other disciplines like technology, science, computers and maths and therefore occupied positions of authority in these fields. Ethnographies of working class schools in Britain have recorded this phenomenon's existence for some years (Willis, 1977; Hargraeves, 1986) and that such differentiation influences the relations between males and females and among males at these schools. Sunville Secondary was not very different in that the management setup influenced the types of duties that males and females performed.

4.5 Sexual Division Of Labour

Connell (2000) argues that in order to understand the gender regime of a school one must understand the way gender relations impinge on different groups of teachers, the responses they make and the strategies they try to follow. In this section I discuss the sex/gender relations that existed among teachers at Sunville.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter there was a concentration of women (teachers and learners) in subjects like Hotel Keeping, Hair Care, Cosmetology and the Languages, and men in the Technical subjects. This had created a situation of work specialisation among teachers and a gendering of knowledge where certain areas of the curriculum were defined as masculine and others as feminine.

The female teachers occupied the positions of counselors and pastoral care givers and co-ordinate committees like Teenagers Against Drug Abuse (TADA), religious committees for learners and HIV/AIDS programmes. Further organisational duties like Debs Ball, Dinner Dance, and Awards programmes for learners were dominated by the female teachers while the male teachers dominated positions of control like Head of ground duty, co-coordination of assembly, the Student Work Experience Programme, examinations, timetabling and tribunals.

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From interviews with teachers I found that the female teachers were contesting the masculinisation of powerful positions especially management and administrative functions that had come to dominate the teaching and learning process.

Carrie: *I'd like to do more than the loading and allocations of teaching loads of my department. I'd like to be physically involved in the decision making, like time-tabling. Time-tabling is definitely an important aspect of the school where important decisions are made. I'd also like to get involved in the technology aspects of tasks where you use the computer to do schedules and reports. These types of tasks definitely give people more power.*

Ronnie: *The male teachers hold positions where there is a lot of decision making that takes place. They make the important decisions, while the less important tasks like secretarial duties and note taking are given to females. If a female teacher is given a duty she completes it in the time frame given. The males do sporty duties like mark a field or outside duties. I'd like to do some of these duties as well, especially like time-tabling and exams where crucial decisions are made.*

While the gender regime in Sunville favoured boys and male teachers, there were challenges to the gender regime and it was certainly not coherent. These contestations and challenges highlight the unequal power relations between males and females at Sunville.

4.6 Power Relations

There are innumerable, local points at which the matrix of power can be challenged and undermined (Paechter, 1998). This way of looking at power brings with it a complementary view of resistance. While I discuss some of these below, it is not the intention here to engage in a discussion on the dynamisms of power but merely to highlight the unequal power relations that existed between males and females at Sunville.

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Earlier in this chapter I detailed the interplay of power in the schooling arena taking into consideration the various aspects of day-to-day schooling. In many cases males seem to have more power and often use this to dominate females and other males and benefit from the patriarchal dividend that emanates from this unequal distribution of power. Male teachers are positioned in ways that give them more authority and control and while many teachers gain from these arrangements, I found evidence of teachers rebelling against particular patterns of power that existed and even trying to modify them. For example, my interviews with some of the male teachers revealed that they disagreed with the unequal power relations that existed between males and females at Sunville.

Vinesh: *I think both male and female teachers are on equal footing. They should have the same type of authority. The bottom line is that any duty at school can be performed equally well by any teacher without looking at gender. In our school, there are certain duties that are allocated to males and certain duties allocated to females – that scenario does exist.*

In terms of technology in this school, it is mainly a male domain. Female teachers have not been on board when it come to technology. They have not been afforded the opportunity to come on board.

I think that females need to be given an opportunity to gain experience in these areas and this will allow them to become better equipped to do their jobs as well as help them for promotions. They must be given a chance to become more involved with the necessary technology to empower themselves.

While some male teachers expressed discontent with the gender arrangements at Sunville, they further said that they did not mind taking on some of the duties that had become the domain of female teachers.

Vinesh**:** *I don't mind doing some of the duties that female teachers do. It is not a problem. I will do it. It would change the scenario for the better.*

Ray: *You see I am a workshop teacher but I have no problem doing any duty at school.*

As a male member of management, I convened the Debs Ball in the years 2003 and 2004, previously a strictly female position. I also do not subscribe to the view that certain duties are the responsibility and exclusive domain of men while others are for women.

From my observations of teacher behaviour at Sunville, I found that a group of male teachers prepared a Mothers' Day lunch every year using the school kitchen (a space that was regarded as a female domain where males seldom ventured). The evidence provided above indicates that there was resistance from some males teachers to the traditional norms of male domination and privilege.

Female teachers also rebelled against and contested the unequal power dynamics, especially at staff meetings. Informal hierarchies existed among staff members and in many cases female members of staff were at the top of these hierarchies. Interviews with teachers revealed similar evidence.

Ronnie: *There are lots of things that male and female teachers do together, but there are other duties that are predominantly male or female like the speech and awards this year was predominantly female, because to be honest in this school the majority of the male teachers are lazy.*

Our management is predominantly male. They have a lot of power but there are informal hierarchies and it is mixed in terms of males and females. Sometimes these people have the know-how in certain areas and when they say certain things we tend to listen because we value their information. They have expert power and sometimes we depend on it.

We also see evidence from this response that power was also used productively. People with expert knowledge used this knowledge to the benefit of the school and others.

Carrie: *There are examples where male and female teachers work absolutely beautifully together, like Debs Ball – but I would like to see more female members of staff being empowered in other duties like time-tabling. In our school male teachers are very apathetic when it comes to their duties.*

Some people have louder voices in the staff meetings – so they dominate the meetings. Both male and females can dominate a situation depending on who is more vociferous and can express themselves more clearly and what is being discussed.

The female teachers interviewed created the impression that while male and female teachers could and did work together to complete certain duties, male teachers still monopolised positions of power.

Although only a small number of female teachers at Sunville held positions of power many female teachers forced their way into decision making because of their expertise and knowledge. They did not simply accept the power relations as they existed by virtue of position. Some female teachers, although they did not have positional power, attempted to gain power in others ways via informal hierarchies. Using their expertise and experience, they gained expert power. The power that the female teachers gained was not used to repress other teachers; rather, it was used to help other teachers and make their tasks easier.

Interviews with male teachers revealed similar evidence:

Vinesh: *It is noticeable that there are informal hierarchies in this school. These hierarchies have reasonable power. Staff views and so on can be influenced by these teachers. Both males and females have this power in the staffroom. These teachers often use their dominance to influence decisions that are best for the school.*

Other research (Thorne, 1993; Paechter, 1998) has also found that teachers and learners attempt to renegotiate and re-establish gender arrangements and relations in their schools. Gender boundaries are constantly challenged in these schools and attempts to change them are sometimes successful.

4.7 Discipline and Control

4.7.1 How the School Maintained Discipline

In order to control behaviour and maintain discipline, the school had put many mechanisms in place. As mentioned in Chapter one, the school was enclosed by a solid wall and was patrolled by two guards armed with whips. There were surveillance cameras monitoring the 'hot spots' and learners were constantly being hauled to the office by the guards for infringing school rules or entering no-go areas. Sanctions, suspensions and expulsions were common. Sometimes the police were called in when certain incidents occurred (e.g. stabbings, drug peddling and extortion of money) which either the teachers or the security guards (or both) believed that they were unable to deal with effectively, and learners were sometimes arrested. The guards also handcuffed boys when taking them to the office. They ran the whips along the rails to intimidate learners and force them to comply. The school had a tribunal system where learners who infringed school rules were given a hearing which generally resulted in the minimum punishment of a five-day suspension.

As I have discussed in the literature review, rigid disciplinary measures can lead to frustration among boys which results in them challenging school authority and disputing policies of control, often in violent ways.

Boys at Sunville were overrepresented in tribunals, suspensions, expulsions and in discipline problems in general. The teachers, security guards and police focused mostly on the boys when trying to limit disputes and violence in school. In the next chapter I explore in more detail how a rigid discipline system like the one at Sunville impacts on

boys' behaviour. I also investigate the competing versions of manhood in the school and the relationship between strict control measures, conflict and violence among boys.

4.7.2 How Teachers Maintained Discipline in the Classroom

Teachers handled learners in different ways and used various techniques to get learners to conform and behave in acceptable ways. In this section I outline how they maintained control of learners and outline the various strategies that they used to keep discipline.

Some teachers confronted macho male learners in order to control them, often using aggression and force, especially outside the classroom, as we will later see. Other teachers used ridicule, embarrassment and criticism to force learners to behave in acceptable ways. I also found that certain teachers colluded with male students' contestation of school rules by overlooking infringements (e.g. failure to follow uniform regulations, absconding, smoking, carrying cell phones) and using similar language to that of the boys. However most teachers, male and female, did not subscribe to these methods of control but promoted peaceful and non-violent behaviour among learners. These teachers themselves acted in non-violent ways as an example to learners.

Below I present examples of the different methods teachers used to get learners to behave in desirable ways. The first example is a teacher's response to a boy who was experiencing difficulty handling a machine in a welding workshop. Here is an extract from my field notes.

Teacher: *"You must put on an apron and go and work in the kitchen. We do not want sissies in this workshop". The other boys joined in by singing in chorus, "kitchen boy, kitchen boy". The teacher did not make any attempt to stop them.*

From my observations I found that only boys were used to set up arenas for sporting fixtures, for example marking the grounds, putting up nets, erecting poles, etc. On one such occasion a boy who was putting up a volleyball net was experiencing some difficulty. The teacher in charge (female) commented:

Teacher: *What is wrong with this 'potter'? (a derogatory word in Tamil which means stupid, weak, clumsy, inadequate). He only knows to run behind the girls. You must go and join the girls' volleyball team.*

The other boys who were watching and helping agreed and one boy responded: "Yes mam, he only acts like a girl". The others boys teased and scoffed as well. The boy swore back at them but it served only to increase the jeers.

Whenever teachers derided boys for not conforming to the school's expected male norms it was always met with approval from the other boys. I think teachers also used this as a mechanism to gain favour and respect from the boys, which strengthened their relationship with them, thereby making the task of controlling them much easier.

As mentioned earlier in this section, teachers also used other methods of identifying with some of the boys' aggressive style of speaking and behaving. Some male teachers used vulgar language and slang when speaking to boys. In this way these teachers gained favour among the boys and experienced fewer problems from the troublesome boys.

In the following accounts, female teachers provided examples of male teachers colluding with deviant boys.

Carrie: *This is what I observed about the male teachers in this school. They tend to talk like the boys – using slangs and words like: "I will bust you up – exa what are you doing and via from here". That I am totally against. The male teachers often kick the boys. The female teachers don't resort to physical violence – not that I know of.*

Some female teachers shared the view that physical force is needed to discipline learners and, as mentioned earlier, while they inflict this type of punishment it is meted with different severity to boys and girls:

Ronnie: *I have always tried to be equal but I found that in reality if I had to give a shot to a boy because he came in late to my class it would probably be harder to a boy than a girl. I am a little more softer on the girls. Although I get angry with boys and girls over the same issues but the way I punish them is a little bit easier on the girls.*

I feel the office needs to take a harder line in disciplining learners. Sending children to social workers and talking to them does not work. We need to set an example to make the kids realise that we really mean business. The soft approach that the school is taking is not working. I think that the school should inflict corporal punishment although it is not according to policy. They need to gather all these kids that are absconding and give them a few shots in the assembly or in the office.

The majority of the teachers at Sunville, both male and female, did not publicly subscribe to violent ways of disciplining learners. While I arrived at this conclusion from my observations as well as from interviews with teachers, I must draw attention to the point that some teachers who may have subscribed to 'peaceful' forms of masculinity, may occasionally have 'lost' it and become physical with learners. In addition, other teachers who were routinely macho, might have a 'soft side' (at times). However some teachers maintained in interviews that they never used corporal punishment to discipline learners, and were totally opposed to using force with learners:

Carrie: *I am not harsh with the learners – I like to talk to them and alert them to the consequences of their behaviour. I do not use aggression or force.*

I treat the boys and girls the same when it comes to discipline.

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Vinesh: *Basically, corporal punishment is a no go – so that's completely out. I use threats of getting the parents in and other means of discipline. I also try to talk to the learners. I enforce discipline the same way for boys and girls.*

While Vinesh did not use corporal punishment, he mentioned that he used threats to get learners to conform. The use of threats contributes to a gender regime that endorses assertive, competitive and violent forms of masculinity.

While the school often took a hard line with learners that infringed the school rules, imposing suspensions, sanctions, community service and other punitive measures, I must stress that some teachers felt that this was not enough, and that corporal punishment was the only way to control learners. There were teachers at Sunville who still believed in corporal punishment and an authoritative approach to handling discipline. I found the hard line approach to disciplining learners was especially overt when observing teachers and learners on ground duty.

4.7.3 How Teachers Maintained Discipline outside the Classroom

As with teachers in other schools, the teachers that I interviewed made it clear that children needed to be made aware of the school hierarchy, which was organised along lines of seniority.

Although teachers were fully aware of the policy that bans corporal punishment in schools, I observed many teachers (especially females) carrying a stick in the classroom and on the grounds. I did not observe any incidents of actual beatings but the stick was used to threaten and intimidate (male) learners. The connection between intimidation or aggressive behaviours and authority was very explicit during the breaks when teachers were on ground duty.

Many of the male teachers used overt physical aggression to restrain, control and dominate the boys. Male teachers used their bodies to block the paths of boys, bump

them into lines and smash them against walls, and sometimes used direct aggression to neutralise a volatile situation. The following extract is from my field notes:

During ground duty I witnessed a scuffle between two boys. A few of the teachers on playground duty rushed to the scene to intervene, as it is the duty of a teacher to ensure safety and security in school. Mr Desmond, a male teacher on staff, caught these two boys by the throat and pinned then against the wall in order to separate them. This show of overt aggression immediately resulted in these boys succumbing and the other boys were all suddenly silent and slowly dispersed. Mr Desmond then dragged them to the office.

When boys got into a fight or scuffle, the fight usually stopped when a teacher intervened. However, female teachers never intervened when boys were fighting and the male teachers that intervened always used physical aggression when separating or stopping a fight. They often slapped and pushed the culprits around. I interviewed a teacher (Mr Roy) immediately after he had intervened to stop a fight on the school grounds. His response was:

"This is the only language they understand – in these situations you have to clobber one or two". He said this with great pride and his body language and facial expression showed satisfaction that he had handled the problem adequately and "sorted out these fighters".

The use of brute force by male teachers seemed to create respect among the boys for that teacher. Boys admired teachers who were hard and displayed aggression when handling difficult situations. I often heard boys commenting that Mr Desmond was a tough "ou" (male person) and that they must not mess with him. Boys also said that they "smaaked" (liked, admired) Mr Chats, a male teacher who was physically well built, and often used physical force to get boys to conform or to handle volatile situations among boys. Teachers who utilised aggressive, intimidatory management strategies, however, did not seem aware that they were emulating some of the behaviours of the boys, since they often

mentioned in informal discussions with colleagues how they had "sorted out" a troublesome boy. These teachers were proud of the fact that they used intimidation and aggression to handle the problem. As I will outline later, boys also posed a serious physical threat to teachers and their property. Control was therefore not monopolised by teachers at Sunville.

Indian teachers seldom used force or aggression on African boys. However, I observed the two African male teachers, Mr Dlamini and Mr Cele, using force on African boys on many occasions. On one such occasion Mr Dlamini, during morning duty, booted an African boy to the ground for not rushing to assembly. The boy picked himself up with no complaints and hurried away. Mr Dlamini then said: "This is the only language these 'darkie laities' understand", meaning that African boys needed to be physically punished in order to get them to conform.

While many parents in the school-going community believed that the school environment was too violent and hostile, at this juncture it is important to remember that not all teachers used intimidation, aggression and physical punishment to discipline learners and that not all learners were subjected to violent forms of discipline.

In most cases, teachers reacted in an aggressive or violent manner to boys who displayed violent behaviour. However in some cases I witnessed teachers initiating the violence by slapping a boy behind the head while passing him or giving him a 'friendly' boot. The boys mostly responded by saying: "Ow sir, why did you do that?" or "What did I do?" The teacher normally laughed and walked away. Sometimes the boys would say: "I will get you back" in jest.

Some of the learners that were subjected to aggression by teachers had begun to react with violence towards teachers. There had been increasing numbers of incidents of violence against teachers. Until recently, all of these happened outside the class during breaks while teachers were on ground duty. Some of the attacks against male teachers involved projectiles. None of the perpetrators was caught.

- Mr Govender was hit with a stone on the head. He was taken to hospital where he received several stitches.

- Mr Pillay was hit with a stone on the leg. He also was taken to hospital for medical attention.

- A chair leg was dropped on Mr David from the second floor.

Other attacks were more directly personal and confrontational.

A grade 9 boy slapped a female teacher across the face after she thumped him on the head. This was an attack by an African boy on an Indian female teacher. Subsequent to this boy hitting the teacher the two male African teachers set upon him and beat him severely. Again the dynamics of race are very evident, where Indian teachers are reluctant to use force on African boys.

4.8 The Rough and Tough Culture at Sunville

4.8.1 Get Tough or Get Out

Being in a position of control where learners accept and respond to teachers' commands, is not something which is given automatically to the teachers by virtue of their position but something which has to be won. Teachers at Sunville (male and female) often used intimidation, embarrassment and threats to gain and maintain control of learners. Below I relate some of the incidents that I observed where teachers used these methods to establish their authority:

As a newly appointed member to the management team, the principal referred a case to me where a grade 9 boy was being constantly taunted by his form teacher (female) about his poor progress and lack of interest in school. The boy's parent called at the school, requesting that he be moved to another class. I spoke to the teacher about this matter. She immediately called the boy out of the class and proceeded to call him a "failure" and a "sissy boy" and ended up by telling him to "get out of this school if you cannot cope here

– this school is not for weaklings". She commented to me that he was like a "dead duck" with no "go". She was particularly disturbed by the fact that he had asked his parents to intervene and saw this as a sign of weakness and fragility. She said: "Boys don't run to their parents when things get tough. I can't stand that, especially from a boy".

This teacher was legitimating and encouraging 'tough' forms of masculinity and promoting 'laddish' and 'cool' images of masculinity (Willis, 1977). The 'code of manliness' where a boy is supposed to withstand abuse without complaining and 'fight' his own battles has a long history and is not a recent phenomenon (Kimmel, 1996; Sewell, 1997). While there are challenges to this form of masculinity, many teachers still adopt and promote tough, decisive and hard versions of masculinity. The reaction of the teacher in the above example could have encouraged other boys to adopt similar discourses and victimise boys like the one above.

The following example, which I drew from my observation notes, underscores the 'tough boy' mentality that existed among both learners and parents at Sunville.

Reginald was a small, slight boy in grade 9 who was not afraid to stand up to the bigger boys when confronted. During one such incident one of the bigger boys pushed him against the teacher's table. He hit his head on the corner of the table and cut his eye. He was taken to hospital and received several stitches. He was back in school the next day. Reginald's mother commented: "He is a strong boy – that is why he is in this school."

This 'survival of the fittest' mentality was prevalent among the teachers, learners and parents in this school. As mentioned already, the implicit message of 'get tough or get out' relayed by the culture and climate of the school had been picked up by many parents of the school-going community. On many occasions parents came to school to complain about boys hitting, intimidating or harassing their children. During one such complaint a parent said: "This school is too bad – look at my son, he is too small – he cannot manage here".

On another occasion a mother of one of the boys became very irate on the school grounds, loudly protesting that someone had hit her son. "I have to come here from work; we send our children to be educated not to be hit". She then addressed the group of boys who had now surrounded her and her son. "What do you come to school for – learning or fighting? Is this a fighting school?"

I later found out that this mother had subsequently transferred her son out of the school. This prompted me to investigate the number of transfers out of the school in the previous three years. After examining the transfer register I discovered that: 17 boys and six girls transferred out of Sunville in 2006; 34 boys and six girls in 2007 and 24 boys and 11 girls in 2008. The transfer secretary informed me that many of the parents cited their unhappiness with the school's roughness as a reason for transferring their children. The general perception of the community was that Sunville was a school for tough boys whose primary interest was not academic excellence. Parents who transferred boys to Sunville often cited reasons like: "I want him to pick up a trade", "He gets into too much trouble in the other school" and "Maybe he will take an interest in a trade". Teachers often related comments made to them by community members outside school, for example: "He is a weak boy (academically), I am sending him to Sunville next year" and "He thinks he is too 'big' – a school like Sunville will 'sort' him out". Some parents felt that they would not get the best education for their children in a school that attracted the above caliber of boys and therefore decided to transfer their children to other schools.

As a member of the school management team, I attended to a matter regarding the transfer of a grade 8 boy out of the school. The parent indicated her unhappiness about the manner in which her son was being treated by other boys in the school. According to her, he was being harassed and physically assaulted on a daily basis. Subsequent to transferring this boy to another school, I received a telephone call from the principal of the receiving school complaining about this boy's belligerent behaviour. I interpreted this situation in either of two ways: this boy had learned this behaviour during his stay at Sunville or he was aggressive to start with. Whatever the case, it possibly serves to indicate that the climate of Sunville was tough and that if you couldn't manage in this

school you needed to 'get out'. There is no doubt that within Chatsworth and particularly amongst this group of learners, in the context of broken families, unemployment and social ills due to low socio economic problems, many learners that came to this school had prior experience of violence. Further, within the school violence was not effectively channeled in peaceful directions. Certain regimes within the school took a very bureaucratic view of disruption. The school therefore did not handle this element very well and this also contributed to the escalation of conflict into violence.

This is a predictable feature of schools that have been deprived of the ability to use the one thing that they thought worked, corporal punishment, and have not been given new tools to deal with discipline problems. The school was now confronted with heightened expectations of learners in the new South Africa who were having to deal with issues like racial frictions that were not there in the past. Therefore it is difficult to pin point and argue that a particular sector was responsible for the rough climate that existed at Sunville. I can however state that there was agreement amongst teachers, learners and the community that the climate of Sunville was rough and tough.

As mentioned earlier some parents enrolled their sons into Sunville to "toughen them up". One such parent was a prominent doctor in the area who transferred his son to Sunville because he felt that he was "too soft", because of the privileged life-style that they were leading. He transferred his son from an influential school to Sunville because he believed that boys who managed to survive in the rough and tough climate of this school would ultimately become strong-willed and hardy.

The school created an image of male physical aggression as understandable and acceptable and sent out explicit messages that tough masculinity was a norm and those that resisted or struggled to cope should seek other schools. The actions of the parents mentioned above seem to support the school's position and it is a moot point whether the school or the parents were more supportive of this position (that tough masculinities are desirable).

4.8.2 Morning Assembly

Assembly has been shown to be a pivotal time and place when and where 'what the school is about' is laid down (Woods, 1990). At Sunville, assembly was held every morning between 08:00 and 08:15. The whole school attended and learners were given information about the programme for the day. Sometimes guest speakers addressed the learners on a variety of topics and issues. The morning assembly was often used to remind learners about school rules and the consequences of infringing them. At the very first assembly for the year 2006 the principal spelled out disciplinary action that would be taken if certain school rules were infringed:

> *No boy will be spared from what I have in mind this year. Absconding and fighting will not be tolerated this year. If I catch any boy outside class or fighting it will involve immediate suspension. There will be no tolerance of boys who break the school rules.*

The principal then called two boys up to the stage and reprimanded them for talking during the announcements. At Sunville rules were often applied inconsistently for boys and girls and became very apparent in the assemblies. Generally, the boys were problematised and pathologised in this school and this image was reinforced in almost every assembly.

Another common practice in the morning assembly was for the principal or deputy-principal to call out names of boys who had breached the school code of conduct. Common offences were fighting and vandalism. When the names of these boys were announced the other learners either cheered or jeered these boys. The deputy-principal in particular made it a point to announce their names with their aliases or nicknames, for example "Lenny 'Leaks' Pillay" or "Claude 'Blacks' Reddy" or "Donovan 'the Dog'". This practice created a frenzy among learners. It served to feed into the hierarchy of masculinities in the school and elevated these boys' peer group prestige. It also served to portray maleness as aggressive, violent and destructive.

Research into dominant 'macho' modes of masculinity shows that, far from inhibiting boys' rule breaking, anti-authority behaviours, drawing attention to them in public arenas provides individuals with kudos within their peer groups (Measor and Woods, 1984; Campbell, 1993).

Guest speakers were often invited to address the morning assembly. Female guests, often from charitable organisations, spoke about morals, ethics and values and appealed to the learners for funds. Other female guest speakers would talk about HIV/AIDS, anti-drug campaigns and respect for women etc. Male guest speakers were from organisations like Rotary, talking about leadership building, and from industry, talking about the job market and the economy. The impression created was that females concern themselves with issues of self care, health protection and teach morals and values while males concern themselves with issues of employment and advancing oneself.

One morning assembly was addressed by an ex-convict. He was bald, wore sunglasses and earrings in both ears and was big and burly, an image that many of the boys in this school aspired to or mimicked in some way. He was loud, used a lot of slang and vulgar language and he bounced and swaggered around the stage during his address. The boys simply loved him and cheered everything that he said. He also got a little carried away and dramatised his anecdotes. The intention of getting this man to talk at assembly was to warn learners against violence and anti-social behaviour. I cannot comment on whether the content of his talk served to endorse violence or helped the boys to behave in acceptable ways but his persona reflected and articulated an aggressive form of masculinity. His bodily performance of 'bouncing' and 'swaggering' (walking and turning as the boys called it), as well as his language, body shape and image, seemed to be a display of the exemplary, hegemonic masculinity that existed at Sunville (Connell, 2000). While the school may have had different intentions when inviting this guest, the impression created by placing him on centre stage, was that the school was celebrating and promoting macho modes of masculinity.

The heavy official emphasis on conformity and the authoritarian style of the principal's delivery did not always have the desired effect. In response to threats of draconian action, many boys muttered under their breaths: "They must first catch us". I think that some boys saw the school's threats as a challenge to which they responded with anti-authority actions which in turn reinforced their toughness and elevated their positioning amongst other learners in the school.

I often observed boys, while walking away from the assembly, mocking each other about what would happen to them if they were to fight or abscond. Some boys also mockingly grabbed each other, creating the impression of a fight and then shouted out to each other: "Take me to the office, take me to the principal." The warnings and threats made by the principal served to create a rebellious, confrontational mentality among some of the boys.

I highlight another incident from my observation of morning assembly, where the principal again proclaimed his intention of using aggression and force to discipline the boys who broke school rules. In this assembly the principal made a rather surprising announcement. He mentioned that the guards would now carry a 'sjambok' (whip). There had been a spate of robberies in neighbouring schools where outsiders entered the school and attacked teachers and learners, robbing them of their belongings. He also mentioned that it was difficult for the guards to distinguish between learners who were not in full school uniform and outsiders. Therefore boys who jumped over the school fences who were not in uniform would run the risk of being 'sjambokked' (whipped) by the guards. Subsequently I observed a boy boasting to his peers: "I will leave school in the last period and I will show you 'ous' that I will not get caught". I am not sure if he was caught, but many boys were subsequently whipped by the guards.

While a majority of the boys learnt to negotiate school discipline with only a little friction, a certain number of boys took the discipline system as a challenge and made a heavy investment in ideas of toughness and confrontation. The reaction of the boys to the principal's threats and actions of teachers and security guards regarding the maintenance of discipline, as discussed above, resonates with Connell's (2000) argument that the

heavy handed approach to discipline serves to stimulate the display of exemplary, hegemonic masculinity.

4.9 'Girls' and 'Boys' at Sunville

One of the most important features of school as a social setting is its peer group life (Connell, 2000). With the approach of adolescence, interactions between learners are liable to be sexualised by flirting, innuendo and teasing. This romance pattern defines masculinity in general through the masculine/feminine dichotomy (Redman, 2001). It also feeds into the gender regime of a school and I have found that heterosexual relationships between learners are a formidable source of peer group prestige. Other than having romantic relationships with girls boys also displayed their masculinity in other ways where girls were concerned. For example, I observed boys confronting others boys who swore at girls (not necessarily their 'girlfriends'). I also observed boys at times carrying their class-girl's bags and allowing girls to pass when the corridors became congested. We se evidence here of other forms of interactions with girls who were not romantic in terms of boys constructing their masculinity, however for most boys at Sunville romantic relationships with girls appeared to be closely bound up with the assertion of a heterosexualised masculine competence.

4.9.1 "Why Good Girls Are Going Out With Bad Boys"

I discovered from my observation of learners and from my discussions with teachers that many girls who were academically successful, well mannered and who generally followed school rules had romantic relationships with notorious boys.

The perception among teachers and learners at Sunville was that boys who were notorious and had reputations for breaking school rules or getting into trouble were more popular among the girls. I found that many boys indulged in anti-school behaviour because they believed that it would attract girls.

Sandile: *Some of the boys want to prove that they are gangsters. They want to prove themselves when there are girls around them. They want to show off.*

Sohail: *When I used to get into trouble a lot the girls used to like me.*

My informal and formal interviews with girls also confirmed that many girls (not all) were attracted to boys with notorious reputations.

Zaakirah: *Most of the girls like the naughty boys; not the whole school. But it is happening.*

As we will see in Chapter six girls played an important role in creating conflict among boys as well as influencing the manner in which this conflict was handled. While I do not devalue the importance of the role of girls in the manner in which masculinities are constructed, this study is not about male female relationships and therefore I did not explore the dynamics of romantic relationships among learners in great detail.

However it was important to get the views of the teachers about learner romance as this had implications for the gender regime of the school and how this regime was constructed and changed.

Ronnie: *I notice that these good girls or the so called good girls because you can't actually call them good girls anymore, but the ones that we generally like because they do well in school, they are respectful when you talk to them – they deliberately go and choose boys who are regarded as the misfits, wild, that are bad, basically bad boys. They are choosing these type of boys. I think the reason is because they believe that if they could hook on to a wild, bad boy then the rest of the school population sees them as 'The Female'. They get more respect. This has been troubling me for some time, **why good girls are going out with bad boys.** I think because bad boys are respected in this school. If you can back-chat a teacher, hit a teacher, bunk classes, smoke and all that then you are respected. The other learners like to be in their company and also try to be them too.*

Now and again some of them break that mould, and some of them maybe because of their religious beliefs and their values at home pull them back, but sometimes we lose them too.

The second paragraph of this extract reveals that not all boys and girls subscribed to the popular ways of thinking and behaving. Many learners spent most of their time with the same sex (inside and outside the classroom) and seldom communicated with the opposite sex. Other learners, while spending time with the opposite sex were not involved in romantic relations at all. In this study I was careful not to miss these different constructions especially in the construction of masculinities among the boys. While most of the romantic relationships were heterosexual, from my observations during the breaks, I found evidence of homosexual relationships as well. These relationships however were only between African girls. My observations were supported by interviews with teachers who made similar observations:

Carrie: *Oh yes, they are definitely involved in sexual relations at this school. There are a few same sex relations as well – I know of a few amongst the black girls. I don't among the Indian girls – Indian boys – no.*

Connell (2000) argues that the romance pattern of gender relations that exists in high schools defines masculinity in general. Heterosexual success is a formidable source of peer group prestige and feeds into the hierarchy of masculinities. Co-educational schools typically operate with an informal but powerful ideology of gender difference, and put pressure on boys to conform to it. This may partly explain why there were no known same sex relationships amongst the boys at Sunville. Also the idea that boys generally emphasised traditional male characteristics such as sexual prowess was evident in their choice of romantic partners. However during an informal discussion with a teacher I was alerted to the fact that an African girl who had a homosexual relationship was subsequently involved in a heterosexual relationship with an African boy. I spoke to this boy and he said that he did "not care" what happened before and "what people think".

This reveals that while most of the boys celebrated heterosexuality as a mark of manliness, and while this boy was not homosexual, there were exceptions to the popular notions of boys opposing any form of homosexuality.

4.9.2 School Girls or Taxi Queens?

Although the girls at Sunville also broke school rules and punitive measures were taken against them this was not a common occurrence. Girls were seldom involved in violence or fighting, however, I would like to highlight one incident involving a group of Grade 12 girls who were involved in a physical fight with another group of girls during a lunch break. This incident sparked huge criticism from the staff (especially the females), who decided to take harsh action against the girls who were involved in the fight. We must keep in mind that this type of thing happened on a daily basis among the boys and often went unnoticed or was ignored by the teachers (male and female). The girls who were involved in the fight were given community work (cleaning the school, washing windows, removing graffiti), their parents were called to the school and they were suspended for a week. Subsequent to this fight all the girls were asked to remain behind after the morning assembly and were addresses by senior female teachers. This happened at three consecutive assemblies. The female teachers addressing the girls made remarks like: "You all are a disgrace to the females in this school. Are you school girls or taxi queens?" (a term given to promiscuous girls in the community). The female teachers also carried out checks on uniforms and paid particular attention to the hair, nails and make-up during these special assemblies. Only girls and female teachers attended the assemblies. Boys and male teachers went to class – no checks on the boys were conducted and there were no lectures about unruly, aggressive behaviour. The impression created by the manner in which this incident was handled and the subsequent assemblies was that it was more acceptable for boys to break the school rules than girls. Girls who broke school rules about aggressive behaviour were treated more harshly than boys. Also, it was the responsibility of the female teachers to bring the girls to book when they deviated from expected behaviour, but the responsibility of all staff to handle behaviour problems of the boys.

4.9.3 School Girl Appearance

There was a general feeling among staff at Sunville that the girls placed more emphasis on their bodies, clothing and appearance than boys.

Ronnie: *I find that with the girls the mirror seems to be the constant companion in the classroom, even when you are teaching, they are looking at their faces. A lot of male teachers miss this but girls are very conscious of their clothes, their belts have disappeared or are provocatively used. Their entire identity depends on their appearance rather than moral values and ethics. They want to project a certain type of image to the boys, strut around with the intent of attracting attention. It does not matter what type of attention they get and from which boys.*

Tammy: *Girls go all out for fashion and dressing. We have a major problem in class as well. They want to take their mirrors out and apply make up and comb their hair while you are teaching. That goes on non-stop sometimes and really disrupts the lesson. I often collect the mirrors and return it at the end of the lesson.*

Although the view that girls were obsessed with their looks was frequently expressed by teachers this was not true of all the girls at Sunville. Many girls did not focus on their appearance with the intensity mentioned by teachers above and worked hard at school to achieve academic success. Generally the girls performed better at school than the boys.

4.9.4 Academic Achievement

While many teachers expressed the view that most of the learners at Sunville were not particularly interested in school work, they stressed that the boys were less interested in academic achievement and success than the girls.

Carrie: *Girls are more in tune to academic excellence than the boys – boys tend to lose interest in school work very early and there are various reasons for this – home background, lack of parental support, being given cell phones etc. There is no*

competition between boys and girls for academic excellence. The girls compete amongst themselves.

Ronnie: *I find that if I give kids homework more girls do it than boys. In tests the girls far outdo the boys. In orals I understand because girls generally have a better vocabulary than boys. But completion of tasks and performance in tests proves to me that females are doing better. At one stage there was competition and the males were dominating and I find that slowly this has changed and the females are taking over and the males are becoming more softer. They are more irresponsible and I don't know how they are going to be fathers and things. Females are taking over in terms of responsibilities and if there are duties to be given I prefer to give it to a female than a male.*

Vinesh: *Girls are more inclined towards academic success. They are slightly more committed than the boys. There is no competitive spirit among the boys.*

Teachers often told learners during classroom talk that girls were "brighter" and "better" at school work than boys. Their actions (like giving duties to girls rather than boys) also created an impression that they believed girls were better at completing tasks properly. These views and actions fed informally into the school's gender regime and thus served to sustain and reinforce a pattern where boys were seen to be tough and 'cool' and need not be concerned with academic success, while girls focused either on their appearance and looks or school work and academic success.

These findings resonate with those of Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) who found evidence from an interview-based study of boys in primary and secondary schools in Australia that boys constructed girls as bookish and clever, and themselves, in contrast as active and sporty. However, as other studies have highlighted, class and race are important in boys' schooling. For example, some boys (who in Britain, are particularly those from the working class and those of African, Caribbean, Pakistani and Bengali descent) have for a long time done badly at school, while others (particularly from the middle classes) still

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have high levels of achievement (Epstein,1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Willis, 1977). In addition girls are not uniformly successful at school (Frosh et al, 2002).

In my study I found that generally the African learners (boys and girls) showed more desire to do well in school than their Indian and coloured counterparts. The African learners were also less defiant and deviant and displayed more of a desire to follow school rules and policies than the Indian and coloured learners. Some of the teachers that I interviewed expressed similar views.

Carrie: *The African learners are much more disciplined than the Indian learners.*

Tammy: *When it comes to school work the black girls are performing better than anyone.*

Vinesh: *The black learners are more disciplined and perform a whole lot better. There is a desire to make the necessary progress and improve their lives.*

Other teachers, while agreeing with certain views expressed above, found gender differences in the attitudes of African learners to school-work.

Ronnie: *I find that the black girls are gearing themselves to actually doing something with their lives. They are more committed. But the black males have become more lazier and take the easy route to life. They don't pay attention – they are the biggest bunkers.*

Among any race group, there will be learners that perform well and others that don't. Further, in certain classes there may be groups of learners (from different race groups) that don't perform well and show little interest in school work. However from the testimony of the teachers above it seems that the African learners at Sunville were more committed to school work than the Indian and coloured learners and in particular, the African girls are more successful than their male counterparts.

4.9.5 Learners in the Classroom

Classroom disruption was very common and was a problem for teachers and learners alike. I found that boys were more disruptive than girls in the classroom. Crozier and Anstiss's (1995) findings that the boys distracted both teachers and other learners in the classroom and thereby dominated space and time fit with my own. I also found that teachers planned lessons around these disruptive boys thereby affording them more attention. Disruptive behaviour from a few boys directed the focus of the teacher's attention onto these groups and thereby afforded them domination of the pedagogical process. It must be stressed, however, that not all boys were disruptive, overt and noisy and many of them succumbed to the authority of the teachers when reprimanded. Sometimes the more diffident and unobtrusive boys were explicitly affected by teacher reprimands. This was also evident in interviews with teachers.

Ronnie: *I feel that the boys are becoming more softer and this worries me. I do not know what is happening to them. They are also becoming more irresponsible. I don't know how they are going to cope as fathers and all of that. They are gone very feminine. If you scold them now, five years ago they wouldn't cry, but if you scold them now they cry.*

While some teachers allowed disruptive boys to dominate a lesson other teachers adopted a more confrontational approach:

Ronnie: *The aggressive boys, I think they are aggressive because they cannot compete in the classroom, they cannot understand what is being taught, they do not know how to handle their homework, they cannot complete tasks, they do badly in tests – so they are compensating by being aggressive. If you really get up close and in their face and really challenge them, they will back down. I don't think that these boys are aggressive because they are manly, they are aggressive because they are compensating for shortcomings in another area.*

Connell (2000) shares this view and argues that groups of boys engage in these practices, not because they are driven to it by raging hormones, but in order to acquire or defend prestige or to mark difference. Rule breaking becomes central to the making of masculinities when boys lack other resources for gaining these ends. Studies by Willis (1977) and Mac an Ghaill (1994) make it clear that boys who cannot access social power through academic success pursue alternative sources through claims to sporting abilities, physical aggression and sexual prowess.

While several studies of children in school have found that the boys dominate the schooling process, my findings reveal that while this pattern was evident as well, gender relations at this school were very complex. On the surface there seemed to be linear processes of gender bias, but as one looked more carefully there were challenges and resistance to this gender bias, rather than unrelenting dominance of boys over girls.

4.9.6 Learners outside the Classroom

I have already alluded to some of my observations regarding the use of space outside the classroom. It was pronounced enough to revisit in this section where I highlight other activities and spaces that were heavily gender typed. My inventories of activities and groups of learners outside the classroom revealed that there was extensive separation by gender.

Although gender separation is not a focus of this study, a growing number of reports have highlighted that unfair gender separation has a profound impact on the lives of high school learners and the manner in which they construct their identities. In a report on school based sexual violence, Abrahams (2004) highlights the importance of architectural design of schools with particular attention to the position of toilets. The report further states that many schools focus largely on discipline problems like smoking – but at the expense of compromising hygiene and safety in school toilets. The role of health promotion at schools should be re-examined with a gender lens. The report recommends that school toilets should be built closer to the classrooms to overcome problems of hygiene and safety. At Sunville there were separate toilets for boys and girls. The boys'

toilets were on the ground floor near the assembly area and the girls' toilets were on the second floor. Graffiti covered almost all of the walls of both girls' and boys' toilets. The boys' toilets however, were also dirty and foul smelling and many boys preferred not to use them. I relate the following incident from my observation notes:

An African boy came to the office one morning asking quite desperately to use the office toilets. When the secretaries refused to allow him in, citing that the rules are that learners are to use the toilets provided for them, he began to cry and turned to me in a desperate plea for assistance. I asked him why he did not want to use the boys' toilets and he replied, "Sir, it is too dirty." I realized that this boy was in desperate need so I directed him to the staff toilets around the corner. I was also aware that there could be a number of other reasons why this boy did not want to use the boys' toilets. They were always congested with smokers, and a lot of anti-social behaviour went on there, such as intimidation and 'tax' collection. (Some boys charged the smaller boys to use the toilet or collected a 'tax' (money) from them for protection in the toilets.) While many boys used the toilets for these anti-social purposes, many boys avoided the toilets altogether.

Sandile: *I don't go in such places like toilets where they smoke and have conflicts and disagreements. The toilets are bad.*

I found that the space close to the buildings, like the staircase to the office, the space outside the tuck-shop and staff-room and the corridors were regarded as girls' space and frequented mostly by girls, whereas the playing fields, areas behind the workshops and open space behind the school were regarded as boys' territory and frequented mostly by boys. The girls who visited these areas were regarded as the defiant and problematic learners who were often in trouble. I found that while teachers at Sunville had more control in the classroom than on the playing fields, teachers spent a lot of energy in trying to exert control outside the classroom as well. I frequently observed girls being chastised for venturing into the 'boy's areas'. For example during one lunch break I observed a few girls walking from the area behind the workshops. Mrs Smith the teacher on duty had this to say:

Where are you wild girls coming from? Don't you know that that area is out of bounds? Girls like you look for trouble. Now get to the assembly area.

The assembly area was regarded as a general area where boys and girls hung out. The teachers regarded it as a neutral area and a safe haven where not much intimidation took place. They held this belief because the area was densely populated and surrounded by classrooms and was easier to monitor. While there were no incidents of violence in the assembly area the possibility of bullying did exist. However, the above example serves to highlight that while, on the one hand, the teacher wanted to sustain gender separation (by asking the girls not to go to an area dominated by boys), on the other hand, she challenged gender separation by asking these girls to go to the assembly area, where boys and girls readily mix. However, we must keep in mind the duty of care that teachers have for looking out for the learner's safety regardless of gender. And this imperative may cut across the tendency to separate learners by gender.

4.9.7 Type of Play outside the Classroom

In this section 'play' is regarded as engaging in games or other activities for enjoyment rather than for serious purposes like a sporting match or a contest. Boys play very differently from girls especially outside the classroom. Among the boys, play is often rough and tumble and is physical in nature. It was virtually impossible to miss the manner in which boys played amongst themselves at Sunville. They were always physically restraining each other by holding, grabbing, tripping, etc. I often asked them why they behaved in this manner and I always got the response: "We are only playing".

Boys also showed their aggression by pushing each other, smacking about the head and body, wrestling, stealing possessions, chasing, catching and dropping each other, throwing blows and booting. I often found it difficult to establish whether these boys were playing or engaged in a fight.

Sometimes the play involved the use of a ball. I often observed boys wildly booting a ball about without direction or purpose. The idea was to kick the ball harder and further than the other boys without regard for the consequences.

It must be mentioned that it is never the case that every boy differs from every girl in the manner in which they play. Some boys never or rarely play in the manner in which I described above, while some girls engage in rough play which involves physical restraint, pushing, etc. However, at Sunville I observed that generally boys played roughly and often their games involved the use of bodily strength and physical prowess. We will also see in the later chapters that the manner in which learners played did, at times, become a provocation which could lead to conflict and sometimes this escalated into violence. The type of games that learners played, or refused to play, also caused conflict, especially among boys.

4.10 Conclusion

The findings discussed in this chapter show that Sunville operated with an informal but powerful ideology of gender difference. By employing deconstructionist theories and discourse analysis, the manner in which Sunville developed a particular gender regime became quite apparent. However, I have tried to illustrate in this chapter that within this social milieu, masculinities and femininities were actively constructed and not simply received. The school had structures and practices that influenced the gender regime and promoted gender difference like the curriculum, the physical setting of the school and the manner in which morning assemblies were conducted, sexual division of labour and tough ways of handling discipline. By the same token, the school was a setting in which other agencies were at play that also had a significant influence on the gender regime, especially the agency of teachers and learners themselves. Using their positions of authority, teachers on some occasions sustained gender differences and male domination while on other occasions they challenged structures and practices that promoted separation, stereotyping and dominance along gender lines.

In some areas of school life, masculinising practices were conspicuous, even obtrusive. Some masculinising effects were intended by the school, some were unintended, and some were not wanted at all – but still occurred (Connell, 2000). For example, the school pathologised aggressive boys and those that did not conform to school rules. This was clearly evident in the morning assemblies, where girls were handled differently from boys and there seemed to be a different set of rules for handling girls and boys. The threats that were constantly leveled against the boys in the assemblies highlighted and tended to exacerbate violent modes of masculinity (Connell, 2000; Skelton, 2001). Further the school had adopted tough defensive strategies to ward off the threat of physical aggression, to control learners and to force them to conform to school rules and regulations like security alarms, high walls, armed guards and surveillance cameras. The bodily stances and verbal and physical control methods of teachers exalted the rough and tough gender regime that already existed in this school. In addition the particular control and management strategies adopted by, especially the male teachers, reflected the intimidatory, aggressive aspects of the hegemonic masculinity evident in the school environment. In effect, both male and female teachers used similar masculine forms of authority to control learners.

An important issue here then is that women can be bearers of masculinity too (Connell, 1995). At the same time it is important to emphasise that violent modes of dominant masculinity, tough disciplinary control measures and denigration of girls and female teachers were not supported and promoted by all in this school and drawing from teacher interviews and my observations I found evidence that alternative, resistant patterns of behaviour were often operating within a more explicit evident hegemonic framework. Many boys distanced themselves from boys who promoted violent domination of other learners and many teachers also took up alternative positions to using aggressive and intimidatory measures of controlling learners.

There were challenges to the hegemonic networks of male power by both males and females in this school. The gender regime of the school was indeed powerful but, as Connell (2000) reminds us, gender regimes need not be internally coherent, and they are

certainly subject to change. The gender regime, as I have alluded throughout this chapter, is a continually changing network of micro-powers, and through an analytical understanding of their modes of operation, I found appropriate and finely tuned micro-resistance to the dominant modes that formulated the school's powerful gender regime.

In the next chapter I will examine how the gender regime of this school influenced the construction of masculinities and how the construction of masculinities impacted on the school's gender regime, while I give particular attention to provocation and how boys handled it.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROVOCATIONS – CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the various kinds of provocations that produced conflict among boys at Sunville. These included the ways that boys spoke to one another, teasing, taunting and challenging. I describe and analyse the different types of provocations as a precursor to identifying the causes of violence in school. The reader will remember that while conflicts which can include disagreements are endemic in most social situations the way in which these conflicts are handled can either lead to a peaceful resolution or escalate into open, physical violence. In this chapter I seek only to analyse the first phase of conflict situations. In later chapters, I will discuss what causes conflict to escalate into violence (or to be resolved peacefully) and identify ways in which escalation occurs (the second phase of the conflict situation).

This chapter is about the provocations that I witnessed and recorded as a researcher which were part of a conflict situation, some of which escalated into violence and some of which did not. It involves a momentary analysis – a description of the moment in time when boys provoked one another. As the chapter unfolds it will reveal some correlation between the particular forms of provocation and whether violence occurred or not. However it is important to understand that these provocations were all gendered and related to issues of masculinity that the boys felt very deeply about.

The links between provocations of conflict and the way boys construct their masculinity are inseparable aspects of 'the moment' but for analytical reasons I shall discuss them separately. This chapter went through many drafts as I refined the analysis. My supervisor, Professor Robert Morrell, challenged my interpretations and probed for clarity. Here is one of his comments:

You suggest violence affects masculinity as though violence pre-exists masculinity. But, of course, masculinity pre-exists violence and is indeed, in some other way, implicated in all cases of violence. For this reason you need to give a stronger emphasis to masculinity.

In what follows, I do indeed place greater emphasis on masculinity, but in this chapter my primary goal is to describe, and at the same time analyse, cases of provocation. I produce a schema of the forms that provocation took and explain the contexts in which these instances were understood as provocative by the boys and how they contributed to shaping the boys' knowledge, awareness and construction of their own masculine identities.

This thesis is concerned with how violence occurs. What are the stages that lead to violence and how can we theorise them? What are the triggers of violence? Why do some conflicts become full scale instances of physical violence and others not? These questions will not only help to refine our understanding of violence, they will also help us to develop ways of reducing violence in schools.

Most of the provocations at Sunville took place on the playing field, in the classroom and in the corridors. Before and after school the provocations are minimal as learners focused on getting to the classroom for registration in the morning and rushing for a taxi or bus after school. During school time, however, incidents occured frequently. I found that boys did not really care if a teacher was present when provoking other boys. The main reason for this was that teachers usually did not take action against boys who were verbally abusive or who played a significant role in the provocation. They reacted only when things got out of hand, that is, when the verbal abuse had degenerated into physical violence and learners were injured.

5.2 Verbal Provocations

Verbal provocations among the boys generally constituted attacks on competence and character and included ridiculing, teasing, and swearing. The extent to which a message was perceived to be offensive, threatening or provocative depended on the interpretation of the receiver of the message. In many cases what I perceived to be offensive as a researcher was not perceived as such by boys, and what I thought was not so offensive was often regarded by them as a serious provocation and led to hostility. In other school-based studies, verbally abusive interaction was often identified as a catalyst for physical aggression (Martin and Anderson, 1995; Sabourin, 1995) and I found the situation at Sunville to be no different.

The provocations that I witnessed and report on as a researcher were sometimes a continuation from a previous incident (which I had not necessarily observed). I could never tell when an incident really began as I came upon such incidents at various stages in the escalation of the disagreement. This meant that the person who appeared to be the aggressor at a particular point may actually have been the person who was retaliating. In some situations there was intent with a clear aggressor, as we see later on, but at other times the situation was more complex and 'histories' (things I had not actually witnessed) were at work. For example, somebody who appeared to be the aggressor in a moment of conflict, may in fact have been the victim on a previous occasion.

While teasing and swearing are not mutually exclusive, my discussion deals with these two types of verbal abuse separately because I found that both the aggressor and the aggressed reacted differently to teasing and swearing and this has different implications for masculinity. I found teasing to be related to taunting and tormenting, while swearing was related to cursing. Swearing usually generated an immediate reaction, while learners generally only responded to teasing after repeated incidents in which they were belittled and insulted by the other learner. The repertoire of swear words that boys used included: *bitch, bastard, poes, cunt, muotherfucker, arse, asshole, naai (Afrikaans for fuck))*.

The teasing usually involved an attack on the learner's physical appearance, speech, area in which they resided (class) and race. It included words like *moffie, blower* (sexual orientation) *darkie* (skin colour), *porky* (physical appearance – weight) and *barbie* (feminine).

5.2.1 Swearing

Despite the fact that swearing often sparked conflict and aggressive reactions from learners, this was a daily occurrence at Sunville, especially among the boys. The reader will be reminded that in the literature review I made a distinction between aggression and violence. The script for swearing normally ran as follows: One boy would make a derogatory remark about the other. The other boy would curse back at him and there would follow a series of cursings back and forth – sometimes accompanied by threats and intimidation. This type of slanging match often resulted in the dispute escalating into violent. However, as we will see later, some of these confrontations were resolved without violence.

In some instances swearing was not a provocation (for example, when boys used a swear word descriptively or playfully or as a way of labelling somebody), while in other instances swearing was clearly a provocation (either perceived or intended or both). It is also important to highlight that words cannot be understood in isolation from the tone and context in which they were uttered.

I relate the following incident of swearing as a provocation.

Tommy: *Hey, laitie – what kind? (meaning what's wrong)*
Chris: *Who you fuckin calling laitie? I'll show you who's a laitie?*
Tommy: *What you gonna do?*
Chris: *You'll get fucked up – don't dalla the wrong ou's. (The boys came really close to each other.)*
Tommy: *Ja, we'll see, I also got my backstops.*
Chris: *I will fuck you and your backstops up.*

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Tommy: *Ja, go tell your mother – fuck off.*
Chris: *You fuck off – too.*

The above incident depicts a provocation that emanated from a simple greeting and escalated into a heated exchange of vulgar language, challenges and threats. I argue in Chapter four and in the literature review that there was strong evidence at Sunville of a dominant form of masculinity that influenced boys' understanding of how to act in order to be acceptably 'male'. This form of masculinity was associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power, authority, competitiveness and subordination of boys who showed any feminine characteristics. Hegemonic masculinity at Sunville involved, among other features, being adept at swearing. While I do not discuss the outcome of the above exchange (violent or peaceful) it is sufficient to note that both boys displayed a desire to act tough and show the other (and peers) that they had authority, either by having fighting prowess themselves or having friends (backstops) who were prepared to use physical violence and fighting prowess to inflict harm or injury on the other.

We might call this 'posturing' – a performative moment that evoked hegemonic values and affirmed their own masculinity. A performance like this, however, might not have been intended as a provocation to violence but rather as an attempt to establish a hierarchy (since Chris was much older than Tommy). I suspect that this dialogue meant something different to both boys and might well have resulted in Chris trying to force recognition of his (superior) masculinity by moving from the verbal to the physical. In many cases boys were prepared to use physical force, aggression and violence to demonstrate their subscription to the hegemonic masculinity prevalent in this school.

In the school context of this study I cannot map particular kinds of insults and provocations with particular types of violence, but it is important to note that variables such as age, body shape and size, race, clothing and context influenced whether a provocation escalated to violence or not. Further it was not possible to determine by the nature of the provocation whether it would result in violence or not. As we see later on, there was no correlation between what initially happened and what eventually transpired.

In other words I cannot conclusively state that a particular provocation resulted in a violent confrontation among the boys or that boys ignored a certain type of provocation. The variables mentioned above influenced the manner in which boys handled the provocations.

While the above incident led to provocation and a confrontation[6] I often witnessed boys calling each other "laitie" as a greeting or friendly remark without provoking the need to retaliate. Sometimes boys used more severe words like "poes", "fucker" and "mother" and these were also taken lightly. Contextual factors and cues influenced the manner in which boys reacted to verbal provocations. Among such cues were the relationship between the aggressor and the recipient.

Lindo: *It depends on who insults me. If I know you and respect you and if you are my friend, if you insult me then I will not confront you. I will not go and call friends and other people, although it is not okay. I just ignore it.*

When it was a friend making the verbal attack while smiling or laughing, or if other learners were also smiling, then it was interpreted by the recipient as friendly teasing. The tension was further diffused when the provocateur or other peer added the phrase "we are only playing".

While on playground duty I witnessed numerous incidents that involved a heated exchange of words. When I confronted the boys involved they replied that they were "only playing".

At times, however, the content of the message was of the utmost importance. This was especially the case when verbally abusive messages targeted personal characteristics or permanent impairments. Provocations where boys verbally attacked someone who was dear to the other learner almost always resulted in violent resolution. This came out very strongly in interviews:

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[6] This incident resulted in the boys pushing each other and I suspect if I had not intervened it would have resulted in a physical fight.

Sandile: *They like to swear – they call your 'mother' your 'ballie'. I am not sure but I think they are swearing our mothers and fathers. They want to prove themselves when there are girls around them. They want to show off.*

When asked what would make them upset, almost all the boys indicated that if someone cursed their parents or family members they would get really upset and confront that person. They also mentioned that they were prepared to use violence against someone who cursed their family.

VH: *What would make you upset / angry with other boys in this school? What are some of the things that boys do that cause you and perhaps other boys to become angry and upset?*

Patric: *Swearing your mothers and fathers – these boys swear our parents – this hurts me a lot. I don't know why they swear our parents. Sometimes when you are walking and they are sitting as a group and you are walking alone, they push you and swear you and sometimes ask you for money – maybe one rand. If I say I don't have money they say 'your mother's poes – you asshole – all those things.*

Sohail: *If someone picks on my mother – then I would really get upset and he is in trouble.*

The aim of cursing a boy's family was to exploit his weakness to the point where he would break down and react in some way. Boys were expected to defend the honour of their families and this code was often exploited by boys looking for confrontations. As will become clear, particularly in the next chapter, popular masculinity at Sunville required what Majors (1989) in the context of African American youth, called a 'cool' style, both in dress and behaviour. This involved an avoidance of displaying 'weak' emotions of fear, distress or pain by whining or crying. At Sunville, boys were expected

to be emotionally and physically tough in order to be considered 'cool'; thus an aggressive reaction to a provocation was more likely than a show of weak emotion.

When swearing was seen as a provocation the boys who were aggressed often felt the need to retaliate as we saw above. The form of retaliation often mirrored the initial provocation. In the words of Claude: "If he hits me I will hit him back. If he just swears me then I will swear him too, and walk away." The need to avenge any insult or attack among the boys was related to normative expectations. The masculine thing to do was for the boy to show his peers that he was neither scared nor a coward.

Claude: *I will confront the boy and ask him about it. I am not afraid to confront somebody on any issue. If the boy is rude to me and overdoes it then I have to do what I have to do.*

Claude presented himself as a boy who subscribed to the 'hegemonic masculinity' of the kind described by Connell (1995). She drew on the images of hardness, toughness, fighting prowess and a readiness to use violence. But adherence to hegemonic norms is seldom total. In the next chapter I will distinguish between boys who subscribed (sometimes) to these ideals without being the frontline troops of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). These were the boys who actually were violent (in certain situations) rather than those who just postured. On the other hand, some boys avoided physical conflict and deflected provocation. These boys provided a variety of justifications to legitimise their decision not to be aggressive. Some nuanced their accounts by implying that they were wiser and more mature than boys who used violence to resolve disputes; others said that they wouldn't lower themselves to the level of the aggressor and some boys minimised the abuse by generalising it, for example, by saying that this "happens to everyone – not only me".

Lindo: *There are a lot of threats – if somebody threatens you, you can't even say anything – I do not challenge them, I keep my cool – I do not respond to whatever they are doing – they get surprised when you just walk away or laugh – they swear you a lot,*

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but just for nothing – afterwards when they see you after five minutes they don't even care about you – they don't even recognise you sometimes.

Lindo justified his commitment to non-violence by giving the impression that the boys who swore and antagonised didn't have a personal grudge and weren't singling him out, but behaved in the same way to anyone and everyone. We also see that Lindo was prepared to let things go, giving us an indication of a variation on hegemonic masculinity that holds a lot of promise for peaceful conflict resolution. While many boys denounced violence and subscribed to non-violent resolution to conflict, they also mentioned that they were capable of violence and would use it in certain situations.

Sandile: *They swear but I do not fight. Sometimes I swear back, but if they say after school 'you will get fucked up' then I try to be friendly with them because I am worried that they may hit me. But I know I am stronger than them. They have many brothers.*

The other boys may think that you are scared or gay – but still I don't like to fight. But one day when something really, really bad happens then I will show them.

While Sandile said that he preferred peace to violence, an interesting observation was that he had a breaking point. As I argue in Chapter one, everyone has the capacity for violence but it takes a particular type of action to release these emotions. Sometimes people will be violent in various situations, including protecting themselves and their loved ones.

Sandile claimed that he was not violent and that he backed down when threatened (the reasons will be looked at later) but he also said that when "something really, really bad happens then I will show them". We do not know what this "really, really bad thing" is and what is really bad for one person may not be so bad for another. What Sandile may have regarded as really bad might have been something quite trivial. The point is that verbal provocation had the potential to ignite violence among the boys, even those who were ostensibly not violent. Conflict can be peacefully resolved up to a particular point,

but beyond that point, barring intervention (for example, by teachers or security guards) it will result in violence. A major contributing or limiting factor according to Connell (1995) is the manner in which boys shape and construct their manhood.

It is also apparent from the interview material provided by the boys who attributes such as hardness, readiness to confront antagonists and fighting prowess were very influential in determining boys' popularity and also their view of themselves and others as properly masculine. The boys at Sunville drew upon these features in constructing modes of hegemonic masculinity, the dominant masculine 'ideal'. When a boy felt that his manhood was threatened (by taunting, teasing, ridiculing, etc.) then there was every possibility that he would react aggressively. While the boys readily recognised the dominant masculine ideal, they also positioned themselves in complex ways in relation to it, often resisting it or disparaging it.

In Chapter six, I examine the exact moment that a provocation escalates to violence and what it is that causes this escalation.

5.2.2 Teasing

Teasing takes two major forms, playful and hurtful. In mild cases, and especially when it is reciprocal, teasing can be viewed as playful and friendly. Playful teasing is not serious or aggressive (even though teasing often includes serious content) and is delivered in a non-hostile non-antagonistic manner. According to Kowalski (2000) pro-social teasing includes playful, affiliate comments. At Sunville, teasing that was intended to be playful was sometimes taken as hostile by the receiver and became a provocation. I relate the following example from my observation notes:

Mr Pillay, a Maths teacher at Sunville, had called a boy (Niven) "Macgyver" in the Maths class when this boy solved a complex problem on the board. This was intended as a compliment as the teacher was referring to a television programme where the main character 'Macgyver' was portrayed as very versatile and able to solve almost any problem.

During the break the other boys in the class began teasing this boy "Macgyver" in a playful manner. However the boy did not take the teasing in that spirit and began swearing at the boys. I arrived at the scene when I heard the vulgar language and managed to elicit what had transpired from the boys.

While nobody likes to be teased we see that even playful teasing was a provocation for Niven and he reacted by swearing at the provocateurs and using vulgar language. This incident could have escalated into violence had I not arrived.

Hurtful teasing is a type of behaviour that is intended to distract, irritate or annoy the recipient. Because it is hurtful, it is different from playful joking and is generally accompanied by some degree of social rejection. In extreme cases teasing may escalate to actual violence (Kowalski, 2000).

Hurtful teasing at Sunville normally included verbally aggressive messages that targeted any characteristic at the core of the learners' sense of identity. For example, boys who that displayed feminine characteristics were teased. Epstein (1997) found that homophobia was expressed towards non-macho boys in terms of their similarity to girls. At Sunville, boys who were targeted were often those who were physically weak, those that spoke in a soft tone of voice and those that did not display machismo in body movements like walking, sitting or running. These boys were teased in order to provoke some reaction or retaliation. The importance the provocateurs place on homosexuality was apparent in the words that the boys used when teasing, for example "moffie", a derogatory term used to refer to homosexuals.

Femininity also came to be associated with particular boys, in opposition to which 'real' masculinities were asserted. A further example of the enactment of masculinity in relation to particular fears and anxieties associated with femininity was evident in the use of other words like "stekkie"(girl) and "aunty" (lady) (meaning having feminine characteristics or being 'female like'). Like Epstein (1997) I also found that boys

invented certain boys as 'gays' and 'sissies' and agree that these terms are often interchangeable. While much of the teasing took on subtle anti-feminine and anti-gay tones, it becomes so embedded in daily school experiences that many learners no longer made the connection between teasing and harassment. It is against these that many boys sought to define their identities.

The ease with which homophobic or misogynistic insults produced shame and avoidance made these threats an effective strategy for control. The 'hard' boys who ridiculed and humiliated the 'softer' boys by taunting and teasing them usually did not expect them to retaliate. The boys who were targeted were reluctant to draw more attention to themselves and very discreetly accepted the abuse, thereby allowing themselves to be controlled. But as we will see in the next chapter, repetitive teasing did elicit reaction from certain boys at some point and this almost always led to violence.

A boy who calls another boy a "moffie" or a "stekkie" is implying that he himself is not, thus asserting his own privileged masculinity by subordinating the masculinity of another. In fact the situation can be quite fluid. For example: Boy A calls Boy B a 'moffie'. For a variety of reasons Boy B chooses not to contest (violently or verbally) this denigrating comment, though he feels that it is a sleight on his masculinity. He then calls a smaller, junior boy a 'moffie' and in this way consoles himself and makes himself feel manly again. Bullying often happens like this where insecure boys hang out with an alpha male type in order to bolster their own flagging masculinities.

Again we see signs of control. Boys who assert themselves in macho ways by teasing 'softer' boys are boys with low self esteem who are most likely to comfort themselves with the knowledge that they are indeed true mega macho males. When this comfort is threatened by the boys who retaliate to teasing then these boys need to use other mechanisms to maintain this image and turn to violence and aggression. I will pursue this analysis in more detail in the next chapter.

I would like to remind the reader that Sunville was a multi-racial school and racist words used to tease learners were always intended to be inflammatory. My observations and individual interviews reveal that different kinds of racist words were often used to tease boys. These words included: "darkie" (an African person), "pecki" (an African person), "coolie" (an Indian person) and "bruin" (a Coloured person). The African boys were most often the objects of attack in racialised teasing. Indian boys normally used racist words to provoke African boys. However I did come across incidents where African boys used the word "coolie" to provoke Indian boys.

Patric : *There are students that abuse blacks. Swear them and tease them.*

Lindo : *They (Indian boys) call us (African boys) "pekis" and "darkies" expecting us to retaliate. There is a lot of teasing – I do not challenge them, I keep my cool – I do not respond to whatever they are saying.*

Sometimes, as in Lindo's case, we see that he did not react to the racial slurs. He gave various reasons to justify his lack of retaliation like wanting to focus on learning, not having time for "pettiness", and that there were bigger issues in the world to worry about. In three interviews I had with him there was strong evidence that his bahaviour (mostly non-violent in confrontational situations) was related to the way he had constructed his identity as a boy. While writing this chapter I have been constantly tempted to continue with the discussion of how certain behaviour was related to the boys' understanding of what it is to be 'male' in the school setting, but I leave this discussion for the next chapter on causes of violence.

While Lindo chose to handle provocations without reacting, other boys did not have the same resolve and did react when teased. Verbal retaliation was at times perceived to be the only solution to prevent further provocation and abuse and stop the confrontation from degenerating into physical aggression.

Sandile : *They swear and tease. Sometimes I swear back too, because it is very painful when they call you the names that you do not like. They say "peckie ou, fuck off" They take advantage and want to show off.*

Here we see Sandile hinting that boys said and did certain things in order to display a particular type of image. In other words these boys were shaping their masculine identity. It seems very apparent that there 'racialising' forces influenced their construction of masculinities. Throughout this thesis I produce evidence and argue that masculinities were multiple and variegated and constructed anew by each particular boy in relation to the positions made available by the culture of the school. Different boys reacted to verbal provocations in different ways for a number of reasons.

5.2.3 Humour

Verbal game-play was used extensively to create humour among the boys. Boys usually made up stories and publicly narrated them (in an attempt to create humour) which often provoked conflict and violence. A common theme was boys "sucking up to teachers" or being a teacher's "bum boy". A favoured verbal game play was a boy attempting to make other boys laugh by making up a story about another boy. For example, a boy would suddenly blurt out in a classroom:

Hey guys – yesterday I saw Deena carrying Dlamini's (teacher) bag to his car. He was sniffing his arse like a puppy.

Sometimes they would use girls in their stories:

Hey Chris – how that stekki (girl) gave you ducks the other day. Exe – Chris waaied to vloek this stekki and she klapped him with her bag.[7]

Some of the incidents were true but were exaggerated to create humour.

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[7] Translation: Chris, we saw that the girl gave you the cold shoulder. Chris tried to flirt with this girl and she hit him with her bag.

Hey guys Rudi got caught smoking by Mr Nair and he took him to the office. Rudi got
so scared that he waaied in his pants. The whole office checked what he did. It was
naar.[8]

In the above incident Rudi had been caught by Mr Nair and taken to the office but the rest of the story was fabricated. The boys who were targeted generally reacted, either to refute the story, defend themselves or try to set the record straight. However their attempts generally did not prevent other boys from having a laugh at their expense. I found that many boys used humour to win favours and gain popularity by ridiculing other boys and trying to get a laugh.

A significant feature in studies of masculinity is the importance of humour to 'macho' forms of masculinity (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Sewell, 1997). Kehily and Nayak (1997) argue that heterosexual masculinities are regulated through humour. The parallels between the boys in their study and the boys at Sunville are striking. In both studies boys performed gender by trying to be funny. I found that the boys at Sunville engage in a great deal of 'dueling play' where they would say certain things with the pretence of joking that would otherwise be a provocation. If the joking provoked confrontation then they would disclaim malice by saying that they were "just joking". The "just playing" and "just joking" claim was also used by many boys to silence objections or ward off confrontation. a boy reacted negatively to someone who was "just joking" it would show that he was humourless, a trait normally associated with girls and non-macho boys at this school. I must point out that while many boys subscribed to this type of thinking, other boys had different views about humour and positioned themselves differently in relation to the "just joking" assertion.

I also found that while boys used humour to establish bonds with each other, the use of humour also served to create divisions and often provoked conflict and violence between the provocateur and the provoked. Therefore humour (both dissonant or genial) was central to the construction of masculine identities and hierarchies at Sunville.

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[8] Translation: Rudi got caught smoking by Mr Nair who then took him to the office. Rudi got so scared that he urinated in his pants. It was smelly.

5.3 Non-verbal Provocations

5.3.1 Possessions

When a boy took another boy's possessions this generally produced conflict and often led to violence. In many cases boys would take other boys' stuff as a prank. Normally the boy that was targeted was someone who was seen as 'soft', weak, and non-macho and who would not be seen by the provocateur as a threat to his popular masculine identity, even if he did react. For example a provocateur might take a boy's bag and throw it onto the roof. While I observed several incidents of conflict that were sparked because of boys taking each others' possessions, the following incident stood out in my observation notes.

When a teacher is absent other teachers serve relief in that class when they have a non-teaching period. I was put on relief in a grade 10 class. In the 55 minute lesson I had to intervene in four fights in the class all related to boys taking each other's possessions.

It started with one boy alleging that someone had stolen his pen-case. A group of boys decided that they would go around the class searching everyone's bags in order to apprehend the perpetrator. Some boys allowed the boys to search their bags while others resisted. A number of scuffles broke out between the boys who were searching and those that were being searched. There was a lot of throat grabbing, shoving, head-butting, etc. My presence and intervention prevented these conflicts from escalating into further, more severe violence.

I am not sure whether this boy's pen-case was missing or if he fabricated this to create a stir but it certainly provoked many boys into conflict situations. In cases where the boys did not resist there was no violence, but in many cases boys protested and this led to violence.

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Interviews with boys also revealed that taking possessions was used as a way of provoking boys to retaliate.

Cerwyn: *There is a group of boys who walk around the blocks and if you are sitting in front they just put their hand through the door and take your stuff and carry on walking. They will then make you aware of what they did and test to see what you will do. Sometimes they take your bag and throw it away and sometimes they take other stuff to see if you can defend yourself. See if they can take you on – you are not that superior.*

Cerwyn made it very clear that the boys took possessions to provoke a reaction. I asked him if they had taken anything from him.

Cerwyn: *Yes – I was sitting in class and this boy was walking down the corridor and he just grabbed my case and walked away. I knew who he was and during the break I confronted him – He did not deny that he took the case and laughed – I grabbed it back – I did not do anything else. I think he thought that I was a softie.*

Cerwyn did not usually get into confrontations with learners but we see in the above incident that he was provoked into a confrontation and retrieved his case. In some cases boys were prepared to fight to get back their possessions.

Sandile: *If they steal my bus ticket then I would really get upset. Because this thing carries about two weeks bus fare. It is very important. If they steal it I would not come for two weeks to school. I would get really angry. I would fight to get it back.*

Sandile lived in KwaNdengezi, an area situated on the outskirts of Chatsworth. Learners travelling from this area bought a fortnightly bus ticket to school. The learners that travelled from KwandeNgezi were close friends and would not take each others' tickets. A learner doing this would do it as a malicious prank. The only motive to take Sandile's bus ticket would be to provoke him and create conflict. Boys often took bus tickets from

other boys knowing that this would generate anger and that the boy would certainly attempt to retrieve it.

Boys also took more valuable possessions from each other like shoes, leather jackets and cell phones.

Sai: *Boys steal other boys' cell phones – and they don't really care if you know or not – they are prepared to take you on – if someone took my cell phone there is only one thing that I can do – that is force it out of him. If he refuses then this can lead to a fight.*

From the above incidents there is strong evidence that boys mainly took other boys' possessions to test their forbearance and show superiority. They got a sense of satisfaction from showing that they could take other boys' possessions and that the other boys could do nothing about it. These 'jokes/games' were about establishing masculine hierarchies and these hierarchies were constantly policed and maintained, often with displays of superiority but, if necessary, by the use of violent force. Like the other provocations of conflict, this type of behaviour had implications for the manner in which boys constructed their masculinity, for both the victim and the perpetrator.

5.3.2 Bumping – 'Acting Big'

A large number of boys sought to display bravado through physical means. They often tested each others' audacity by bumping each other and waiting for a reaction. Sometimes the boy that was bumped did not react, sometimes words were exchanged and both boys walked away and sometimes the conflict quickly escalated into violence, with other boys joining in the fight. My interviews reveal that if one boy bumped another boy and he did not react then the boy that instigated the bumping gained superiority over him and admiration from other boys.

Sohail: *I don't like it when they act 'too big' – sometimes they bump you and act big. They try to get high status or something. But they don't interfere with me – they know me*

in this school. Sometimes boys want to cause fights for nothing, just for fun. They will
bump a boy, swear him, then a fight will start. Sometimes they choose anyone.

Sohail was a big burly boy. In the past, he had instigated many a fight by deliberately
bumping other boys and had developed a reputation among the boys for being tough and
aggressive. In interviews he declared that he had changed his behaviour from
intimidating, threatening and fighting with other boys because "you get nothing" from it.
However, although he had changed his behaviour he said that he still had friends who
were aggressive and violent and they still used bumping to start fights. However, nobody
bumped him because of his reputation. . For Sohail, an element of his construction of his
everyday experience of school was being able to use physicality to intimidate and
provoke other boys into a fight as a test of tenacity and strength.

Testimonies from other boys revealed similar views:

Cerwyn: *They use bumping to get a fight started – if they go up to a boy and hit him –*
then it will be that they started it but if they bump you first then they put the blame on you
– that you are starting something.

Some who do not want to start a fight will say sorry but I saw the boys going back to
fight. Because if you back down then he has one over you. You see they bump to show
their friends that they can also fight and threaten other boys.

Cerwyn's interpretation of corridor jostling was a perception of contestation for
admiration from peers and some type of superiority over other boys. From the above
testimonies and from my observations I found that boys were aware that bumping caused
conflict and used it to provoke violent reactions from other boys to gain veneration
among their peers, etc. Their identities were constructed in relation to their status among
peers. The boys jockeyed for position by using physical strength to intimidate other boys.
They referred to this type of behaviour as "acting big" which means trying to show that
they had dominance over other boys. The use of body strength and physicality was a

major marker of masculine identities in the boys' lives and, as we will see later, was a major cause of violence among them.

5.3.3 Aggressive Play – Fun Fighting

In this thesis I define aggressive play as 'rough and tumble play' where physicality is used in competitive ways to test each others' resilience. Boys at Sunville physically restrained each other, wrestled and attempted to pin each other to the ground or against a wall to display bodily strength. When teachers intervened the boys responded that they were "only playing". This type of behaviour came to be regarded by teachers and learners as 'fun fighting'.

Within the school context, most of the aggressive play was between boys. For the most part the aggression was not dramatic – it was normally quite mundane, for example pushing, shoving, spitting, tripping, holding and restraining. However, this type of behaviour made the lives of a large number of boys and girls (and it might be added teachers) miserable. This kind of petty aggression often provoked conflict, which sometimes quite quickly escalated into a 'punch up' with other boys joining in, either to assist their friends or just to "get in on the action".

On a number of occasions I witnessed boys participating in rough and tumble play. I noticed that among these boys there existed a fine line between what they understood as play (fun fighting) and an altercation or provocation. On many occasions while on playground duty I confronted boys welded together in a head lock or neck vice, only to be told "we are just playing". Pollack (1998) argues that boys seem to enjoy asserting themselves with other boys. However, I also witnessed boys tussling it out in a playful manner that would suddenly erupt into a fist fight. In other words, the rough and tumble play was a provocation to conflict and often violence.

Rough and tumble play was more prominent among the younger boys, usually those in grades eight, nine and ten. Boys of all races indulged in this type of behaviour. My

interviews and further observations gave me more insight into this kind of behaviour. The following incident, taken from my observation notes, involved two Indian boys in grade nine:

After school I noticed John holding Akish around the neck in a vice grip. As I walked towards the boys, Akish managed to break free and reacted by trying to grab John. All the time the boys were laughing, giving the indication that were playing. Both boys fell to the ground, but John fell awkwardly and hurt himself. This provoked him and he swore at Akish and threw a few punches. The 'play' now became serious. The boys' expressions changed from smiling and laughter to discontent and anger.

Incidents like this were not uncommon. Boys often 'played' in these aggressive ways and usually it did not lead to anything further, but when one boy got hurt or was undermined the mood very quickly turned nasty. I discovered that as long as both boys who were 'playing' aggressively had equal opportunities – pushing or throttling each other, etc., the fight would remain playful. But if one of the boys gained the upper hand then the other would become angry and this led to conflict. Sometimes this took the form of swearing and calling of names and it ended there, but sometimes it escalated to physical violence.

Interviews with some of the boys confirmed my analysis of this behaviour:

Cerwyn: *Boys wrestle a lot with each other –see if they can put the other guy down. They keep on doing it. The boy that is always on the ground gets irritated because he cannot get a chance to be on top. Fist it is fooling around but then it can grow to a fight because the guy who is always on the ground reacts aggressively. Sometimes while playing one guy gets hurt slightly and he hits back and this leads to a fight.*

Sai: *You see they play, play and then one gets irritated and starts to hit the other one. Boys hold each other by the neck – first they test each others' strength and when one cannot manage – his face starts getting red and this leads to a problem.*

Rough and tumble play can be seen from different perspectives. Thorne (1993) found that the rough and tumble play among the boys she studied was a constant feature of playground life, and in their desire to present themselves as tough, they threatened, insulted and competed with each other. She argues that this hostile behaviour is, ironically, also a way of developing friendships. According to Thorne, boys bond through aggressive play with each other. However, Pellegrini's (1993) research showed that engaging in rough and tumble play did not make boys more popular with each other and it was more a function of aggression than pro-social play. Other researchers argue that this type of aggression by males against males is often interpreted as boys being boys. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) argue that rough and tumble can be seen as a culmination of bodily aggression which is a key part of masculinity. It can quite easily be seen as experiments in domination, testing one's power and ability to catch, push, hit and ultimately hurt. Aggression is rewarded and this type of behaviour serves to establish a pecking order of physical power.

I found that petty aggression, rough and tumble play, or fun fighting definitely provoked conflict when the 'play' reached a certain level of severity. It was difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when the 'play' changed to conflict but I discovered there was a certain point of no return. I interrogate this further in Chapter six. This was a form of boundary policing for some boys and normalised particular constructions of masculinity. The boys tested the limits of masculine boundaries by pushing each other to breaking point, a kind of brinkmanship. Boys were content to 'have a go' at each other so long as they were both on an equal footing but when one boy gained the upper hand then the play became competitive and resulted in swearing and the exchange of blows. While this sometimes occurred in the context of heterosexual affirmation (to impress girls), I confine the explanation here to peer group culture. I have dedicated a section to how girls affect boys' behaviour in the next chapter. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) report similar findings where rough and tumble play is benign as long as the roles of victim and victimiser are alternated so that domination is avoided, and as long as it remains playful.

Some boys at Sunville engaged in rough and tumble play routinely, but others did so infrequently or not at all. Some boys preferred to spend their breaks in the library, computer rooms or standing around talking rather than engaging in rough and tumble play. I will discuss the relationship of this to the manner in which boys shaped their identity and constructed their masculinity in the next chapter. For now it is suffice to say that the taunting and jousting among boys often provoked conflict and at times this conflict escalated to violence.

5.3.4 'Knuckle Busters'

The boys at Sunville had coined a card game called "knuckle busters", which almost always provoked conflict. I found that the boys also used cards to gamble and this was a major cause of conflict. I discuss gambling as a cause of conflict in the next chapter. Although many teachers thought "knuckle busters" was a gambling game, it involved punishment rather than money as a form of payment. The rules were as follows: Four players were involved in the game. Each player picked a card and showed it to the rest of the players. The other players took turns to punch the player with the lowest score. If the player with the least score had a black card he would receive 'soft' punches and if he had a red card he would receive 'hard' punches. There was always dispute about whether the loser would get 'hard' or 'soft' punches and this often caused conflict.

We see that the boys were using aggressive ways to test each others' manliness. Tolerance of pain and hardness is a common indicator of manhood in many studies of boys and men. However I argue in this thesis that while the boys readily recognised this ideal, they also positioned themselves in complex ways in relation to hardness and aggression, often resisting and disparaging aggression as a means of resolving disputes. These contradictory features to the hegemonic masculinity of the school are documented in Chapter seven, where I investigate how these boys dealt with the resulting constraints in shaping their masculine identity.

5.4 Conclusion

Verbal and non-verbal provocation in many ways attack a learner's identity and when these provocations hurt, degrade and inflict pain then the provocations serve to create aggressive reactions. While many boys at Sunville adopted vengeful and hostile strategies and perceived direct confrontation as the only means to handle provocation, many other boys did not allow the provocation to create conflict and used other strategies to ward off and avert conflict.

Some boys succeeded in being popular by using various means to provoke other boys and make them fearful of their hardness. On the other hand, many boys resisted and rejected the understanding of masculinity implicit in the act of provocation and refused to be drawn into the game of 'jockeying for position'. They also resisted being part of the hierarchy of 'hardness' that existed at the school.

In the next chapter, I discuss the causes of conflict and take care to highlight the multiplicity and fluidity of boys' identities by focusing on both the aggressive and competitive as well as the peaceful ways in which boys at the school handled conflict situations.

CHAPTER SIX

CAUSES OF CONFLICT AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse how and why conflict occurs and escalates to violence. This follows the previous chapter which discusses various forms of provocation that are often, but not always, triggers for physical violence (fighting). This chapter will explain the process by which provocation is converted into violent confrontation and identify the causes of conflict and violence among boys at Sunville Secondary.

The first section of the chapter describes incidents of violence among the boys who took place during their last three years at school. The second section analyses why conflict occurred and how it escalated to violence. Many studies of violence in schools have identified broad causes of violence that relate to environmental, structural and cultural factors, which include socio-economic conditions, class segregation, grading and scheduling, parenting practice, racial and religious bias. I discussed this in the literature review in Chapter two. Rather than focusing solely on the physicality of male violence, this chapter engages with causes of violence among boys who relate to issues of masculinity. In this chapter I argue, as Collins et al (1996) have done, that violence by males against males is a form of boundary policing which serves to determine where a boy is positioned within a hierarchical arrangement of masculinity.

In the previous chapter I explored provocations of violence. There is an important distinction to be made between provocation and cause. A conflict situation generally has two phases. The first phase is the provocation and the second phase is the possible escalation to violence or the peaceful resolution of the conflict. A provocation is a moment in time – an act that may cause a response. In this study, a cause is seen as a principle or a phenomenon that boys are prepared to defend, advocate or subscribe to that gives rise to an action which is usually physical violence. Before I discuss why conflict occurs and escalates to violence I relate two incidents from my observation notes that provide some images of the violence at Sunville. The first incident took place on the 18th of May 2007.

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I did not witness this incident first hand but got to the scene immediately after the fight had ended and obtained testimonies from both boys who were involved in the fight, and the learners in the class. The incident occurred in the classroom between two grade 10 boys from the same class. The conflict started when Tom threw Sandile's bag outside the classroom. Sandile swore at Tom and when Sandile went to fetch his bag, Tom tripped him. Sandile reacted by throwing a punch at Tom. Tom also reacted violently and both boys began fighting, exchanging punches and kicks. When I arrived at the scene the boys had stopped fighting. Some desks were overturned in the classroom, there was blood on the floor and both boys' uniforms were covered with blood. Tom had a cut under his eye and was bleeding profusely. Sandile had scrapes and bruises on his face and body and both boys' faces were swollen from punching or kicking each other. The cut under Tom's eye did not seem to bother him much as he was still prepared to go into battle again with Sandile when I arrived at the scene. While with the help of the guards I escorted the boys to the office many boys gave them 'high fives' as a show of approval of their behaviour and admiration for them. The boys were fêted as heroes by their peers.

The above incident did not involve the use of weapons. However, more serious incidents of violence occurred, where boys inflicted physical harm on each other using knives and other weapons. I never witnessed an incident where a gun was involved; however carrying knives was not uncommon among the boys. The following incident, which took place on the 4th of February 2008, involved the use of knives. I did not witness the whole incident but arrived at the scene once it was in progress. My account below is taken from my observation notes and discussions with learners and teachers who witnessed the incident:

Eight boys were involved in this incident, which happened during instruction time when learners were supposed to be in their classrooms. Whenever there was a fight in school it was very noticeable because learners in the vicinity rushed to

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the scene, often shouting, jeering or cheering. There was a feverish atmosphere around the scene. When this particular incident took place, I was teaching in the classroom and I heard the all too familiar noise of learners shouting. I knew immediately that there was a fight in progress. I rushed to the scene to find eight boys fighting each other in pairs. All the boys had knives and were trying to stab each other while slapping, punching and kicking. There were a few teachers already on the scene but they did not physically intervene for fear of getting hurt as the boys were out of control. The guards then arrived at the scene and tried to stop the boys without success. One guard then turned the fire-hose on these boys who then stopped fighting. Three boys then ran away. A teacher tried to stop one of the fleeing boys who flicked his knife at the teacher on his way up the stairs.

Three of the boys who remained at the scene had knife wounds. The other boys were also bleeding from the mouth and head. We contacted their parents and called in the paramedics who attended to the boys' wounds. This fight had been triggered over competition for a girl's affection which developed into a group conflict and escalated into physical violence.

While the above stories are examples of the violence that was part of the fabric of Sunville the reason for providing the description here is to provide an analytical entry point for later discussion in this chapter on how conflict escalates into open physical violence. Violence is not just a pathological display of emotion. It occurs within specific contexts and proceeds through a series of identifiable steps. As has been argued by many students of masculinity (e.g. Fitzclarence, 1995), violence must be approached and analysed in a context-specific way.

I argue in this chapter that the major cause of fights (violence) at Sunville was the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity. Attempting to gain inclusion or hierarchical ascendancy led boys to jostle for position and this led to physical violence. The competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity heightened the vulnerability of boys. They responded to this vulnerability by forcibly and sometimes violently establishing

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their masculine credentials. When I refer to the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity I am talking about how boys constructed their masculinities in the specific context of Sunville. The emphasis was on the individual boy and his psychic relatedness to masculinity. The connection between the hyper competitive heterosexual male environment driven by peer pressure and other forces (see Chapter two) and the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity produced a potent cocktail of competition, which generated conflict, which rapidly escalated into violence when boys bought into prescriptions of hegemonic learner masculinity. Being anti-school was often at the heart of how boys proved themselves.

The major cause of violence was the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity at the school, but there was no one, single, cause of violence. Violence was caused by multiple circumstances that included, among others, the psychological condition of the boy, the school context (including the possibility of resolving conflict peacefully), peer environment and the nature of the provocation.

Much of the masculinity and violence literature 'explains' the connection between masculinity and violence as though the relationship were unproblematic or simply casual. Most of this literature is based on the idea of men protecting or creating patriarchal power and in this regard, the explanations are rather abstract or instrumental (they impute to men a particular motive which is often not established empirically). Seldom is a microanalytic approach taken that looks at the dynamics of violence in process-terms. One approach to explaining male violence is to treat it as pathology. In this view violence results from a malfunctioning brain incapable of making 'correct' moral judgements (Gilligan, 2009). From these perspectives, research and intervention focus on individual pathology and individual change. This approach to male violence diverts attention away from social norms for boys and men and from violent practices that affirm the norms.

An alternative view of male violence derives from the belief that practices of male violence are too widespread to be solely considered problems of defiant individuals or groups detached from the cultural milieu that continually births them and shapes them as

male. Connell (2005) argues that boys create their lives individually and collectively through what she calls the 'configurations of practice' associated with the social position of men, with a particular social and cultural context. Implicit in Connell's (2005) argument is a rejection of biological essentialism whether rooted in a focus on bodily differences or bodily stages of development. In this view male violence is understood as a tragic problem of how Western societies construct, reproduce and enforce 'norms' of masculinity constituting the 'ideal' as superior, in control, strong, tough, respected and infallible (Kimmel, 1996).

Research in Western societies on masculinities may not have an automatic, direct or unmediated relevance to the South African context as cautioned by Morrell (1998a), however research in Western societies does serve to inform my own study since there are parallels between male violence in Western and African forms of masculinity. I discussed these theories of violence in the literature review in Chapter two.

Boys and men are not born violent or with innate violent tendencies. They are born into a culture where a gendered hegemony exists that prescribes a form of masculinity which legitimates violent practices as a way to achieve or maintain some sense of being a 'normal' man. But not all boys and men will accept these norms, or even if they do, will not accept them all the time and in every context. Boys negotiate norms in their life through the demands of particular circumstances that they find themselves in. In some cases boys may 'obey' hegemonic norms and in others they may defy them. It is for this reason that microanalysis of the ways in which violence occurs is so important.

While the thread of masculinity construction runs throughout this thesis, this chapter in particular discusses more vigorously how understandings of what it is to be a man and the shaping of masculine identity relate to causes of conflict. I argue that there are a number of contextual factors that feed into the events that occur after a provocation and determine whether a provocation leads to the escalation of conflict and violence or whether the conflict fizzles out. I will consider this constellation of factors as causes of violence. As indicated in the previous chapter, these should not be confused with provocations which

are 'triggers'. Whatever the outcome, the causative factors all relate to boys' understandings of masculinity.

Different cultures, different societies and different communities have different mandates of what it is to be a man, but common to all of them is a cultural mandate to prove yourself, and define what kind of man you are, and to do so in a public way. In other words, you must be recognised in some way as being a man. The adolescent boys at Sunville had diverse needs regarding their masculinity and the need to prove it – they were moving into 'manhood' and for some this imposed specific obligations concerning the defense of their identity and dignity. My discussion in this section charts the ways such recognition was earned in the context of the school.

6.2. The Competitive Nature of Hegemonic Masculinity

In this section I examine responses to provocation that led in the first instance to an escalation of conflict, and in the second to violence. My examination centres on masculinity which gave shape to and propelled the responses of the recipients of provocation. The hegemonic masculinity of the school (embedded in the school's gender regime) reduced the likelihood of non-violent responses and increased the likelihood of violent outcomes. In this sense it was a cause of violence, but not a cause that stands alone. Other factors intersected to convert provocation into actual physical violence. I found that the competition between boys took a number of forms: defending girlfriends, humiliating other boys (by swearing, stamping on shoes), gambling and other mechanisms that maintained the male peer group. This competition was designed to establish their masculine credentials in the eyes of peers. While the gender regime of the school and the culture of the community supported boys' violent and assertive ideas of masculinity, peer endorsement was a key element in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The competition was geared to obtaining peer approval and, in turn, this was sometimes related to/defined by being defiant and taking anti-authoritarian/anti-school positions.

6.2.1 Defending Girlfriends

I use the term 'girlfriend' to mean having a heterosexual (though not necessarily sexual) romantic relationship with a girl (Redman, 1996). Redman (2001) argues in his study of heterosexual romance among boys in a secondary school in the United Kingdom, that heterosexual romance involved commitment, mutuality, emotional intimacy and sexual activity. He further argues that during secondary school, romantic relationships with girls appeared to be closely bound up with the assertion of a heterosexualised masculine competence. In this study I found that romantic relationship with girls often caused boys at Sunville to get into conflict situations in their attempts to avoid humiliation, trying to keep intact what respect they had in a context where class, race and age factors were at work.

Many studies reveal that boys often get into conflict situations where girls are concerned and the conflict often escalates into violence (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Barker, 2005). Gary Barker (2005) recounts a personal experience of getting into conflict over a girl:

> *I remember having become involved in a fight with a bigger boy over a girl in a very public arena. She liked me but he was bigger and decided that he had seen her first. I ended up on the ground with a bleeding lip while a group of fellow students looked on. I didn't really even know the girl. I would probably have been ashamed for her to know that I had gotten into a fight because of her. But it was not really because of her. It was because of those other boys watching: would Gary Barker wimp out or would he fight back?* (p.13)

Barker (2005) found in his experience as a teenager in a white suburb in Houston, Texas, whether you fought or walked determined if other boys respected you and whether girls found you interesting. However in any context there are multiple ways of proving oneself and not all boys go the route that Barker describes above, as I have discovered in this study. A significant means for boys at Sunville to prove their maleness revolved around not accepting shame, for example, for some boys it was a provocation if other boys

interfered with their girlfriends. These were the boys who had bought into hyper–heterosexual masculinity and were bound by its values to fight over girls. An important element of heterosexual performance in that it puts distance between a boy and the suggestion that he is effeminate or a homosexual. The following are examples of such situations:

Shivern: *Just say you are walking with a girl and they[boys] make you feel like a stupid, pass remarks at you and your girl. Let's say it is after school and you are walking with your girlfriend, you would not say anything – just carry on walking. Then later you take your friends and go back to them and ask them why are you causing trouble with my girlfriend and if they have a big mouth then this leads to a fight.*

Sandile: *There are a lot of fights here. They fight a lot for girlfriends.*

Sai: *If one boy has a girlfriend and another boy goes and talks to this girl then he gets upset and confronts this boy. They sometimes fight over this.*

Claude: *Boys get into lots of conflict – especially outside the gates when going home. A lot of fights start with the vulgars – but before the vulgars – sometimes boys go to another boy's girlfriend and cause problems. Then that boy, you know, will go and start swearing and a fight happens.*

Cerwyn : *When a girl is going out with a guy – just say she is a popular girl and she went out with you and she left you for some stupid reason and she goes out with another guy, then that guy will use this against you and this can cause fights – example he will say she went out with you but she had to leave you because you were like this or like that and she had to get someone better than you.*

While all the above testimonies indicate that boys fought over girls at Sunville it is important to note that the girl was not the *cause* of the fight, she was the symptom, a

pawn in the much bigger struggle to prove oneself to one's male cohort. The girl was instrumentalised in this struggle. The trigger or provocation of the conflict was one boy interfering with another boy's girlfriend. The cause of the conflict was the boy's desire to prove himself to his peers and avoid humiliation by reacting to this intrusion. This fed into the jockeying for position among the boys at Sunville and the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity of this school. This situation existed for boys across all races.

In one of my interviews Sipho (an African boy) related how a fight broke out between two groups of African boys at school:

Sipho: *You see the story is about the girl but at the end the outcome was between two groups of boys. The girl was left outside and the outcome was between these two groups of boys. You see in this school what happens is that some of the people think that they know better than other people – they show off like "baboo". Boys form these gangs and go around the school. They will hit the weakest link from the other gang to show that they can beat the other gang. We can put the girl inside there too – she is the spark but it is not about her – it is about these groups. Both these groups think that they know better than the other group. It has to do with respect – which group is getting more respect. They have to get some status around the school, to say that the whole school is afraid of us and I am going with the best group – something like that.*

While other boys who I interviewed mentioned that girls were the cause of fights, Sipho pinpointed the problem when he said that the girl was the spark but the fight was not about her, it was about the competition between groups of boys for respect from other boys and position in the school. This corroborates my analysis that fights are often caused by boys wanting to prove themselves to their peers and a desire to gain respect of the other boys in the school. Adolescent boys have different needs regarding their masculinity and the need to prove it. They are moving into 'manhood' and for some this imposes specific obligations concerning the defense of one's identity and dignity. There are a number of factors that affect boys' behaviour in attempting to prove their masculinity. For example, boys of smaller stature may not readily get into a physical

confrontation with bigger boys and may seek other ways of proving their masculinity. On the other hand compensatory masculinities often work in the opposite direction. Small men are often a lot more aggressive than big men because they have something to prove.

Conflict between boys of different race groups may more easily escalate to violence than conflict between boys of the same race group. While I argue above that some of the boys who got into conflict over girls subscribed to the hegemonic masculinity that existed at Sunville and were bound by its values to fight over girls, this behaviour was not unconditional. Boys behave in ways that move in and out of hegemonic masculine positions. In other words a boy is not guaranteed to fight in every situation involving the defense of his girlfriend. Sometimes he may just walk away choosing not to fight and sometimes he may resolve the dispute peacefully. A boy may subscribe in particular situations/at particular times to hegemonic masculinity. But this is not the only or the whole explanation.

Among boys who notionally incline to different sets of masculine value (one hegemonic, the other counter-hegemonic) we might find that the recipient of provocation does not respond in terms of a hegemonic script (which would be to fight physically) but may either walk away, or choose to respond verbally or in some other non-violent way. I explore this further in the next chapter.

Some boys may choose to respond from a different masculine subject position which also inclines to violence. There is nothing contradictory about this because violence is not and cannot be the monopoly of hegemonic masculinity. Often complicit masculinities, for example, are just as violent as hegemonic masculinities, and the same even goes for oppositional masculinities. It is thus important to identify the ways in which these values intersect and how they become combustible (and lead to violence). In my analysis I try to avoid reifying 'masculinity' and fixing boys in/into one subject position. Throughout this study I am aware of the fluidity of the situation. As this chapter unfolds, I highlight a number of causes of conflict and we will see that some boys responded from a masculine perspective other than the hegemonic masculinity of Sunville Secondary.

In many cases boys fight over girls but there are a number of other contextual factors that feed into the situation and make it explosive. One of these factors is that there are almost always other boys watching. Peers have an important bearing on a provocation escalating to conflict and violence, as Barker (2005) reveals in his testimony above. I discovered that for many boys at Sunville, there was a need to show the other boys watching that they were not scared, and would not back down – and in the process the boys met their understanding of the expectations of being a 'real' man. If a story was circulated around the school that a certain boy stood up for his girlfriend, he would get respect from other boys. He would be seen as a "real outie". The term 'outie', at Sunville, referred to those boys who displayed qualities of normalised masculinity discussed above. The evidence suggests that defending one's girlfriend was a display of heterosexual masculinity as independent, entirely unfeminine and exclusively 'straight'.

Lindo: *The other thing is girls. Maybe I am asking a girl out and another boy comes and asks that girl out, that causes a conflict because it again comes back to peer pressure – people say hey see he is taking your girlfriend and he is not respecting you – all of that. This is the major thing that causes conflict among boys.*

Although sometimes some boys may not have wanted to fight for their girlfriends they felt compelled to do so because of peer pressure, a desire to prove a sense of worth and maintain a reputation of being a tough guy, or even just of being 'okay', not a 'moffie', not something less than a boy, among their peers. For a brief moment, the boy responding to provocation would feed into or off the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant boys even if, most of the time, he did not act out the hegemonic masculine script. Study after study of masculinity has revealed that in order to achieve successful heterosexuality men and boys seek to show their distance from homosexuality (Morrell, 1994a); Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1995, 2000; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Barker, 2005). At Sunville fighting over girls was one way for boys to distance themselves from homosexuality and construct a heterosexual masculine image. Fighting for girls was an effective way to publicly validate their masculinity to their male friends.

However not all the boys shared these views or behaved in ways that identified with this type of identity. As I have argued earlier a boy who subscribes to an alternate masculinity (complicit subordinate or protest) may also fight for a girl.

Sohail was one of the boys in my study who consistently subscribed to a hyper-heterosexual hegemonic masculinity and believed that he should fight for girls:

Sohail: *But it is better not to have girlfriends – You have to fight for them. I am better off without them.*

Sohail indicated that when it came to girls he felt that he had to fight for them, whether he wanted to or not. The discourse of not wanting to accept shame and proving their manhood was frequently adopted by boys to explain their involvement in conflict at Sunville. Sohail had built a reputation for being tough. He was popular and respected among the learners. In order to maintain his popularity and reputation of being a tough guy he could not walk away from an incident that involved his girlfriend: "you have to fight". Sohail fitted into Connell's (2005) description of the frontline troopers who are the pillars of hegemonic masculinity.

Sohail related another incident where he got into a fight over a girl.

Sohail: *I got into a fight because of my girl – I punched the other guy and beat him. I know that I could have walked away but there were people around there. The other boys were screaming for us and I felt I had to win.*

Sohail was aware of alternate responses to provocation which included the possibility of avoiding violence. "I could have walked away but there were people around there", is significant because it implies that if there was no-one around he may not have fought. His response indicates that the reason for the fight was to prove his manhood to the other people around and not the girl per se. He not only felt that he should fight but that he

should also win. In Sunville winning a fight would give a boy a certain amount of prestige. So boys fought because of pride and tried to win to gain prestige. For Sohail, as with many other boys at Sunville, winning the fight did not just mean that he successfully defended his girlfriend but also that he successfully proved his manhood. Sohail's behaviour is a model for hegemonic performance. Again we see evidence that girls at Sunville were not the cause of the fights but instruments in the struggle for dominance.

According to Barker (2005) girls and women also have expectations of boys and men and these often include some pressure to perform, to achieve and define oneself as not female, not homosexual and not dependent.

6.2.2 Girls' Views

From the interviews with the boys there was overwhelming evidence that girls did influence boys' behaviour at Sunville. While this study does not focus on girls I brought in this section to illustrate that there some girls at Sunville had certain expectations of boys and some boys behaved in certain ways to satisfy their expectations and in doing so got into conflict situations and sometimes violence.

The inclusion of one section on girls' views might read as a rather perfunctory exercise. The focus of this thesis is the production of masculinities within the context of conflict and violence. This chapter is not a case study that seeks to identify what constitutes learner femininities to match my investigation of masculine formations. Such work has been carried out elsewhere (but not in South African settings). The work of Lees (1993) and Paechter (1998) informs my theoretical and methodological stance. However it is important to explore how the girls at Sunville felt about the boys to better understand why some boys got into conflict situations at school. Did the girls admire and like boys who tried to pursue and impress them? What type of boys' behaviour did girls like? What type of boy would the girls consider as a boyfriend? I must warn that this is not an exploration of the cultural production of school femininities. It should also not be read as the girls' reaction to masculinity at Sunville. It is merely a snapshot of what some of the girls felt and said about the way boys constructed their male identity at the school.

The evidence I use in this section is drawn from girls who were randomly selected from grade 11. Among their number was Zaakirah, the deputy head girl, who dominated most of the discussions. Their comments do not represent the voice of all the girls at Sunville, however, their views resonated with the peer culture of many girls at the school. While I recognise that there are different ways of being a girl (Paechter, 1998), a key imperative for many girls was getting a boyfriend and there was intense pressure from their peers to do so. Boys were the main topic of conversation and getting a boyfriend was seen, not only as proof of girls' normal heterosexuality, but also provided some sort of status to those girls who had steady boyfriends. Holland et al (1996) describe this as the 'male in the head', that is the power of male dominated heterosexuality (p.240). At Sunville the boys who had girlfriends also enjoyed a certain amount of status among their peers. Renold (2007) argues that heterosexual relationships at school bolster young men's and young women's reputations. There were a range of strategies involved in girls' public stances to boys at Sunville. From my classroom and playground observations I noted that many girls (especially the popular ones) spent a lot of time socialising with boys who had a reputation for being intimidatory, aggressive and hostile. Research has established that adolescence is a time when young people usually begin to develop a sexual identity and it is often an important component of peer group prestige (Butler, 1993; Sullivan and Gilchrist, 2006). I must however emphasise that the above findings was not true for all the girls at Sunville. Many girls preferred to spend time with and have relationships with boys who were peaceful and non-violent.

Below I outline views that some girls expressed about relationships with boys at Sunville during a group interview with grade 11 girls. This group consisted of both African and Indian girls, although the Indian girls dominated the discussion.

Zaakirah: *A guy who likes to intimidate other children and have big mouth with teachers and hits other children are like popular and nobody wants to mess with them, so if a girl is going out with a guy like this then everyone will want to know him so they will want to know her. No girl will want to go out with a boy who is quiet because if somebody*

interferes with you and you can't fend for yourself then your boyfriend is just going to stand there and do nothing. Nobody wants that.

While Zaakirah was speaking the other girls nodded and made sounds in agreement. The girls gave me the impression that they liked boys to be aggressive and confrontational ("big mouth with teachers"). They seemed towant to associate themselves with this type of boy and distanced themselves from boys who conformed to rules and followed regulations ("quiet boys"). They also implied that other learners admired and respected boys who were violent and therefore it was advantageous for a girl to associate herself with a boy who "hits other children". I did not find distinct groupings of girls who liked defiant and violent boys at Sunville as in the case of Mac an Ghaill (1998), who found that a group of girls (Posse) liked the 'Macho Lads' and these girls constituted a critical social group at Parnell school.

Anneline: *Let's say that you are going out with a intelligent boy – you feel embarrassed because they will call him a 'geek' and stuff and you will be labeled like him.*

When Anneline talked about "intelligent" boys she was referring to boys who did well at schoolwork and were committed to academic achievement. These boys normally avoided conflict and were seldom involved in fights. The girls were reluctant to have relationships with these boys for fear of being labeled. They preferred boys who were capable and prepared to fight and believed that these boys were in a better position to defend them.

Zaakirah: *Girls like boys to fight over them. It is a reality that the quieter boys do not have girlfriends. And some boys who are academically inclined don't want girlfriends so it is no use for us trying our luck. Anyway the girls like the violent boys more because they can fight. They can stand for themselves and they can stand for you too. The violent aspect does not matter – that is like a nice thing. That's like a big stick ice sport. Having violence in you is a good thing.*

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I found that many boys felt pressurised to satisfy the expectations that girls had of them and behaved in ways that not only got them into conflict with other boys but also in trouble with school authority, parents and sometimes the police. However these views were not the views of all the girls at Sunville and, as we will see later, not all the boys at Sunville felt the need to satisfy these expectations of them and they constructed their masculinity in alternate ways.

6.3. Avoiding Humiliation and Bolstering Fragile Masculinities

Boys at Sunville used a variety of means to degrade and humiliate other boys. Heterosexual masculinities were organised and regulated to a large extent through trying to humiliate other boys or trying to avoid humiliation. Avoiding humiliation was defensive and bolstering fragile masculinities was aggressive. Boys tried to bolster their own fragile masculinity by humiliating other boys and they were able to do this most effectively and easily by picking on boys who were vulnerable, those who were not part of the main gang (the peer group that is most influential in defining hegemonic masculinity). This masculine practice is at the core of bullying and bolstering and perpetuating hegemonic masculinity in its assertive, intolerant, blustering and violent form. For the working class 'lads' in Paul Willis's (1977) study humiliating other boys was regarded as a preparation for the workplace. I am indebted to Willis's insights, which helped me to better understand boys' competitions with each other. However, this section goes further in analysing different types of humiliation and showing how this caused conflict. A common style that boys at Sunville used to pick on other boys was the elaborate use of verbal insults. In order to bolster their own masculinities some boys used vulgar and offensive language to humiliate other boys. Boys who largely reject hegemonic masculinity may be forced defensively to protect their own masculine identities when they are subject to aggression (often by hegemonic masculine frontline troopers). This explains why some ordinarily peaceful boys find themselves in fights and physical scraps. While the hard boys (hegemonic frontline troopers) are normally the

aggressors they will also protect their own masculine identities (by reacting violently) if they are verbally insulted. The following quote shows how boys swore at other boys in their competition for ascendancy at Sunville.

Cerwyn: *They try to act top league – swearing other boys and trying to act macho.*

I also observed that when boys tried to display their authority over other boys, they competed for supremacy in school in a process that Cerwyn called trying "to act top league", by using verbal abuse which often involved swearing. Swearing was often used as a form of degradation. In many instances boys retaliated by swearing back, ridiculing and criticising the provocateur. However when the verbal attacks becomes too much to bear, when the humiliation become intolerable and the learner reached a point of saturation, then verbal retaliation escalated into physical aggression. In one tribunal at Sunville, a boy explained and defended his action of hitting another boy after he had been constantly verbally taunted: "There was nothing more - I had to do what I had to do". We see how a manifestation of aggression escalated a confrontational interaction into a physical clash. As I argued earlier, the boys who retaliated may have been peaceful boys, but in trying to defend their masculinity against aggression (which came largely from the frontline troopers, the bullies, the gang members and those who wanted to join the 'in' group and used these means to do so) got involved in physical aggression. The comment: "I had to do what I had to do", illustrates that a boy may resort to physical aggression not because he readily wants or chooses to, but because he needs to avoid humiliation and defend his own masculinity.

6.3.1 Racialising Conflict and Violence

 Swearing also caused conflict among boys across race lines.

Shivern: *Some African boys too like causing problems for nothing. Like swearing – they swear you in Zulu.*

Some of the words you know – you don't understand everything – but you know when they are swearing.

Shivern was an Indian boy who maintained that African boys provoked Indians boys by swearing at them in Zulu. The Indian boys often reacted, sometimes by swearing back and sometimes by using violence, as Sandile states:

Sandile: *The African boys and the Indian boys fight. The Indian boys are always starting the fight – then say you are swearing us, you are swearing us and then they call their brothers and start to fight.*

From the interview material provided in the previous chapter, African boys also maintained that Indian boys swore at the African boys and this upset them and sometimes led to violence. Competition among boys was structured across race lines. In other words boys from one race group competed with boys from other race groups, Culturally the cut-off point at which boys felt inclined to defend their masculinity was probably different; provocations would have been interpreted differently by boys along race, ethnic and religious lines, but I found that even across race lines, avoiding humiliation/being aggressive to show one's maleness was a major cause of conflict as is evident in the quote below:

Patric: *The school is right but there are problems with the students. The Indian boys swear at and abuse black boys. They swear at them and fight.*

Lindo : *The Indian boys do undermine us – for instance they know that this is their area, we are the outsiders and we should abide by their rules and not mess with them. You must be afraid now – and say okay I am coming here to his school – I just came here to this or to that but we are not free to do what we want – they are undermining us because they know that we wouldn't do nothing because we are in their area – they can do whatever they like. That is why we have conflicts with them sometimes.*

As I have highlighted in Chapter one Chatsworth was a predominantly Indian community. After the collapse of apartheid in 1994 many African people moved into Chatsworth and this led to schools becoming multi-racial. However not all of the existing Indian residents readily accepted their new counterparts and tension between Indians and Africans in Chatsworth still exist. The particular historical and cultural context of South Africa has created its on brand of how different races interact with each other. The tensions in the community between Indians and Africans often permeate into schools as well. Boys in school are continually constructing and maintaining their identities and status (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). The Indian boys enjoy the dominant status at Sunville. The entry of African boys into the school is seen as a threat and the Indian boys act in ways to suppress the African boys in order to maintain their dominance in the school for example setting rules and boundaries that the African boys must abide. Rizvi (1993) also identified among school children in Australia an opposition to immigrant groups which arose from some sense that these groups had fewer rights than the long term residents. At Sunville these oppositions often caused conflict between Indian and African boys.

The dominant culture at Sunville is the Indian culture and for most learners English is their home language and speaking in English is the normal, accepted way. African boys identify with their culture by speaking in Isizulu. The Indian boys see this ethnic difference as a challenge to their dominant masculine identity and this causes racial conflict among the boys. This sentiment was also strong among the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic boys in Walker's (1998) study where he depicts a dominant Australian culture in the school with which other students had to contend in constructing their identity and status, including that of gender.

Analysts of violence in North America (Faludi, 1999), the United States (Steinem, 1996) and the Caribbean (Barker, 2005) report patterns where violence is among the tactics men use to attempt to compensate for a perceived deficit in masculine control, confidence and prerogatives. Connell (1989, 1995) also emphasises the strategic structuring of gender relations within a gender order in which some groups of men constantly seek to secure power over other men. Connell(1989, 1995) further shows how in the institutional and

interactional struggles of everyday life (patterned by race, class and other social relations), masculinities manifest themselves competitively and strategically.

From the boys' testimonies and my own observations, I gathered that the Indian boys in their attempt to secure their dominance over African boys used swearing to threaten, antagonise and agitate the African boys (see Chapter five). In this chapter, so far, I have been discussing masculinities at the individual level – where one boy feels that he needs to respond to a provocation in order to defend his individual masculine identity. Here we see a different phenomenon, the aggressive assertion of group values which goes along with an attempt to secure a racialised masculine hierarchy. As I argued in Chapter five, the Indian boys wanted to place themselves at the top of the tree. In so doing, they claimed control of the school and reminded Africans that they were visitors and that the school was Indian and would remain so. Many Indian boys mentioned this in their interviews as well:

Sai: *You see the African boys must not act big when they come here. They must behave themselves.*

VH: *How do you expect them to behave?*

Sai: *They must behave like normal visitors that go somewhere.*

VH: *What do you mean?*

Sai: *When someone visits a place, you don't go and do things all by yourself – you listen to what is being said to you and the rules – they must respect that this is an Indian township and abide by our rules. You can't be a leader here.*

African boys defensively (and collectively) responded to this challenge and this almost always led to conflict. I was unable to establish whether the African boys did in fact swear at the Indian boys in Zulu as the Indian boys who I interviewed testified. In the

context of this study the validity of these allegations was not important but rather the fact that swearing was a provocation and many boys felt humiliated if they were verbally abused. As with any race group, when the boys retaliated then the conflict erupted into violence, with other boys also becoming embroiled in the situation.

6.3.2 Swearing Mothers and Girlfriends

Many competitions among boys revolved around the giving and taking of insults where language became the stage for the performance of masculinity. The ability to absorb very personal comments and to respond sharply was the weaponry required for successful verbal jostling. In the previous chapter I outlined the repertoire of swear words most often used by the boys at Sunville. Verbal jostling quickly moves to physical violence when the verbal attacks were on mothers and girlfriends.

The two most provocative swear words used by boys were "mother's poes" and "mother's hole" (both references to mother's vagina). When these words were uttered, there was a high chance that conflict would escalate to violence. These insults were a slur on the sexual reputation of the mother, where the vagina became the focus of association for birth, penetrative heterosexual intercourse and the insult (Gordon et al, 2000). Mothers were invoked in insults to contest the boundaries of masculine competency within the peer group. Using swear words that referred to mothers and girlfriends was another way of demonstrating heterosexual masculine identities and hierarchies among the boys at Sunville. In a sense there was continuity between defending the honour of a girlfriend and defending the honour of one's mother. The boys' heterosexual maleness was confirmed by taking on the male 'protector' role and by so doing affirming that they were 'not like' the mother or girlfriend, i.e. not female.

Insults about mothers and girlfriends were also utilised by boys as techniques to make each other vulnerable while emphasising the power of dominant versions of masculinity. In this instance, insulting mothers and girlfriends was an aggressive move and must be distinguished from the defensive elements that I discussed earlier.

The boys who subscribed to hyper-heterosexual hegemonic masculinities were normally the aggressors. As I have mentioned earlier these hard boys may also have defensively protected their own masculine identities when they were subject to aggression. Sohail was a prime example:

Sohail: *If someone picks on my mother – then I would really get upset and he is in trouble.*

Although not all boys were susceptible to provocation when on the receiving end of insults about their mothers or girlfriends (as we will see in the next chapter), many boys indicated that they would react violently in order to defend the honour of their girlfriends and mothers.

Sai: *If someone picks on my parents – they have no reason to pick on my parents – this will make me upset and I will hit him there – not after school or anything – I will face the consequences.*

Even those boys who indicated that they did not like violence said that they would fight for their girlfriends if they believed that they had been treated rudely by another boy.

Cerwyn: *I am someone who does not like to fight. I don't like violence. I avoid conflicts at all times – if they interfere with me I might leave it but if they interfere with my girlfriend then I would get upset and try to help her. I would react and use force if I have to.*

Most of the verbal abuse entailed making insulting references to mothers' and/or girlfriends' sexuality. Males were located as moral guardians of the sexual reputations of their mothers and girlfriends. Most boys at Sunville (usually the provocateurs) drew upon these features in constructing modes of hegemonic masculinity, the dominant masculine

'ideal'. In their competition and jockeying for position, these boys used swearing to gain ascendancy among their peers.

In conclusion, I found that whenever verbally aggressive messages targeted any characteristic at the core of the boys' sense of identity, this triggered extreme emotions of humiliation and in many cases aroused the boy to the point where he was willing physically to fight the abuse. The cause was, therefore, a combination of the boy's particular self understanding (of his own masculinity), the immediate circumstances and the gender regime of the school, which limited or shaped what was possible in terms of response to provocation (the fact that teachers hit boys when they felt provoked is an example of this). In short most of the boys rarely remained passive in the face of attacks on features that were essential to their self concept, especially swearing about their girlfriends and mothers. However, in all the incidents mentioned above there was a common backdrop of masculinity, of male identity, of projecting and seeking to live up to certain versions of what it really means to be a man.

6.3.3 Gambling

Teachers spent a great deal of time and energy trying to eradicate gambling at Sunville. There were serious implications if boys were caught gambling at school, yet they took the risk in spite of constant surveillance by security cameras and monitoring by the school guards.

Attempts by the school to inhibit boys' rule breaking and anti-authority behaviours included imposing heavy punishment and drawing attention to offenders in public arenas. However, these measures often had the opposite effect and provided boys with kudos within their peer groups (Measor and Woods, 1984, Campbell, 1993).

Gambling is one such anti-authority type of behaviour that reinforces reputations of male toughness and elevates a boy within the school's gender hierarchy. There is a certain amount of risk involved when boys gamble at school. The discourse of daring and risk has been highlighted by a number of studies of masculinity (Sewell, 1997; Barker, 2005;

Miller, 2008). This is not a study on how constructions of masculinities intersect with, or impact on adolescent male risk behaviour. Broadly speaking, however, men are expected to be daring and virile. Traditional stereotyping puts enormous pressure on young men and it may pressure them into partaking in various risk taking activities to prove their manhood. At Sunville one such activity was gambling. I often over-heard boys bragging that they had been gambling and had not been caught, "we cracked a pack (gambling) and nobody 'bophard' (caught) us." Challenging authority and disputing policies of control invites competition in 'machismo' among the boys (Willis, 1977) and as I discovered this competition often caused conflict and violence at Sunville.

Studies of working class, heterosexual, male adolescent youth (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979; Skelton, 2001) bear significance in the articulation of social class as a variable in developing masculine identities in school settings. Many boys attending Sunville came from working class societies that were plagued by social ills. 'Gambling schools' (structured, organised (illegal) gambling 'houses' where various card games were used to gamble) were a common institution in Chatsworth and surrounding areas and were frequented by many adult males in the community. Gambling was a common male pursuit amongst adults (parents, uncles and other family members) and boys drew on this as part of a process of claiming manhood. It is important to highlight that the boys at Sunville were teenagers, trying to be men and prove their manhood. Teenage masculinity is a transitional masculinity often built on the emulation of adult males in their community. Gambling was one adult male activity that boys at Sunville emulated in the school arena. In doing so they competed with other boys for ascendancy and, in the process, got into situations of conflict and violence.

My interviews with the boys provided insights into how the boys gambled:

Sipho: *The gambling works like this: There is a pack of 52 cards. Let's say for example I am shuffling and you are calling – you have to call a card – then the cards are dealt – and lets say you called an Ace. The cards are dealt – one to me and one to you. If the card that you called goes to you then you are the winner – if it goes to me then I am the*

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winner. You can put any amount of money as long as the other guy can match it. Other boys also put money on you or the guy who is shuffling. Sometimes they say your card is going to win and sometimes they say that the other guy's card is going to win. Sometimes they spin a coin, maybe a five rand or two rand – if your call wins then that money is yours – if you lose then you must pay that guy.

There was a lot of conflict, disputes and fighting when boys gambled, sometimes between the boys themselves and at other times between the boys and authority figures. In gambling, money was used as a form of payment for losing.

Claude: *If one boy gets into a fight with another boy then all that boy's friends will jump in [Rush Hour]. I witnessed a lot of fights – They fight because of gambling – gambling is the number one cause. When they lose their money then they get upset and they want the money back so they try to force that boy to give it back.*

Money is a possession and boys competed to take that possession from each other. When boys took each others possessions, either forcefully or as a prank, it often provoked a reaction. Gambling was another way for boys to take each others' possessions. I have argued throughout this thesis that there was a strong competitive male-dominated peer school culture at Sunville. Gambling was also used as a contestation for admiration from peers and when a boy managed to take another boy's money, he gained superiority over that boy in the eyes of his peers.

Many boys who I interviewed believed that gambling had biological connotations, "there is something in our blood that makes only a boy gamble"[interview]. For these boys it was taboo for a girl to gamble and I did not witness or hear of girls gambling at Sunville.

The use of unfair methods in gambling also constituted a provocation.

Sipho: *You see sometimes when a boy loses – then he wants to change the rules. What was agreed now does not happen so the boy does not want to give the money. Sometimes*

they put a card under – they cheat – you can say that the main cause of problems in gambling is cheating or being accused of cheating.

Let's say for example that person who was shuffling loses then he tells you that you are not going to take my money – this will start the violence.

Sai: *There is a lot of cheating and stealing that goes on when boys gamble. When they lose their money – they feel cheated and sometimes they think they were robbed and this causes a problem.*

While the money was an important element in the gambling process, being cheated and being disrespected was a major cause of conflict.

Other studies of masculinity such as Barker (2005) argue that young men live in consumer-orientated economies in which young people are the deliberate targets of mass marketers. In this skewed system, low-income young people often lack legitimate means to acquire those very goods they are bombarded by the media into wanting. Barker (2005) found in his work on youth in Brazil that in a consumer orientated world of mass marketers who deliberately target youth, including low-income youth, the masculine mandate of working or producing income is exacerbated. "We become men when we get a lot of money to be free. Money gives you independence" (Barker, 2005: 19).

Sunville boys regarded commodities like cell phones, I-pods and leather jackets as an index of high status masculinity.

Sipho: *Having a cell phone means that you are moving with technology. You are connected – sometimes when you want to listen to music and another guy is playing his I-Pod and you ask for another song they say no – you want your own things so you can play music also.*

However we must not lose sight of the masculine performances and rituals taking place when boys gamble. The major transgressions here were cheating and changing the rules, which were regarded as a breaking of the compact that bound the boys together (and therefore underpinned their hegemonic masculine values). It was these transgressions that were the provocation. The refusal of the person who had cheated or changed the rules to back down caused the escalation and the refusal of the injured party (the boy who had been cheated) to accept the lack of humility on the part of the cheater finally gave rise to violence.

From the above evidence I gathered that the boys who gambled at Sunville were not pathological gamblers; rather, gambling was strongly associated with constructions of masculinity. While gambling centred around winning and losing money there were other masculine performances and practices taking place, like the risk involved and the customary association of manhood with virility, daring and risk-taking behaviour.

6.3.4 Mechanisms that Maintain the Male Peer Group

Masculinities cannot simply be understood in terms of individual choice (Connell, 1989). The organisation of peer group relations is important in the manner in which masculine identities are constructed. At Sunville, male peer group networks constituted the institutional infrastructure within which a range of social identities were negotiated and ritualistically projected. Peer groups were a key feature of the boys' micro-culture that served to validate and amplify their masculine reputations. After analysing the transcripts of individual interviews with the boys, a common theme that emerged was the boys' allegiance to friends. All the boys who I interviewed mentioned that they regarded the boys who they hung out with, as their friends.

Claude: *Friends are the boys you go out on the road with – play with – we talk, we play cards, go to the shop and have cool drinks.*

Friday nights, I go out with friends. We go to the races (drag racing) – we go to town, drive around – go to the Lugs [the Blue Lagoon – a common hang out for teenagers], we drink.

Chris: *These are the boys who I listen to music with and relax on the road. We talk – we sometimes take a walk to the grounds. Weekends we go in the club. We go with our friends to meet girls – sometimes we drink alcohol when we club in and put money.*

Shivern: *I join my friends on the road. We take a walk – sometimes to the mall (Chatsworth Centre). We talk – we smoke.*

Boys used the term 'friend' quite loosely. The boys who I interviewed, regarded friends as those people with whom they spent a lot of time rather than people with whom confidences and intimacies were shared.

Most of the boys at Sunville hung out with the same boys in school as well as after school and on week-ends. The reader is reminded that Chatsworth is a working class community where parents spend a large portion of their time at work which limits the amount of time they have to spend with their children. Boys at Sunville therefore spent a lot of time outside the home after school hours, looking to other boys for companionship, support, adventure and fun.

While there are many definitions of friendship in the literature, all emphasise closeness and intimacy between individuals. Giordano (1995) argues that friendship is characterised by varying degrees of 'nearness' and adolescents learn a great deal about themselves and the social world by interacting with friends.

For Sunville boys, a friend was someone whom you spent a lot of time with, someone who enjoyed the same activities as you and someone who had similar likes and dislikes. Some of these boys mentioned that a friend was someone with whom they went to clubs with and shared cigarettes and alcohol. I began to realise that what these boys considered

to be friends were actually buddies or acquaintances with whom they hung out but with whom there was no great depth or intimacy.

VH*: What do you like most about this school?*

Chris: *My friends – hanging out with friends.*

Claude: *I like my friends and I like my course. Being in this school is like being on the road with my friends – only thing here I am doing schoolwork.*

Shivern : *My friends are here – I join my friends and get up to mischief.*

Sohail: *I like my friends.*

Boys have an allegiance to the members of their peer groups and are prepared to protect these members' honour at considerable cost. A boy will risk the possibility of physical violence to defend and support a member of his group without knowing what the problem is or why this boy is in a confrontational situation. The loyalty that boys show towards members of their peer group often leads to violence. There are constant pressures on boys to perform and behave to expected group norms. The search to achieve status is inextricably linked to the search to achieve an acceptable form of masculinity. Status though is not something that is given but is often the outcome of intricate and intense maneuvering and has to be earned through negotiation and sustained through performance. One of the ways that boys at Sunville gained status in the male peer group was to support, protect and defend other members of this group.

Chris: *There is a lot of fighting. You see I get into fights because I stand for my friends. When he is in a fight I go – first to separate and then more boys join in. It happens in this school. I don't know why he was fighting but I have to help him. When more boys join in then it is a free for all. It is called the 'Rush Hour'. The other boys who are not involved rush in and start booting. It is called 'Free Boots'. Some boys call it 'Free Meat'.*

Sohail: *If someone interferes with my friend and they start swearing then I will use force and hit them. If my friend is in trouble I would defend them. For example last year one of my friends had problem because another boy took his bag. I got into a fight for that.*

We see that the boys were readily prepared to get into conflict for other boys in their peer group. While aggression was a common feature of male peer groups at Sunville, I must highlight that my intention is not to demonise these groups. Some peer groups encouraged fighting and violent versions of manhood, but others encouraged the opposite, as we will see in the next chapter. But for those groups that were aggressive, violence was a way of getting and maintaining status within the male peer group and fighting for a peer was the most effective way of gaining the 'tough guy, real man status'.

Sai: *If my friend is in trouble I have to help him. Everybody knows that.*

You see there was this incident that happened in the toilets where someone stabbed Yacoob in the back of the head. Yacoob's friends were there. They all stood back. The whole school knows this. Boys always talk about back up, back up, but there was no backup there – those friends did nothing. They did not even throw a few punches or pull the other guys out. They are cowards – how can they not help their friend?

VH: *Do you think less of these boys?*

Sai: *Yes – they are not true friends, they are cowards – only know to talk big. Your friend did what he did but when he is in trouble you must help him.*

Many other boys interviewed also said that they were prepared to take whatever action was necessary to defend and support their friends. Many of them also mentioned that boys had "backstops" in the school, meaning boys who were prepared to give unconditional help to peers in difficult situations, more especially in situations which required help to fight or intimidate other boys. If a boy was a backstop he would be

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prepared to get into any sort of conflict to help a peer, without consideration for the consequences of such actions. Loyalty was a highly esteemed masculine value.

Many of the boys who I interviewed believed that in order to be a man you had to stand up for your friends. Conflict was not caused by 'friends' but by the belief that they needed to show allegiance and loyalty to members of their peer group. A lot of provocation and subsequent confrontation revolved around 'friends' (for example, swearing friends, taking friends' possessions, bumping friends) and the desire to display peer group support, and protect and defend other members of the peer group, thereby gaining status in the male peer group.

6.3.5. Revenge

Loyalty to members of one's peer group and taking revenge often fed off and into one another. As I have argued in the previous section, in the heat of the moment boys got involved in conflict to help, protect and defend others in their peer group.

When a boy is on the losing end of a confrontation he feels belittled, ashamed and humiliated. In many cases he looks to take revenge. In these cases the violence is simply deferred because the boy has been humiliated and is likely at another point to become involved in violence. Sometimes when conflict does not lead to violence this is not a triumph for pacifism and non-violence, it is just the prelude to violence later on, because it signals the start of a longer-running process which will eventually end in a showdown. All of this is predicated on the competitive hegemonic masculinity that I have been discussing throughout this chapter.

A boy at Sunville seeking revenge, would often take his friends along at a later stage to confront his opponent and re-ignite the conflict and, with the back-up of friends, this confrontation would result in violence.

Cerwyn: *Sometimes you cannot get back at the same time because you do not get a chance because of the teachers and all that so you take revenge later or you do not have enough people to help you.*

Boys take revenge to get back because they were brought down, especially if it is by a smaller boy. If it is by a bigger boy and if he hits you badly, this brings your status down and if you cannot make it then you get other people involved – your friends – to get back at that person.

Cerwyn, like many other boys who I interviewed, gave insights into how and why many boys took revenge. He mentioned that they took revenge because "they were brought down" and their "status" was brought down. Boys normally sought revenge when their position and status was threatened, when they felt belittled, or if they had been humiliated and dishonored. This was a common thread that ran through most of the interviews.

Sai: *You see when you catch hiding – boys won't look up to you – but if you do something later about it, take your revenge, then you can get back your status. Besides that if I got injuries then I will call on my friends and go back. He took advantage of me – it is like an abuse so I must get him back. After I settle the score I feel good, I feel that I have shown people that they cannot take advantage of me and get away with it – other boys also know that you have sorted it out.*

The problem was usually "sorted out" by using violence. When revenge was the goal, it was much more likely that provocations would lead to violence because the boy who had been threatened or humiliated would be "looking for a fight". He would be wanting to save face and resurrect his dignity and honour in the face of his peers.

As Sai mentioned, the opinion that other boys had of him was important. The comment: "other boys know that you have sorted it out" indicates that it was important for Sai to prove to his peers that he had taken revenge for whatever had happened to him, that he was not a coward, and that he had not backed down, and while he may have lost face at

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the time when the incident occurred, he had made amends by taking revenge. Besides wanting to prove his masculinity to his peers, Sai also indicated that he had to take revenge to satisfy his self pride as a male; a boy attending Sunville Secondary. If a boy had injured him in a confrontation he saw it "like an abuse". He felt that as a boy striving towards manhood he had to avenge this abuse to his person, if not by himself then with the help of his friends.

The above examples provide insights into the way male power is negotiated and contested through the bravado of ritualised revenge. While in many cases boys engaged the help of friends to take revenge, in other cases they took revenge on their own. I did not come across a case where an Indian boy took revenge without the help of his peers. However among African boys it was common. I highlight the following incident in which a boy was bent on taking revenge on his own in retaliation for an injury.

Ladwa and Tula (African boys) were involved in an incident where Tula stabbed Ladwa in his side. I interviewed Ladwa who narrated the following story.

Ladwa: *I was walking along the corridor and I accidentally bumped Tula. (As I have discussed in Chapter four bumping is a provocation that often causes conflict and violence among boys.) I was not aware that I had bumped into him. He asked me why I bumped into him. I said that I did not know what he was talking about. He started shouting and pushing me. Then he pulled out a knife and stabbed me.*

The next day Ladwa brought a knife and a bush knife (machete) to school to confront Tula. He was caught by one of the teachers and brought to the office. I again interviewed Ladwa to find out what happened.

Ladwa: *I brought the knives to stab Tula. I don't like trouble. I spend most of my lunch breaks in the library. I don't join any of these boys and mind my own business. But this boy stabbed for nothing. I could have died. I ran home with blood all over me. I must take my revenge. He showed me no respect and I must pay him back in the same way.*

VH: *You are in matric and are prepared to throw away everything for revenge?*

Ladwa: *That does not matter. He stabbed for nothing and now I must get him back.*

VH: *Why did you bring two knives?*

Ladwa: *This one knife is small. He had a big knife. If I could not reach him with this one, I would use the big one.*

Ladwa had hidden the big knife in the fishing pond near the office, indicating that he had given this a lot of thought.

When I interviewed Tula he did not have much to say besides that he always carries a knife for protection and was not afraid to use it. He also mentioned that he had stabbed other boys in school to protect himself and that other boys also carried knives. He also said that he thought that Ladwa was "vloeking"[9] him by bumping him and that he did not tolerate that. Clegg (1981), in a study of faction fighting in rural Zululand in the 1970s, found that revenge is a well established response to a particular provocation and ensures that disagreements are violently resolved, time after time and over generations.

Practices of violence by boys at Sunville in the form of revenge were strategies that worked to affirm the norm of what it was to be a man. Ladwa felt that he had to retaliate in some way because Tula had compromised his dignity and self respect. It was demeaning for him to go home covered in blood. As a male he was ashamed. Carton (2001), in his research of Zulu men in the Thukela River valley in KwaZulu, found that the *isithombe sikababa,* the masculine bearing (alter ego), was (and remains) of utmost importance for Zulu men. Ladwa did not want revenge in order to prove his manhood to others but to satisfy his own pride and gain back his self respect. He had to stab Tula for things to be right again. The consequences did not matter. All Ladwa cared about was

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[9] "Vloeking" was a slang term used by the boys at Sunville. It had different meanings in different contexts. When one "vloeked" a boy it means to interfere with/challenge him. When one "vloeked" a girl it meant flirting with her.

getting his revenge so that he could feel like a man again. For Zulu males it is very important to act like a man (*ukudoda)* and to do things worthy of praise (Carton, 2001). Ladwa was prepared to sacrifice his career and future for his male pride. Self pride is dignity, a sense of worth or values, which were important features of the hegemonic masculinity of Sunville. Taking revenge was one way of maintaining or getting back self pride.

Carton (2001) found that *ukuphindisela* (revenge attack) was a 'Zulu' reaction to strife and conflict and it was important for Zulu men to *wadla* (conquer) at all costs. In summary, there are important ethnic/racial differences in patterns and justifications for revenge. Among Indian boys at Sunville, revenge was taken more to demonstrate their manly prowess to other boys (peers), whereas among African boys revenge was taken for reasons of *ukudoda*, male pride. *Ukudoda* is also a social and not just an individual feature. One's pride is damaged when respect is not shown, particularly in public, and such disrespect is held to be disrespect for the clan and ancestors, that is, an invisible collectivity is at work in constructions of revenge associated with *hlonipha* (respect).

Many boys who attended Sunville came from 'broken' homes. Boys from secure families (where they were supported and loved) would probably have had less need to assert self pride than those boys from 'broken' impoverished homes whose identities depended largely or entirely on their own actions. A middle-class boy often has family resources to fall back on (his father will have employment, status, public respectability, material possessions), but a poor boy may only expose himself to more ridicule if he brings his family into it, and therefore has a lot more invested in protecting his reputation and status.

Cerwyn: *You feel bad if someone hits you, it hurts you, not physically, but you feel like you are getting abused or something so you have to go back and do something about it. You feel better after you take your revenge and get back your status. You feel as if you have been violated. Some boys feel that if they can stand up and get back at a boy who hit him then they can get back their confidence.*

The influence that the boys' narratives on revenge bring to bear on the structuring of male identity is epitomised in Cerwyn's comment, "Some boys feel that if they can stand up and get back at a boy who hit him then they can get back their confidence". Many boys, who got involved in a physical confrontation and lost felt that their bodies had been invaded felt a need to take revenge in order to redeem themselves. The above testimonies indicate the way in which male violence was valorised at Sunville through the practice of taking revenge. Masculinity does not exist as an ontological given but comes into being as people act (Connell, 2000). Another way of saying this is that masculinity is brought into existence through performance. Taking revenge at Sunville was a masculinising performance that legitimated violence.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter engaged with the causes of violence among boys who related to issues of masculinity. Before I discussed why conflict occurred and escalated to violence among boys at Sunville, I related two incidents that provided some images of violence at Sunville from my observation notes. I then proceeded to analyse why the conflict occurred and escalated to violence.

The use of physical force provided many boys with a means of affirming their manhood. For most boys power was usually affirmed in personal embodied activities like fighting. Many boys at Sunville fashioned fragile and contradictory masculinities around issues of loyalty, honour, respect, pride, prestige and reputation by performing certain acts and behaving in ways that would affirm solidarity with other individuals and/or peers generally.

Most boys felt that peer pressure forced them to 'prove' that they were 'hard' rather than 'soft'. These boys were repeatedly called upon, and took up the challenge, to prove their hardness. Defending friends was centrally important to the construction of masculinity of Sunville boys. Boys who did not defend their friends were often labeled as cowards.

Defending friends, on the other hand, created clear-cut masculine identities, elevating the 'hard' boy above the 'soft' through the public exposition of power and vulnerability.

Boys at Sunville sought to authenticate their maleness in postures of heterosexuality and in doing so risked the possibility of physical violence. In all the incidents of conflict that I witnessed and heard about in interviews, there was a common backdrop of masculinity, of male identity, of projecting and seeking to live up to certain versions of what it is to be a man. It may be the case that in today's climate some boys are no longer able to attain a recognisable masculinity through conventional, conformist practices, so are seeking to authenticate their male identity in postures of 'hard man masculinity' and heterosexuality that lead to violent confrontation with other boys.

As I have mentioned throughout this thesis, conflict can be resolved through violent means but also through non-violent and peaceful ways. In the next chapter I focus on those boys who did not cultivate a hyper-masculinity through violence. I focus on the voices of resistance to traditional, patriarchal versions of manhood and the variations in boys' discourses and ways of being, and highlight through these voices of resistance that masculinities are not inherently violent but are situationally and contextually constructed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NON-VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter five I discussed the various kinds of provocations that produced and were an effect of conflict among boys at Sunville,seeking only to analyse the first phase of a conflict situation. I described and analysed the different types of provocations as a precursor to identifying the causes of violence in school. In Chapter six I provided details of how conflict occurred among boys at Sunville and what caused it. In Chapters five and six, I argued that provocations and causes of conflict at the school were linked to hegemonic values of maleness which included heterosexuality, toughness, authority, competitiveness, maintaining peer group prestige and subordination of boys who showed signs of feminine characteristics.

As with the previous chapter, this one looks at the moment when a provocation has been issued but instead of following how this develops into violence, this chapter shows how non-violent outcomes occur. The focus of the chapter is on boys who resisted and rejected the school's hegemonic masculinity and refused to be drawn into the game of 'jockeying for position'. I look at the ways in which boys averted provocations from escalating into violence and the peaceful ways in which they handled actual conflict situations.

The boys whose voices you will hear later in this chapter were not inherently peaceful or incapable of violence. It is unlikely that they would have chosen non-violence in any and every situation. Individuals occupy multiply positions and therefore have a range of identities with different ones acquiring significance in different contexts. Boys take up different positions in different contexts; identities are multiple and fluid (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Mills, 2001).

On the other hand, the subjects of this chapter had allegiance to and were vested in particular constructions of masculinity which were at variance with the school's hegemony and this made it more likely that they would choose peace over war.

In Chapter two, I discussed the analytical framework developed by Connell (1995, 2000) to distinguish a hierarchy of masculinities. She identified, among others, four forms of masculinity – hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and protest. Hegemonic masculinity can be looked at in two ways: (a) a configuration of practice and (b) an embodiment, an example of which Connell (1995) gives as frontline troopers. A frontline trooper is a particular individual who subscribes to a particular set of values and consistently performs them even though there may be contradictions. On the other hand, the conceptual application of 'hegemonic masculinity' can also follow the understanding that it is a 'configuration of practice'. In this instance, the focus is not on individuals but rather on actions, words, gestures (discourses) which allows for the identification of the processes by which hegemony is maintained/enacted/reproduced in a specific time or place. This allows for a great deal of fluidity and subtlety in analysis but can have the problematical effect of making power seem to be a very transient phenomenon with little connection to particular individuals.

Connell's framework was helpful in understanding the boys who contributed to an alternative discourse and who had alternative viewpoints to those boys who subscribed to the hegemonic view of using violence to resolve conflict. However, I needed a different way of describing the complexities of behaviour in each conflict setting at Sunville, since my study is a micro analytical examination of the dynamics of conflict. I needed to name a particular way of resolving conflict which involved the mobilisation of non-hegemonic values. Understanding these voices and actions of resistance to violence yields tremendous insight into the power of subjectivity – that is the power of individuals to construct their own meaning out of the situation around them and the power of subjectivity to question and resist rigid gender norms. These boys chose a particular subject position which I have called autonomous and which stemmed from an

understanding of themselves as boys (that is, their gendered identity as a male, their masculinity). I will flesh out the concept as this section unfolds, both in terms of the evidence and theoretically.

In a moment of conflict boys draw on biographies which bear the imprint of family structure, relationships and a host of other influential experiences, to walk away and not respond physically to a provocation. This ability rests on embracing certain non-hegemonic masculinities and allows them in that moment to be autonomous, which is to say independent of and from the prescriptions of hegemonic masculinity. However, at other times and in other places they may well subscribe to particular hegemonic values. For the purposes of this study I refer to the condition of masculinity which is performed in a specific time and place as autonomous masculinity.

I am not suggesting that a new form of masculinity be added to Connell's list of masculinities, nor am I insinuating that this autonomous masculinity sets the cultural agenda for other boys. The purpose of this category is to capture a construction of masculinity exhibited by boys who did not subscribe to the school's hegemonic form of masculinity, and who were also not complicit with (joining in and benefiting from the advantages of) the dominant form or subordinated by it (by allowing themselves to be controlled, oppressed and subjudicated).

A boy may behave in a particularly way in one situation and differently in another situation and there are a number of contextual and psychological factors that affect this behaviour. The complexity of individuals and contextual factors means that labels never fit completely. My approach to exploring masculinity focuses on understanding the pressure to choose specific 'hats' or versions of masculinity and the power to resist the pressure to buy into hegemonic versions of masculinity. I seek to identify how boys make it possible to acquire non-violent, peaceful versions of masculinity in the face of conflict.

7.2 Different Ways of Negotiating the Heterosexual Imperative

Boys at Sunville who bought into versions of hyper-heterosexual masculinity were bound by its values to fight over girls, an important element of heterosexual performance. While there many boys got into conflict in trying to defend their girlfriends, other boys refused to get into conflict over girls.

VH: *How would you react to somebody who insults your girl-friend?*

Lindo: *It depends on who insults her. If I know you and respect you and if you insult my girlfriend then I would come to you and confront you in a manner that will suit both of us. Instead of me going and calling friends and other people, it is not okay.*

If it is someone who I don't know and he means nothing to me and I don't even follow by his rules then I won't even care. Confronting someone like that will just cause more stress for me.

In all my conversations with Lindo, he consistently mentioned that he did not like confrontation and violence. He had an easy going temperament and I never observed or heard of him getting into a scrap or fight at school. In the above testimony, relating to his girlfriend, we see that he constructed his own meaning and interpretation around insults or violations of his girlfriend's honour. If the provocateur was known to him then he preferred to talk about the provocation instead of letting it develop into a conflict and violence. It is very interesting to note that if the person was not known to him he did not even dignify the provocation with any response. Lindo gave the distinct impression ("I don't even follow by his rules") that he didn't care about satisfying peer group expectations or fitting into an expectant (hegemonic) type of masculinity.

As this chapter unfolds it will be seen that Lindo featured very prominently because he spoke a lot in the interviews and supplied me with rich data.

The reader is reminded that Lindo was an African, Zulu boy who enrolled at the school in 2006 in grade 10. He was 16 years old when I interviewed him for the first time.

He had the following to say about his role model:

Lindo: *My role model is Nelson Mandela because he stood up for what he believes in – they tried to urge him to go the wrong way but he did not change – he even stayed all those years in jail for what he believes in.*

I don't have role models that are movie stars and athletes. The other reason Nelson Mandela is my role model is because he took the rule of non-violent resistance although he had all that rebellion against him.

We see that Lindo was independent, strong willed and individualistic in his thinking and actions. He admired and looked up to people with these traits (his father, Nelson Mandela) and as we will see later, he was steadfast in his commitment to peace in the face of provocation, intimidation, threats and conflict.

During my discussions with Lindo he mentioned other boys who shared the same views as him regarding conflict and violence.

Lindo : *You see boys like Patric and Sandile – they are quiet boys – if you approach them by fighting they will not fight back – they are big body built – they are strong. He is quiet, he doesn't speak a lot, he is kind to other people, he is good to other people. He is not an aggressive boy.*

In the course of my research, Patric and Sandile agreed to become respondents. I asked them the same question about how they would respond to someone who insulted their girlfriends. Sandile did not have a girlfriend but Patric gave similar responses to Lindo.

Patric: *I would get angry but I would not get violent. Fighting does not solve anything, you can get injured but the problem is not solved.*[10]

As with Lindo we see that both Patric and Sandile chose peaceful ways of resolving conflict even though their status was threatened and they faced humiliation by their peers for not defending their girlfriends in violent and aggressive ways.

7.3 Peace over Violence

In this section I pay particular attention to those boys who chose not to react violently when provoked.

I posed the following question to all my respondents and many boys indicated to me that they rejected, refuted and denounced violence and tried to avoid it as best they could.

VH: *Have you been in a disagreement with other boys in this school? How did you react? Why did you react in this way?*

Sandile: *I don't like the fighting – Most of the boys in this school – African and Indian like to fight.*

I had this experience once – there is this boy they call 'Gummie' – we went to the school sports – we were playing tennis – he came and took the ball and asked us – how far do you want the ball to go? We said bring the ball back and he kicked it away and said what are you going to do about it? We just went and brought the ball back and started playing again. He challenged us but we did nothing.

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[10] All Zulus are not warlike and violent. Ethnicity does not automatically convert into a set of expected masculine traits. The view of a Zulu man, mythically born in the mould of his creator Shaka, representing the indomitable black warrior with a legendary fighting prowess that defeated well armed British men is highly stereotypical. Behaving with respect (ukuzila), having dignity (isithunzi) and being cool-headed are important markers of Zulu manhood (Mchunu, 2009). However 'Zulu masculinity' is itself contested – it does not have a fixed content and Mchunu is referring to one version of Zulu masculinity which reaches back to the traditions of hlonipha (respect) and rural connectedness (to chiefs, homesteads and so on).

I do not fight. The other boys may think that you are scared or gay – but still I don't like to fight.

Some boys say 'you must bring it on'. That causes the big fights. I don't like that.

Patric mentioned that he avoided conflict and refused to fight even though the boys were persistent in their provocation of him. We see that in many cases boys were intentionally provoked by other boys in order to draw out a response.

Patric: *They (the boys) swear a lot and like to fight. I don't mind him swearing – if I mind then I would get angry and get into a fight.*

I just keep walking – sometimes if they talk to me in a bad manner I ask them why you are doing this. Sometimes they get more angry and try to make you fight – they force you to fight – but I don't want to so I keep walking.

Cerwyn: *I don't like the violence and fighting.*

Sai: *I have had several experiences where I was 'vloeked' but normally I just walk away. I remember one situation where when I walked up the block one boy caught me by my belt, to bully me. I could easily take him but I walked away. They want a reaction from me so it can lead to a big fight. They bring their friends and if I bring my friends then it becomes a gang fight. They don't target you, they just randomly pick anyone.*

It is clear from the above evidence that these boys chose not to react violently when provoked. Even when the provocation was severe – for example, when a boy was physically accosted – these boys chose not to respond. They defined their reluctance to fight as a form of strength and were not interested in competing for hierarchical ascendancy. They were not prepared to buy into the hegemonic versions of masculinity of satisfying peer group expectations of using physical violence to defend one's honour.

Lindo in particular, went on to say that he felt sorry for the type of boy who was pressured into violent behaviour by his peers.

Lindo: *Most of the boys are violent because of peer pressure. They are pressured to fight. There are two types of boys – the one who always wants to fight – the one who is always a bully. But the other type is pressured to fight – his friends are pushing him to fight, 'go, go hit him'. He is not really a violent boy.*

The first type I do not admire – because I don't like fighting. The other type of boy I feel a bit sorry for him – he must get new – friends this is the only solution.

This response from Lindo not only reinforced his earlier comments that he denounced violent behaviour but also created the impression that he was morally superior and better than these boys for not allowing himself to be influenced. We again see evidence that ethnicity does not automatically convert into a set of masculine traits (like being a warlike Zulu warrior).

Lindo pathologised some boys as violent and looked down on the boys who were pushed to fight by their peers. While he did not subscribe to the hegemonic version of masculinity at Sunville he was also not subordinated by it. In Mac an Ghaill's (1994) study in the English Midlands, the 'Real Englishmen' differentiated themselves from the 'Macho Lads' in terms of their attitudes to, and relationships with women, maintaining that they were in fact the 'real boys' and not the 'Macho Lads'. In this study the 'non-violent' boys also created the impression that they wanted to distance themselves from the 'violent boys' and, as we will see later, they regarded themselves as being the 'real boys'. As mentioned above, the 'non-violent' boys in this study claimed moral superiority by rejecting the values of the hegemonic masculinity of this school. Any counter hegemonic position has to assert its own morality – so when Lindo claimed to be superior, he was rejecting hegemonic values and asserting a rival set of values which he believed were good and right.

A comparative study of a single sex private school in Britain by Edley and Wetherell (1997) shows how some non-rugby playing boys challenged the domination of rugby players by portraying them as unthinking conformists, incapable and perhaps even scared of doing their own thing. The implication was that the non-rugby playing boys were by contrast mentally strong and individualistic. The 'non-violent' boys in this study also claimed to be mentally strong, individualistic and independent in their thinking. In other words they had their own set of values which were in contrast to those of the hegemonic values.

For the purposes of this study, I identified the modus operandi of this group of boys as being autonomous. They had embraced a set of values that allowed them to walk away in that moment when they were provoked. Under different circumstances and in different times these boys may have inhabited other subject positions but in this context they were at variance with the hegemony established by their competitive and violence-prone peers.

These boys took up autonomous positions in situations of conflict that did not support the hegemonic imperative at Sunville to escalate conflict into violence. Autonomous masculinity is a performance in a specific time and place which stems from a more general framing of masculinity (in a boy's own life) but which will inevitably contain contradictions which may well in other contexts, circumstances and times manifest in different ways which actually support a particular hegemony and, more generally, provide support for the subordination of women (which is a feature of patriarchy).

These boys may have had contradictions which would see them acting differently in other settings and possibly even in ways that supported the general imperatives of patriarchy. But when a boy chose peace over violence for the purposes of this study, I argue that he was behaving autonomously. These boys drew on different discourses of conflict resolution which were embedded in their understandings of what it was to be a man. They were committed to a non-confrontational, non-physical approach to a difference of opinion and drew on a set of values that often originated in and from masculinities that

operated outside the school realm and were likely to be drawing on a range of religious, cultural and ethnic discourses. Autonomous masculinity is that masculinity that is performed at a particular moment of conflict at which moment particular non-hegemonic masculinity (in terms of the school's masculinity) are drawn upon to avoid conflict.

I have chosen the term autonomous masculinity because, in the context of my research, I was observing practices that separated these boys from the boys who resolved conflict using force, aggression and violence. When conflict turned to violence it gave expression to, and support for a set of hegemonic, normative, prescriptive masculine values which at Sunville included being confrontational, resolving conflict violently and asserting oneself at another boy's expense. In understanding an autonomous approach to resolving conflict I observed elements of masculinity that were reflective of a broader set of understandings of how they are themselves boys and it is that, that I want to capture. It is not just a label. I have looked at the content of my data and I am drawing from it configurations that I can make sense of. It was not just one individual but a group of boys.

Lindo strongly inhabited an autonomous position in conflict situations. We find that he did not care to challenge the dominant form of masculinity as he says: *"he means nothing to me and I don't even follow by his rules then I won't even care"*. However the desire not to challenge the dominant masculinity does not mean that he was subordinated or that he did not have any desire to subordinate others, as we see in the following extract:

Lindo: *Many boys fight but even if he is the strongest boy and he gives someone a black eye – he is not respected even by that boy that he hit.*

If you look at my background – my father is not violent – he always taught us that fighting is not the way – talking is the best way – if they provoke you – calling you a coward – I don't react.

Lindo did not get into conflict or respond to provocations aggressively because he believed he was more mature and sophisticated than these violent aggressive boys and

that he was morally superior to them. In all his interviews he mentioned that he was really not afraid of these boys but chose peace because it was the right thing to do and because he had been brought up the right way. He was unwavering in his choice of non-violence in the face of conflict.

Lindo: *I realise that this is their way when they swear and all that. I don't even let it affect me. I just walk away. The next time when he swears me he knows it is not worth it because I will do nothing.*

There is a lot of threats – if somebody threatens you, you can't even say anything – I do not challenge them, I keep my cool – I do not respond to whatever they are doing – they get surprised when you just walk away or laugh.

When Lindo referred to "they" he meant boys who subscribed to the hegemonic norms of masculinity, those boys who used threats, intimidation and violence to gain ascendancy among their peers. The reader is reminded that the behaviour of the boys, who Lindo was referring to, was not absolute and fixed in all contexts. Lindo mentioned that the provocations which were mainly swearing (in the above case) did not affect him. He further showed that he was not intimidated or afraid of these boys: "they get surprised when you just walk away or laugh". His non-response and casual approach to the provocations surprised these boys so much so that they generally left him alone and in this way he minimised the provocations and conflict.

7.4 Peace Most of the Time

Boys who were non-violent most of the time sometimes could not and did not resist provocation and were triggered into conflict and violence.

Lindo: *I have not been in disagreements in this school but I have witnessed disagreements. You see this boy who got into the 'Valentine' fight, he is my friend. We*

always tell each other that fighting is not right – but at that time I don't know what happened to him, maybe he got a loose end then he wanted to fight.

The reason for fighting was a very small thing but I think it is about racial issues, who is the top notch in this school, who is controlling this school. It started by a very small thing – just by they bumping each other and because of that the conflict started. They fought for a while, I was so surprised because we always avoid fighting.

You see after they fought, there is no conflict between them. They realise that they are both strong – they are in the school soccer team and they play together.

Lindo called the above incident the 'Valentine fight' because it took place on Valentine's Day (14 February) during a cultural show at the school where an African and Indian boy got into a fight. The provocation was bumping but the cause was competing for supremacy. Sometimes the competition among the boys was around racial issues since Chatsworth was a predominantly Indian suburb and some Indian boys believed that the African boys ought to be submissive to them. When fighting occurred across racial lines it generally received a lot of attention from learners and teachers.

The boy that Lindo spoke about was an African boy (Siphiwe) whom I spoke to casually about the 'Valentine fight'. Siphiwe did not want to say too much except that he got angry and the pushing led to blows, but that subsequent to the fight, things had settled down and there was no enduring animosity between them.

The incident above resonates with my earlier argument that there was an autonomous position (which was not dominant, complicit, subordinate, or oppositional) which boys could inhabit, and which some inhabited more than others because they embraced particular masculinities which were counter-hegemonic.

In the next section I focus on conflict situations in order to analyse and discuss how these boys avoided provocations and conflicts.

7.5 Avoiding Conflict

Besides not allowing other boys to provoke them into conflict and physical violence I also found strong evidence of boys looking for ways to avoid getting into conflict situations.

Sandile: *I don't go in such places like toilets where they smoke and having conflicts and disagreements. The toilets are bad.*

I don't go near the tunnel, top blocks and behind Dlamini's block. I stay by the assembly area, near the stairs. It is safe and okay there. They can see the cameras are watching there.

Sai: *The bad places are the third block, the grounds and the tunnel. The tunnel is a bad place where they smoke – girls and boys get together there. When you go there they interfere with you.*

Patric: *I also stay in places where I can avoid people that will try to make you fight.*

These boys kept away from the 'hot-spots' during the breaks. They mentioned this in their interviews and I also observed that they chose to spend their time in the library, computer rooms or just hanging around and talking in the assembly area. They had identified spaces in the school where the likelihood of getting into conflict was slim and spent most of their free time in these areas.

In all my conversations with these boys, while they mentioned that they eschewed violence, they also felt the need to convince me that they did other things that made them feel manly. There are different alternatives and possibilities of performing masculinity that are contingent on each setting using the meanings and practices available (Connell,

1996; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Wetherell and Edley, 1998). In the next section I highlight some of the ways that the 'non-violent' boys asserted their masculinity.

7.6 Asserting Masculinity without Using Violence

I did not directly ask these boys what made them feel 'manly' but during my conversations with them, they deliberately attempted to shore up their masculine identities by mentioning practices that they considered affirmed their manliness.

Lindo: *I play volleyball and I get more recognition – boys don't play volleyball much here but I used to play for the region as well when I was in Ulundi. Maybe because of that they accept me more than the other boys.*

Contrary to many studies of masculinity in schools, the idealised form of masculinity at Sunville did not manifest itself in sport. As I have argued, fighting prowess took precedence over any other practice. Lindo however, mentioned that he thought he was more readily accepted as a boy because of his sporting prowess. He equated 'sporty boy' with 'real' boy and seemed to feel that he was accepted as a 'real' boy when he demonstrated sporting excellence. Sewell's (1997) African Caribbean boys displayed similar sentiments where they positioned themselves in different ways from the hegemonic masculinity yet still preserved their manhood.

Another area in which the boys developed alternative masculine expressions was in the way they dressed.

Lindo: *My dress code makes me feel like a man. My appearance – neat and well dressed.*

Again we find evidence of Lindo constructing his masculinity in opposition to the hegemonic form at Sunville. He was drawing on the registers of manhood from the world that he knew, in his family and cultural group. Resisting the school's code of conduct was a celebrated way of displaying masculinity at Sunville (see Chapter four). Many boys

disregarded the dress code – leaving their shirts hanging out of their pants, not using a tie and wearing takkies – which for them created a macho appearance. Lindo's view was in opposition to this and being well-dressed made him feel manly.

Bodies are another obvious site of masculinity construction.

Sai: *I do body building – and I go for kick boxing. It builds up your body and gives you a muscular appearance, which attract the girls and gets respect from the other boys. If you have a nice strong body then they respect you and they don't interfere with you, especially in this school.*

While Sai rejected violence, he did not want to be constructed as 'soft'. For him body building was an enactment of his masculinity. He was complicit with a hegemonic soft/hard masculine binary. He promoted an alternative vision of masculinity as autonomous but, at the same time, parts of his performance bought into particular aspects of hegemonic masculinity which is consistent with the theory of masculinity, which permits contradiction. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) talk about multiple masculinities at play at the same time. It had also worked for Sai as a way to ward off conflict as "they don't interfere with you". He was very capable of defending himself in a physical fight but chose to avoid conflict and violence and focused on other ways of showing his manhood. I do not have theoretical evidence but being Indian myself and drawing from the cultural teachings of Indian religions, Sai could be subscribing to the teachings of non-violence, non-confrontation, control of emotions and peaceful co-existence in his rejection of violence.

There were also other means which boys used to prove their manhood.

Sandile : *I am following my brother's footsteps – he is working on his own business with his partners in the Pavilion – it is called Music Warehouse. He supports us. If I do well I will join him. I feel proud when I am in the shop with him.*

Sandile was proud of his brother and wanted to be like him. For Sandile having your own business (especially something glamorous like a music outlet) gave you status as a man. He therefore aspired to join this business and in that way gain masculine credibility. Aside from the glamour of the music industry, being a breadwinner is classically part of hegemonic masculinity.

In Chapter two I reviewed material that discussed many (sometimes racially-based) hegemonic masculinities in South Africa. Earlier in this chapter I outlined versions of Zulu masculinity – here the modernist impulse to set up a business could be considered to have been incorporated as a hegemonic marker of respectability (even by rurally-based men who believe in respect (*hlonipha*)), but it is also classically a marker of capitalist respectability. As mentioned earlier the nature of Zulu masculinity is fluid and changing and, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, where there are many more opportunities for accumulation by black businessmen, business success is a mark of a new middle class (black) masculinity.

In constructing an alternative masculinity, these boys may well have taken from hegemonic discourses around masculinity and work which themselves jostle for valency in a context where another discourse stresses the importance of masculinity and being tough (and criminal). In other words different masculine values inhere in discourses and boys may have drawn on meanings from a range of discourses which may plug into broader hegemonic understandings of manhood. Measuring one's masculinity in terms of the size of one's bank account or the status of the job is generally associated with a hegemonic, consumerist understanding of masculinity (Kimmel, 1996). In South Africa, being tough in both African and white societies has often been the mark of a man (Morrell, 1998a). Lindo, for example, drew on both understandings of masculinity yet nevertheless managed to weave a counter-hegemonic interpretation of these discourses into his violence-avoidant approach to conflict. We again see the existence of multiple performances of masculinity at the same time. While we have seen earlier that being able to fight or to win a fight was of little importance to Sandile (non-hegemonic configurations) we see here that Sandile was subscribing to a particular hegemonic value.

In the context of Sai and Sandile's performance of masculinity we see a co-existence of contradictory discourses. Their masculinity was flawed and they inevitably drew on some hegemonic discourses and, in the process, could be said to be giving support (at that moment) to some of the elements of hegemonic masculinity. At other times, especially in conflict situations, these boys adopted autonomous positions.

Within the gender regime of the school the teachers and learners were the major role players. Educators usually have the power in schools and are much more likely to set the standards that establish ideals of behaviour. In this school, however, many learners did not buy into the ethos of the school and had their own sub-culture.

Autonomous masculinity, in the way that I propose in this study, is about the learners and not the teachers and is distinguished by practice and norm. These boys in their practice were manifesting constructions or understandings of masculinity that distinguished them from the hegemonic but yet, as argued earlier, they also espoused conventional/hegemonic values; that is, there were contradictions. I don't want to use the terms available to me from Connell's (2000) framework, which are subordinate, protest or oppositional, since in the nature of this study these labels don't fit. They were not intended to translate easily into microanalytical research contexts but were designed for meta analyses. This study is a focus on learners and I am specifically looking at youth masculinities. There have been a range of attempts to make sense of the boys who manifest youth masculinities. Barker (2005), for example, has identified the "hippies" and the "kickers", Mac an Ghaill (1994) the "macho lads" and the "academic achievers", Walker (1998) the "footballers" and the "competitors", Sewell (1997) the "conformists", innovators", "retreatists" and "rebels", Martino (1999) the "cool boys", "party animals", "squids" and "poofters", and Shefer et al (2007) the "moffies", "jocks" and "cool guys". These labels are context specific and descriptive and therefore I cannot simply borrow and deploy them in my study. Nevertheless, it is helpful as a researcher to be able to identify and label, otherwise one would have difficulty describing what one is talking about. For these reasons I have developed the term autonomous masculinity to talk about the particular practices of boys who choose peace and non-violence in conflict situations.

However a label always carries the danger of pathologising, reducing an individual to one identity and, as I have shown above, this is not the case here. I argue that masculinity is a configuration of practice.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter describes a particular moment of male learner interaction involving conflict, in which constructions of school masculinity are enacted in non-violent ways. I have developed the concept, autonomous masculinity to refer to the ability of some boys to resist provocation and to eschew violence. I argue that at the moment when conflict is defused particular configurations of practice are at play, which are significant for understanding how conflict occurs and how it can be prevented. The ability of boys at Sunville to resist violence rested on a set of masculine values which were autonomous from the school's peer hegemony, which stressed dominance, competition and violence as ways of enacting masculinity.

The boys who adopted autonomous positions of masculinity seemed to have a high degree of self belief and assurance and regarded themselves as different rather than inferior. For these boys, avoiding humiliation or seeking to bolster their masculinity was not as important as for the boys who subscribed to the hegemonic masculinity at Sunville. They were confident and secure enough not to allow ridicule and other abuses hurled at them to provoke them to violence. They adopted autonomous positions in situations of provocation and violence. While they seldom reacted to provocations they also did not seek to provoke conflict. They had no wish to be like the dominant boys but rather pitied them or looked down on them. They were wary of the dominant boys, but were not frightened of them and recognised their weakness. But yet there are contradictions. In certain instances they drew on some hegemonic discourses and, in the process, gave support to some of the elements of hegemonic masculinity.

This chapter highlighted that there are different alternatives or possibilities of 'doing boy' that are contingent on each setting using the meanings and practices available, although some are more obvious and conspicuous than others.

My findings and analysis in the chapter revealed identities that did not subscribe to the form of masculinity that was hegemonic amongst school peers, especially in the way conflict was handled. These identities were not subordinate to, complicit with or secondary to the hegemonic masculinity of Sunville. They did not seek to challenge or oppose the existing hegemonic masculinity although they implicitly offered an alternative vision of it. They embodied an autonomous configuration of 'doing boy'.

Research has become so preoccupied with the way that boys aggressively and competitively assert themselves that it has failed to acknowledge alternate masculine identities except as subordinate identities in opposition to the hegemonic masculinity that exists in that context. This chapter builds on an existing understanding that non-violent, peaceful boys have a place in the categorisation and construction of masculinity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has set itself the task of analysing how conflict occurred amongst boys at Sunville Secondary, how it was understood by them and how they handled it. On many occasions it escalated into physical violence. On other occasions, however, the conflict was defused. In approaching the constituent parts of my study I explored how the boys' versions of maleness impacted on how they handled conflict. For the boys in this study these included the ideologies of masculinity prevalent in the school, the social structures in which they lived and their own social positions. The purpose of this final chapter is to recapitulate the findings made as the thesis has unfolded in preceding chapters and to restate these findings as the conclusion of the thesis. This chapter will also identify restrictions, restraints and limitations and offer recommendations for a future research agenda.

The chapter commences with a summary and review of the research process. Thereafter I draw conclusions based on the findings of this study. I then identify restrictions and restraints of the study and finally make recommendations for interventions, future research and policy to inform the school's role in implementing change.

8.2 Summary of the Research Process

The main aim of this study was to examine the gendered processes surrounding issues of interpersonal conflicts between boys in school, particularly as they related to physical violence. Within this overall goal, this study identified and analysed the way in which masculinities were constructed and performed especially in the contexts of tension, disagreement and conflict. In attempting to achieve this overall aim, the study was structured to identify and analyse several phases with varying research questions associated with each phase.

In Chapter one (Introduction) I discussed the context and background of the study and provided a rationale for it. I highlighted the importance of looking at conflict and violence as separate phenomena and explained the contribution a study of this nature could make in introducing new ways of examining boys' violence in schools. I introduced the theoretical framework of gender as a social construct, which is a constant theme in this thesis.

In Chapter Two (Literature Review) I reviewed literature and research relating to conflict, violence and the construction of masculinities, which provided me with a basis to analyse the data in my study. The literature reviewed enabled me to compare findings of other research projects with my own and to identify similarities and differences across studies. I also reviewed literature that explored Zulu and Indian masculinities which helped me to better understand and interpret boys' responses during interviews.

In Chapter Three (Research Methodology) I provided a detailed account of the research methods and design that was used to generate answers to the research questions. I provided theoretical justification for the design and indicated how the methods were applied practically in the process of conducting the research.

This study analyses how situations of conflict and violence impact on and are themselves influenced (and in some cases caused by) school structures and processes and how these structures and processes heighten or reduce the likelihood of violence. The aim was to explore the complex ways that boys participate in conflict in the schooling process. In Chapter Four (The Gender Regime of Sunville) I described how the gender relations at Sunville were enacted, highlighted the practices of the school that had strong masculinising effects and emphasised the resistances and challenges to the internal set of gender arrangements of this school.

Provocation was seen in this study as the first phase in a conflict situation. In Chapter Five (Provocations – Conflict and Violence) I describe the various kinds of provocations

that produced conflict among boys at Sunville and explored the links between the provocations of conflict and the way boys constructed their masculinity.

In Chapter Six (Causes of Conflict and Interpersonal Violence) I discussed the processes which cause instances of conflict to escalate into violence or to be resolved peacefully. My examination centred on masculinity and while I argued that the first order of cause is the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity it is a cause that does not stand alone. In this chapter I examined the multiple factors that caused violence among boys at Sunville.

Large numbers of men and boys have a divided, tense, or oppositional relationship to hegemonic masculinity. Chapter Seven (Non-Violence in Conflict Situations) examines the contradictions, contestations, alternatives and nuances to the school's hegemonic masculinity by focusing on the boys who had chosen peace in conflict situations. I needed to name a particular way of resolving conflict which involves the mobilisation of non-hegemonic values. Understanding these voices and actions of resistance to violence yielded tremendous insight into the power of subjectivity – that is the power of individuals to construct their own meaning out of the situation around them and the power of subjectivity to question and resist rigid gender norms. These boys had chosen a particular subject position which I called autonomous and which stemmed from an understanding of themselves as boys (that is, their gendered identity as a male, their masculinity).

8.3 MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Conclusions drawn from this study are discussed in relation to the research questions outlined in Chapter one. Three broad conclusions emerge. The first is that there is a link between boys' construction of masculinity and the manner in which they handle conflict. The second is that physical violence is the culmination of a process and that violence is never the automatic outcome of disagreement or conflict. Generally, conflict passes through phases on its way to the dissipation or resolution of the conflict or towards the escalation of conflict until it erupts in physical violence. The third conclusion is that the

school's gender regime impacted on the making of masculinities contributing to certain norms and marginalising others. Since the school's gender regime in this case was authoritarian, it contributed to an increased likelihood of conflict escalating into physical violence. At Sunville hegemonic masculine values and patriarchal dominance were explicit. The gender regime could not be reduced simply to gender oppression, patriarchal dominance and reinforcing hegemonic masculine values. There were resistant patterns of behaviour that operated within, though did not explicitly challenge, the school's hegemonic framework. I discuss each of these conclusions below:

8.3.1 Link between Masculinity and Conflict

From my examination of the manner in which boys at Sunville handled conflict I was able to place the study participants into two major categories of masculinity. Those that subscribed to the dominant hyper-heterosexual masculinity and those that did not. As I have maintained throughout this study, I have been alert to the importance of practices and to the danger of pathologisation (the boys did not fit neatly into any category). However even though constructions of masculinity are contradictory, it was possible to identify boys whose constructions of masculinity were more aligned to values of non-violence, democracy and peace and who were therefore more likely to engage in peaceful conflict resolution than those who were invested in a competitive order of boys within the school. Further I am not claiming that the boys will always belong in these two categories or that no other categories of masculinities existed at Sunville. The boys who accepted norms of hegemonic masculinity and those that rejected them will not do so all the time and in every context. Boys negotiate norms in their life through the demands of particular circumstances that they find themselves in. In some cases boys may 'obey' hegemonic norms and in others they may defy them. It is for this reason that microanalysis of the ways in which violence occurs is so important. However, I categorised the boys into the two types of masculinities mentioned above based on their behaviour in handling conflict situations. I am aware of the danger of fixing identities and taking the focus off practice, fluidity and dynamism.

Some provocations lead to violence and others do not, and the key to this dynamic lies in different understandings, constructions and performances of masculinity. I found that understandings of what it is to be a man and the shaping of masculine identity relate to how conflict is handled. I argue that there were a number of contextual factors (for example tone of voice, existing relationship between the boys, attendant audience or spectators, history or prelude to the provocation) that fed into the events that succeeded a provocation and which explained how provocation led to an escalation of conflict and violence or whether the conflict fizzled out. Whatever the outcome, the causative factors all related to the boys' understandings of masculinity. It is the reception of the provocation that is key, and this reception depends on many psychological and contextual factors. Some constructions of masculinity produce acute vulnerability which in turn prompted boys who felt threatened to respond aggressively which led to a rapid escalation of conflict and violence.

Boys who identified with the hyper-heterosexual hegemonic forms of masculinity were more prone to handling conflict in an aggressive and violent manner than the boys who did not. Competition for ascendancy and peer endorsement was a key element in the construction of hegemonic masculinity and it was this aspect that powerfully propelled the responses of recipients of provocation towards violent confrontation. The hegemonic masculinity of the school (embedded in the school's gender regime) was a condition (a context) that limited the possibility of avoiding escalation and violence. In this sense it was a cause of violence, but not the sole cause. Violence was caused by multiple factors that included: the psychological condition of the boy, the school context (possibility of resolving conflict peacefully), peer environment, and the nature of the provocation. These intersected to convert provocation into actual physical violence. Schoolboys were involved in a number of forms of competitive behaviour including defending girlfriends, humiliating other boys, gambling and mechanisms that maintained the male peer group. Competition with fellow male learners was designed to establish masculine credentials in the eyes of peers. The competition to obtain peer approval was the main ingredient that caused boys to resolve conflict in ways that used force, aggression and violence. In all the incidents of conflict that I witnessed and heard about in interviews, there was a common

backdrop of masculinity, of boys projecting and seeking to live up to certain versions of what it is to be a man. The boys who did not buy into the competitive forms of masculinity, those that did not aspire to 'belong' or to win peer approval, in most cases sought to handle conflict in peaceful ways.

Boys who resisted and rejected the school's hegemonic masculinity and refused to be drawn into the game of 'jockeying for position' mostly chose non-violence in the face of conflict. These boys constructed their own identities in opposition to the hegemonic masculine ideals entrenched in male learner culture at Sunville. They did not care to satisfy peer group expectation or fit into the expectant (hegemonic) type of masculinity that existed at the school. These boys were mentally strong, individualistic and independent in their thinking. They embraced a set of values that allowed them to walk away in that moment when they were provoked, a set of values which was in contrast to the hegemonic values. They were not interested in competing for hierarchical ascendancy. They were not prepared to satisfy peer group expectations of using physical violence to defend one's honour. There were however ethnic/racial differences in the way honour was understood. The Indian boys saw honour as more of an individual feature, whereas among the African boys honour was more of a social feature and was linked to *hlonipha* (respect), a social understanding that is played out in an imagined community of kinsmen and women.

These boys refused to be provoked and when in conflict situations chose to settle the conflict peacefully. They were not necessarily physically weaker but they had no desire to prove their maleness through conflict and violence. For the purposes of this study, in these conflict situations I have identified the modus operandi of this group of boys as being autonomous. These boys took up autonomous positions in situations of conflict that did not support the hegemonic imperative at Sunville to escalate conflict into violence. I have chosen the term autonomous masculinity to describe that masculinity that was performed at a particular moment of conflict, at which moment particular non-hegemonic masculinities (in terms of the school's masculinity) were drawn upon to avoid conflict. In

the context of my research I was observing practices that separated these boys from the boys who resolved conflict using force, aggression and violence.

However it is important to bear in mind that a boy may behave in a particular way in one situation and differently in another situation and there are a number of contextual and psychological factors that affect this behaviour. I have developed the term autonomous masculinity to talk about the particular practices of boys who chose peace and non-violence in conflict situations with no intention of labelling them. Labels always carries the danger of pathologising; reducing an individual to one identity, and this was not the intention here. I argue that masculinity is a configuration of practice. The complexity of individuals and contextual factors means that labels never fit completely.

8.3.2. Phases of Conflict

Conflict among the boys at Sunville passed through phases on its way to either dissipation or resolution of the conflict or the escalation of conflict until it erupted in physical violence. Provocation in this study was seen as the first phase of a conflict situation. Provocations were an integral part of school reality for learners and teachers and took two forms, namely verbal and non-verbal.

Verbal provocation involved teasing and swearing, which were not mutually exclusive. I dealt with these two types of verbal abuse separately because I found that both the aggressor and the aggressed reacted differently to teasing and swearing. I found teasing to be related to taunting and tormenting while swearing was related to cursing. Swearing usually generated an immediate reaction while teasing normally generated a reaction after repeated infringements, since the intention was to belittle and insult the other learner. Provocations that involved a verbal attack on someone who was dear to the learner almost always resulted in violent resolution. In my study I was unable to map particular kinds of insults and provocations onto particular types of violence, but I found that denigrating mothers and girlfriends almost always created an extreme reaction in the boys.

Using swear words that referred to mothers and girlfriends was one of the ways that boys located themselves within the hierarchy of heterosexual masculine identities at Sunville. We again see the links between the ways boys constructed their masculinity and the ways they handled provocation and conflict. They confirmed their heterosexual maleness by taking on the male 'protector' role and by so doing affirming that they were 'not like' the mother or girlfriend, i.e. not female. Insulting mothers and girlfriends, therefore, created situations where sexual ambiguity was not possible and called on the recipient of the swearing to affirm his (heterosexual) masculine identity. Swearing crystallised who was 'hard' or 'soft' through the public exposition of power and vulnerability. The hard boy generally reacted aggressively and this was likely to escalate the conflict and lead to physical violence. This was the second phase of conflict.

Non-verbal provocation at Sunville took the form of seizing each other's possessions and using the body in aggressive ways to test each other's manliness like 'rough and tumble play', bumping each other and games that involved physical punishment as a penalty.

I found that verbal and non-verbal provocation in many ways threatened learners' identities and when these provocations were hurtful, degrading or inflicted pain then the they elicited aggressive reactions. While many boys at Sunville adopted vengeful and hostile strategies and perceived direct confrontation as the only means to handle provocation, many other boys did not allow the provocation to generate further aggression and hostility and used other strategies to ward off insults, threats and challenges and avert escalation. We see here how the second phase of conflict took the form of peaceful resolution.

One of the reasons for conflict resulting in violence was that the overall school regime readily made available non-violent approaches and outcomes. In a culture that sanctions violence and defines masculinity in terms of power, control and dominance, aggression may be adaptive (Beatty et al, 1994). In the next section I discuss the third broad conclusion of this study which is that the gender regime of the school impacted on the construction of masculinities.

8.3.3. Gender Regime and Masculinities

The gender regime of this school is understood in two ways. It refers to the 'agency' of the school in shaping the gender regime which in turn is expressed in the actions of the school when it exercises its agency. The school also serves as the setting in which other agencies are at play, including those that draw on extra-school forces such as family, gangs and wider community.

I explored the structures and practices by which the school formed, was the backdrop for, and via, its processes, regulated gender relations among its pupils, teachers and other role players. Various studies have recognised the role of the school in constructing a particular gender regime (Connell et al, 1982; Mac an Ghaill, 1994, Sewell, 1997; Connolly, 1998; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, Lingard and Douglas, 1999).

The physical and spatial positioning of the workshops (mostly used by boys) in the forefront of the school, and the salons, beauty rooms and kitchens (mostly used by girls) in the background has patriarchal implications. It reflected a gender arrangement where boys and male workshop teachers enjoyed some type of privilege and elevated their status at Sunville. The positioning of the workshop classrooms as easily accessible advantaged the boys and male teachers in that they benefit symbolically from being in the forefront of the school. This arrangement of space allowed them to enjoy increased freedom of movement and their domination of space in this academic arena positioned them as being more important and fed into the regime of gender inequality, more especially that of male domination and privilege.

The school curriculum also contributed to the patriarchal regime. The fêted subjects in Sunville were the technical subjects which were the domain of the boys and the male teachers. The school as a broader overarching structure created conditions for curriculum segregation. Resources were more generously committed to promoting 'masculine' subjects than to the subjects regarded as 'feminine'. Preferences for technical subjects by particularly the 'tougher', 'harder' boys at Sunville were seen to affirm masculine

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identity and there were patriarchal benefits for those learners that took up the technical subjects. This created the impression that the tough forms of masculinity were accepted and endorsed, if not always actually celebrated by the school.

Sunville had a rigid disciplinary system that was geared mainly towards controlling the behaviour of boys**.** This disciplinary system seemed to fuel the competition among boys for ascendancy and supremacy which fed into versions of the hegemonic masculinity The boys jockeyed for position among their peers by engaging in anti-school behaviour (thereby challenging the disciplinary system) in order to prove that they were fearless, brave and intrepid. Many teachers promoted 'laddish' and tough images of masculinity by using overt physical action and aggression to restrain, control and dominate the boys. In this way teachers also became embroiled in creating a 'hard man' image of masculinity at Sunville.

Morning assemblies were ritualistic occasions when the principal, management and teachers acted as agents in shaping the school's gender regime. Images of particular and distinct and separated forms of maleness and femaleness were promoted during these gatherings of the entire school community.

I did not find evidence of overt sexual harassment of girls by boys. Many would expect to find this at Sunville, as several studies, for example (Lees, 1993; Paechter, 1998; Barker, 2005) have suggested that verbal and physical bullying of girls is common in coeducational schools. However, the discourse of male sexual aggression was not overt at Sunville but rather boys seemed to get into conflict situations either when trying to protect girls or trying to impress them.

8.4. Restrictions and Restraints

This study was conducted using a relatively small sample size (ten boys) of individuals drawn from one secondary school. It represents a different way of viewing conflict and violence among boys in a secondary school in that it examined the stages that led to

violence and not just the physicality of violence. It is restricted in terms of its transferability to other contexts or settings or to the general population of male youth and I cannot make generalisations about male violence or male identities. Although relatively small in scope this study does mirror the findings of other studies in different school contexts (Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Sewell, 1997; Martino, 1999; Connell, 2000; Bhana, 2002). While the specifics of the study can't be generalised, the approach to the analysis of conflict situations could well be applied fruitfully to other school and institutional settings.

From the beginning of this study I was aware of the tension that existed between my roles as a teacher and researcher. Being a teacher and a researcher at this school had important implications for the way learners presented themselves in interviews and other contexts. I was mindful of the fact that my position as a teacher might influence the way in which learners related to me as a researcher. I addressed this restraint by making use of reflexivity and other methodological techniques (Chapter Three) in the research process. These strategies did not equalise power but made it negotiable, rather than an inevitable effect of status difference. I think that my careful use of reflexivity in the process of engaging with the boys allowed for honest, sympathetic and mutually respectful relationships to develop.

8.5. Implications and Recommendations

This study sees masculinity and male violence as primarily socially constructed. This implies that we should hold society (and schools) more accountable for the production of violent enactments of masculinity. The implications for the kind of research conducted in this study are enormous for all professionals in society but especially for those invested in healthy growth and development, that is, teachers and community workers. Underlying the implications is the notion of change and what needs changing. This study has highlighted the fragility of masculinity and how this condition underpins violent conduct and feeds off and into dominant forms of masculinity. Paradoxically, this fragility provides an opportunity for change. Schools can play an integral role in implementing

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change by attending to the vulnerability of male learners, by repetitive interruption of violent discourses and practices and by promoting an alternative discourse of peace and non-violence.

As with other research findings, this study has found that there is a clear identifiable link between modes of the dominant masculinity and violence. As mentioned earlier professionals working in the education field need to have some understanding of the way in which these processes operate to normalise boys' violences. Furthermore, recognition has to be given to how these violences are deployed in ways that shore up masculine privilege and create a hierarchy of masculinities. I have argued earlier that physical violence should not be regarded as the playing out of individual pathological behaviours, nor should such violence be seen as the product of boys' nature.

The two phases of conflict as argued in this study are important and should inform the manner in which violence intervention programmes in schools are structured. The first phase of conflict is provocation and while there is a link between conflict and violence the one does not automatically lead to the other. Violent resolution features more strongly in some provocations than others because the particular boys involved invested in particular kinds of masculinity. The second phase of conflict is the possible escalation to violence or peaceful resolution of the conflict. Boys constantly negotiate their positions in conflict situations and the choices they make are largely influenced by the manner in which they construct their identity and in particular their masculinity. In developing and implementing conflict resolution programmes in schools it is important to consider the phases of conflict and how masculinities are implicated in these phases.

Thus, work with boys on issues of gender and violence requires a focus on the way in which violence, domination and oppression are implicated in the construction of an idealised masculinity. This focus should take on a two-pronged approach.

In this study I worked with boys who came from poor backgrounds and there were cultural (and racial) factors which played out in how boys experienced themselves. The

point is that even bullies are vulnerable and need to be supported. I recommend, as does Barker (2005) that masculinity work should not just focus on 'violence' and its prevention but should seek to help boys (even those that mostly use violence to resolve disputes).

Firstly, the relationship between the boys and teachers who embody and enact the hegemonic form of masculinity and acts of physical violence in schools need to be interrogated and disrupted. The extent to which schools are culpable in legitimating (and this includes condoning) violent practices needs to be examined and itself critiqued and confronted. Only in this way will school violence be reduced.

Secondly, schools should be mindful that there other versions of masculinity are being performed within the school context and they should support forms of masculinity that are democratic, peaceful and respectful. Far too often, reactive responses focus on trying to 'stop' violence without giving due attention to promoting non-violent forms of masculine behaviour. A side-effect of this failing is that alternative masculinities are marginalised. If schools are to become less violent they need to support those boys and resist provocation and the imperative to violence.

8.6 CONCLUSION

This final chapter has provided an overview of the overall research process and the main conclusions drawn from my study. The restrictions and restraints were discussed and finally implications of this study and recommendations for interventions, future research and policy were discussed.

This study builds on and adds to existing understandings of conflict, violence and masculinity in this comparatively budding but burgeoning field. An important finding of the work in this study is that there are multiple and qualitatively different pathways to enactment of non-violent masculinities. These are the voices that resist rigid and violent versions of manhood. More extensive research, I believe, can ultimately devise more

effective and creative approaches to promoting alternatives to violent masculinities, thereby giving boys alternate, non-violent ways of 'being a boy', which will lead to a reduction of violence especially among boys in schools.

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