YOUNG MEN'S TALK ABOUT MENSTRUATION AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Current research in the sub-Saharan and other resource poor contexts indicates the largely negative social constructions of menstruation and menstruating women. Young men have been shown to reproduce these negative constructions and reinforce the stigmatized status of menstruation in these contexts. To my knowledge no studies have examined the ways in which young men talk about menstruation and menstruating women in South Africa. In this research, I aimed to explore the ways in which young men (in a resource poor area in the Eastern Cape) talk about menstruation in with their male peers in a focus group context and how this talk serves to enable specific subject positions (both masculine and feminine) that may reproduce, comply with and resist constructions of hegemonic masculinity (as outlined in previous South African research). By drawing on Raewyn Connell's influential framework of masculinities and augmenting this with Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley's contributions, this research adds to the growing body of research on masculinities in the South African context.

I utilized a discursive framework in which to understand the interpretative repertoires drawn on in everyday talk about menstruation and the specific subject positions made available by these. Purposive sampling was used to recruit a total of 37 participants from two former Department of Education and Training schools in the Eastern Cape. Participants were young 'black' men with a mean age of 18.3

In analyzing and interpreting the data two overarching patterns emerged. In the first, the participants discursively distanced themselves from menstruation (and femininity in general) in order to avoid possible marginalisation and subordination in relation to local hegemonic masculine ideals. In doing this, the participants drew on a number of interpretative repertoires including: a dualistic repertoire, a bad (versus ideal) femininity repertoire and an abject femininity repertoire, which assisted in creating numerous subject positions. These subject positions allowed the young men to align themselves closer to hegemonic masculine ideals, and create distance by positioning menstruating women as the 'other'. In the second overarching pattern, menstruation was constructed as a threat to masculine identity; within this construction, the young men discursively negotiated the ideological dilemmas surrounding this 'highly feminine' topic in ways that bolstered their positions within the gender hierarchy.

Overall, hegemonic masculinities in this context were discursively reproduced and complied with in the participants' accounts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Word	Meaning
Ulwaluko	a traditional circumcision ritual widely practiced in the Eastern Cape, initiating a rite of passage into 'manhood'.
Isiko	This refers to the Xhosa law that initiates receive training in during *Ulwaluko*
tsotsis	Typically referring to a young black urban criminal
CSSR	*Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction Research Unit at Rhodes University*
Siyahluma project	A partnership between the CSSR, the Community Engagement Division and the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics at Rhodes University which explored menstruation related challenges of school going girls in the Eastern Cape
Ja	An Afrikaans word meaning yes; but widely used in South Africa
Neh	Is it, isn't it so; Afrikaans word but widely used in South Africa

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In this research, I aim to investigate: the discourses employed by young men (in a resource poor context in South Africa) with regards to menstruation and the way these discourses serve to enable specific subject positions that may reproduce, comply with and/or resist hegemonic masculinity. The specific terms used here (i.e., discourses, subject positions, and hegemonic masculinity) will be defined and briefly elaborated on in this introductory chapter. The research questions guiding this particular research will be listed once these aforementioned terms have been discussed.

I begin this broad overview of the research, by discussing the research paradigm informing this research (social constructionism), and concepts within this paradigm (discourses, and subject positions). What follows is a broad overview of the theoretical framework included in this research. I then contextualize gender and its links with menstruation in the South African context, which informs the rationale for this research. Lastly, an overview of each chapter is provided[1].

1.2. Research Paradigm: Social Constructionism

This research is located broadly within a social constructionist paradigm, which has a number of assumptions regarding the nature of social reality. As a metatheory, social constructionism includes a broad array of approaches that share a number of similarities (Danziger, 1997). Potter (1996) highlights the similarities within these approaches, arguing that many of them: share an oppositional stance toward 'traditional' social science traditions (such as positivism/empiricism); promote the idea that our thoughts and actions are contingent upon culture and context; and view discourse as a central principle in the construction of knowledge and everyday practices.

In social constructionism knowledge is viewed as being produced through language, as well as through the daily interactions of people in the course of social life (Gergen, 1985). This knowledge is historically and culturally determined, meaning that the ways

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[1] Note that the introductory chapter provides a broader overview of the terms used and the integration of theoretical frameworks employed within this research. The following chapters discuss these concepts and frameworks critically and in much greater detail. The purpose in covering these in the introductory chapter is to provide the researcher with a basic overview of what is to follow.

we understand the world are not a result of distant and objective observations but, instead, are determined by the processes and interactions in which we are involved every day (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985; Potter, 1996). In this view, knowledge does not exist intra-psychically alone, but is rather produced through something people 'do' together in a system of relationships (Gergen, 1985). Language in this view, therefore, has a performative function and is used to construct, validate, maintain and contest the nature of social reality.

Writers now labelled as 'social constructionists' (Burr, 1995; Parker, 1990) have long tried to show how language is a site of "variability, disagreement and potential conflict" (Burr, 1995, p. 41). In this sense, social constructionism reveals how the use of language inevitably deals with power relations which become a site of conflict and struggle where this power is acted out (Burr, 1995). This understanding has major implications for the understanding of gender and the possibilities for social change. By locating research within a social constructionist paradigm, the researcher is presented with a theoretical orientation that allows them to investigate and expose the various ways in which constructions of gender function ideologically. Fairclough (as cited in Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 75) defines ideology as "constructions of meaning that contribute to the production, reproduction and transformation of relations of domination."

By adopting a social constructionist paradigm, the researcher is able to challenge and explore the ideologies that reproduce gendered relations of dominance (Danziger, 1990; Gergen, 1985). For instance, some studies conducted within a positivistic/empiricist paradigm have presupposed that masculinity/femininity arises out of a static essence that is unchanging over time. This assumption is ideological in the sense that it has constructed gender in ways that essentialize the differences between men and women (Gergen, 1985; Parker, 2004). In social constructionism, categories such as 'masculine' and 'feminine' are viewed as historically constituted and culturally mediated terms whose meanings are constantly changing depending on the social context in which they arise. In this sense, gender identity is seen as fragmented, non-continuous and a product of the prevailing discourses that are culturally available (Burr, 1995). If discourses are fluid and a person's gender identity is constructed by discourses, then it follows that an individual's identity is also fluid and open to change, instead of essential, fixed and unchanging. What it means to be

a man or women can therefore be reconstructed and transformed to allow for more positive constructions that support gender equality (Burr, 1995).

Here, the emancipatory potential of social constructionism is clear, as the paradigm provides a framework that exposes these dominant forms of knowledge that essentialize gender differences and contribute to unequal relations in society. This ability to 'denaturalize' and 'democratize' hegemonic knowledge in the field of gender studies is therefore a core strength of the social constructionist paradigm and a central aim within this research (Gergen, 1997). By doing this, researchers may move away from describing merely 'what is' and promote an alternative language that favours 'what we may become'. As constructions of gender are disrupted, new ways of constructing self and others may add to a heightened sense of well-being and human welfare (Gergen, 1997).

Research located within a social constructionist paradigm can therefore "empower the powerless, give voice to the voiceless, expose power abuse, and mobilize people to remedy social wrongs" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 449). As Gergen (1997) so aptly states, "detached observation gives way to what we may view as poetic activism" (p. 36). The central idea emerging from this field is the idea that language is structured into a certain system of meanings called discourses (Parker, 1990). The next sub-section (included to provide a theoretical foundation for the following chapters) is a discussion of contemporary discourse theory, with a focus on the complexities inherent in current conceptualizations of discourse.

1.3. The Basic Concepts Utilized in Social Constructionism

Due to its interdisciplinary nature and origin, the term 'discourse' has become a complicated construct with a broad variety of definitions. The purpose here is not to cover each definition, but rather to allude to the multiplicity of definitions that are available, highlighting the fluidity of the concept. Bloor and Bloor (2007, p.2) define discourse as "symbolic human interaction in its many forms, whether directly through spoken or written language or via gesture, pictures diagrams, films, or music." Burr (1995) offers a broader definition stating that "a discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on, that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event (or person or class of persons), a particular way of representing it

or them in a certain light" (p. 48). For Davies and Harré (1990) discourses are viewed as being bound up within intuitions; they argue that a discourse is "an institutional use of language and language like systems" (p. 45).

What is clear from the variety of aforementioned definitions and applications is that it is difficult to confine the term discourse to any 'watertight' definition, as it is an abstract concept (Burr, 1995). The term 'discourse' has been a part of many contrasting theoretical and disciplinary debates leading to a variety of applications and definitions (Potter, Wetherell & Edwards, 1990). It is for this reason that Macleod (2002) advocates for the use of the term 'conceptualization' instead of definition as the latter implies a fixed and definitive closure which ignores the fluidity of the concept. Discourse is grounded in a variety of theories and is therefore in a constant state of reworking and reconceptualization (Macleod, 2002).

Despite the numerous conceptualizations of discourse, it is generally agreed that discourses are constitutive of social reality and are in turn constituted by the subjects who use them. In discourse theory language is not viewed as an abstract referential system but rather as a mechanism that constructs and regulates social reality (Potter, Wetherell & Edwards, 1990). What is also generally agreed upon is that discourses have two important effects. Firstly, they constrain what can be said (by whom, where, when) by individuals which affects how these individuals participate in social life (Wooffitt, 2005). For instance, dominant discourses on femininity may lead to women being exempted from certain activities such as business (characterized by traditional masculine qualities such as competitiveness and ambition) because their identity and the way they are expected to act are controlled and constrained by these dominant discourses (Burr, 1995). Secondly, discourses construct objects by using certain vocabularies that may objectify people (Wooffitt, 2005). For example, the term premenstrual syndrome has often been used to provide an explanation of some acts of aggression in women. This term, which has been constructed as objective and value free, constitutes a form of social control over women by providing a vocabulary that objectifies them (Fairclough, 2001; Wooffitt, 2005).

It is not a single discourse, however, that constructs an object but rather a multitude of discourses that intersect to construct an object. As Burr (1995) so aptly puts it:

...a multitude of discourses is constantly at work constructing and producing our identity. Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings. In this sense the realm of language, signs and discourse is to the person as water is to the fish (p. 53)

An individual's experience of the markers of identity such as gender, race and class are therefore all expressed and understood through the categories made available to them by a particular set of intersecting discourses (Davies & Harré, 1990). Potter and Wetherell (1987) highlight that people draw on available discourses in society and employ a range of grammatical acrobatics in order to align themselves with these. It is in this way, that the we discursively reproduce and construct our identities (i.e., gender, race, class etc).

Within the context of gender, social constructionism and contemporary discourse theory, therefore, account for the unstable and fragmentary nature of our gendered subjectivity and how broader cultural and historical discourses inform the various subject positions we take up in everyday interactions (Burr, 1995). Subject positions reveal how men and women are positioned within these discourses, and the power relations that emerge as a result. In this way "our sense of who we are and what it is therefore possible and not possible for us to do, what it is right and appropriate for us to do, and what it is wrong and inappropriate for us to do thus all derive from our occupation of subject positions within discourse" (Burr, 1995, p. 146). To understand how these subject positions are reproduced, complied with, and/or resisted hegemonic masculinity, I draw on Connell's (1995) framework of masculinity in this research.

1.4. Brief Overview of Theoretical Framework

Connell (1995) introduced the term hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the most culturally honoured way of being a man and serves to legitimize male dominance over women and alternative forms of masculinity. Connell's (1995) conceptualization of masculinity is built on a hierarchical understanding of gender, which positions men in relation to one another under hegemonic standards of gender. Within this hierarchy of gender, Connell (1995) introduced the notion of multiple masculinities to reveal how men position themselves in relation to hegemonic standards and other men, in the

form of complicit, subordinate and marginal masculinities. These positions are all defined in relation to hegemonic masculinity, with complicit masculinity defined by its identification with hegemonic standards, and subordinate and marginal masculinities defined by their distance from and dis-identification with hegemonic standards respectively. Connell (1995) argues that although most men are unlikely to fully embody hegemonic masculinity, men are still regulated by it and judge other men's conduct by its standards.

Hegemonic masculinity is understood within the South African context as being associated with qualities such as: strength, the ability to provide financially, authoritarianism, knowledge, and sexual prowess and frequent sexual encounters (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele et al., 2007). Added to this, two broader themes emerge in the literature on masculinity in the South African context. The first of these includes the degree to which men can maintain a distance from femininity and feminine practice (Ratele et al., 2007). Secondly, hegemonic masculinity is upheld and reinforced through blatant homophobia and appeals to heterosexuality (Ratele, 2014). Men within the South African context are, therefore, regulated according to these hegemonic ideals. For instance, within the South African context men who cannot provide financially for their families may become marginalized/subordinated, and heteronormative ideals may lead to the subordination of gay men (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele, 2014).

There is uncertainty in the research concerning who exactly represents hegemonic masculinity and what the concept looks like in reality (Speer, 2001). In response to this criticism, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have argued that the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is not representative of a certain type of man but should rather be viewed as a way men position themselves through discursive practices. This is taken further by Wetherell and Edley (1999) who argue that men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable, but then discursively position themselves in relation to other constructions of masculinity (subject positions) when it suits them. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, is a way that men position themselves discursively by taking up various subject positions in relation to hegemonic standards. These valuable contributions based on Wetherell and Edley's (1998, 1999, 2014) numerous studies of masculinity will, therefore, augment Connells (1995) conceptualisation of

hegemonic masculinity in this research. I now turn to the broader context of menstruation in the South African context (as highlighted in the literature).

1.5. Context of Menstruation and Menstruating Women in South Africa

For centuries menstruating women[2] have been associated with an abject, monstrous and out of control status, one related to uncontrolled outbursts, violent displays of behavior and destructive emotions (Chrisler et al., 2006b; Ussher, 2006). In the wake of claims in the global North of an egalitarian certain societies based on shared opportunity, where women are said to have equal access to the public domain, there remain strict taboos governing menstruation that force women back into the private realm. Menstruation, constructed as a 'normal' and 'healthy' biological process remains shrouded in negative public perception and demeaning portrayals of menstruating women in popular culture. Specifically, these contemporary cultural meanings construct menstruation as dirty, unclean and repulsive. For this reason, menstruators are culturally sanctioned to keep their menstruating 'status' and 'condition' hidden (Young, 2005). As will be shown in this research, current claims of egalitarianism seem to be contradicted by the strict and demeaning norms governing the fecund body.

These strict norms governing the fecund body are evident within the South African and other resource poor contexts as research has revealed the many menstruation related challenges faced by women. This research has largely shown that girls lack adequate information, resources and facilities for the effective management of their menses (Kanyike, Akankwasa & Karungi, 2005; Roma et al., 2012; Sommer, 2009). As a result, girls are more likely to be absent from school during their menses than when not menstruating, which subsequently causes these girls to miss out on a substantial portion of their education (Roma et al., 2012). Those who do attend school often struggle to concentrate in class as they fear staining their clothes, leading to ridicule and judgement from their peers (Kanyike et al., 2005; Sommer, 2009). Added to this, many girls cannot afford menstrual products and there is often an insufficient supply

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[2] The phrases 'menstruating women' and 'women who menstruate' are used with a prior awareness that there are a range of people who menstruate, who may not identify as women (i.e., transgender men and intersexed people). However, this research is principally concerned with 'women who menstruate' and this phrase is, therefore, used throughout this research.

of clean water and adequate sanitation facilities in their schools to ensure that adequate menstrual hygiene is maintained (Roma et al., 2012; Sommer, 2009). Despite local interventions to provide free and affordable sanitary products (such as reusable pads and menstrual cups), many social challenges remain for menstruating women within the South African context (Ismail et al., 2016; Roma et al., 2012). These social challenges can be partly attributed to the way menstruation has been constructed in society, particularly through broader societal discourses and negative male attitudes toward menstruation (Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2013; Chrisler, 2013; Padmanabhanunni & Fennie, 2017). Sommer (2009) has shown that negative male attitudes toward menstruation are pervasive within the sub-Saharan context, as many girls report feeling grown up and attractive whilst menstruating, but experience harassment from boys and men regarding their menstrual status. Perhaps most importantly, the literature suggests that men are drawing on and aligning themselves with broader societal and cultural discourses in everyday conversations to construct menstruating women in demeaning ways (Kirk & Sommer, 2006; Sommer, 2009). With this context as a foundation, I now turn to the rationale behind the chosen topic of research.

1.6.   Rationale and Research Questions

To date no studies (to my knowledge) have been done within the South African context examining male attitudes and the discursive positions men adopt towards menstruation in everyday conversation with their male peers This research therefore adopts a discursive approach in order to examine the complex ways in which men construct menstruation and position themselves and menstruating women through everyday talk. To my knowledge no research has attempted to do this within the sub-Saharan context (as confirmed by McMahon et al., 2011). It is for this reason that the gap in the literature (specifically the perceptions of men towards menstruation and how they discursively position menstruating women and themselves) needs to be addressed.

It is for this reason that I explored the discourses employed by young men (in a resource poor context in South Africa) with regards to menstruation and the way these discourses serve to enable specific subject positions that may reproduce, comply with and/or resist hegemonic masculinity (as outlined in previous South African research).

In meeting these aims I conducted male only focus groups with the intention of answering the following research questions:

1. What discourses do young men employ when talking about menstruation in a focus group context with their male peers?
2. What masculine and feminine subject positions do these discourses enable?
3. How do these discourses and subject positions reproduce, comply with or resist hegemonic masculinity ideals as outlined in previous South African research?

1.7. Overview of Chapters

In the following chapter, I introduce literature on the structural inequalities and menstruation related experiences which are prevalent in the sub-Saharan context and other resource poor areas. Due to the sparse literature that is available on menstruation in the sub-Saharan context I augment this overview by drawing on international literature. I structure this chapter into five broader sections which, I believe, best capture the constructions of menstruation and menstruating women and the various discourses informing these. Respectively, these themes include: the structural inequalities associated with menstruation in resource poor contexts, historical constructions of menstruation, constructions of menstruation and femininity, and perceptions of, and actions concerning menstruation. This overview provides a context in which to understand how the meanings attached to menstruation are informed by broader systems of patriarchy, and are linked to the general subordination of women in society.

With this as a foundation, Chapter 3 provides an overview of constructions of hegemonic masculinities within the South African context. One of the research questions deals specifically with research conducted on masculinities in the South African context, and this chapter, therefore, is important in providing the reader with a detailed understanding of these constructions of masculinity and the subsequent hierarchies of gender they aid in creating.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the theoretical framework and methodological principles guiding this research. I begin this chapter by providing an overview of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) broader discursive framework, by discussing some of the core analytical concepts inherent in this approach: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. I then provide a critical overview of Connell's (1995)

masculinities framework which then leads into a discussion of how Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinities can be effected within a discursive framework (Wetherell & Edley, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2014). I conclude this chapter by discussing some of the mechanics of the research such as: the demographics of the participants included in this study, the sampling technique employed, the data collection methods, how the analysis itself was effected and a discussion of some ethical considerations adhered too throughout this research.

My analysis and interpretation of the data is included in Chapter 5, and is separated into two broader patterns of repertoires and subject positions. The first of these highlights three repertoires which the participants drew on when talking about menstruation with their male peers. These include: a dualistic repertoire, bad (versus ideal) femininity repertoire, and an abject femininity repertoire. The second overarching theme, highlights the specific ways in which menstruation is constructed as a threat to masculine identity formation. Here menstruating women were positioned as the 'other' and the young men rhetorically distanced themselves from the 'highly feminine' topic of menstruation in order to avoid subordination and marginalisation. Finally, chapter 6 concludes this research by providing an overview of these aforementioned findings and discussing some of the limitations of this research and my suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Due to the sparse literature available in the South African context regarding menstruation, this chapter is augmented by research conducted in other resource poor contexts such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and India. Throughout the review, studies conducted in the global North are also included, so as to better understand menstruation related experiences/practices and to provide a broader overview of the challenges faced by women who menstruate. The following discussion is structured into five sections that capture the themes emerging in the literature. I begin this chapter with an overview of the literature available on menstruation in resource poor contexts, by focusing specifically on the structural inequalities highlighted by these studies. I then combine research conducted in these resource poor contexts, with research done in the global North in order to highlight the commonalities of menstruation related experience. Making sense of these experiences, I discuss historical, religious and cultural constructions of menstruation in order to ground these experiences in broader socio-cultural contexts. I then highlight the links between constructions of menstruation and idealized femininity so as to link menstruation related experiences/practices to gendered regimes. Lastly, I provide an overview of the literature that is available on men's perceptions of menstruation and menstruating women.

2.2. Structural Inequalities

The research that has been conducted in the sub-Saharan context has predominately focused on the numerous structural inequalities surrounding menstrual management (McMahon et al., 2011; Roma et al., 2012). Specifically, these studies have shown that women/girls lack access to adequate facilities and resources for the effective management of their menses (Kanyike, Akankwasa & Karungi, 2005; Kirk & Sommer, 2006; McMahon et al., 2011; Roma et al., 2012; Sommer, 2009, 2010). For instance, Sommer (2010) found that school-girls in Tanzania reported a lack of access to basic facilities and resources such as clean water, unisex latrines, cleaning equipment and incinerators, which made managing their menses extremely difficult (especially within the school context). Related to this, it has also been found that many women in the South African context cannot afford menstrual hygiene products to ensure that adequate menstrual hygiene is maintained (Roma et al., 2012; Sommer, 2009). This is evidenced by the number of alternative products and materials that women use to

manage their menstrual flow. For instance, girls have reported using pieces of material from old shirts and dresses, scraps from old towels, toilet paper, poor quality cloths and blankets as alternative and less expensive options (McMahon et al., 2011; Sommer, 2010). The World Bank (2005) reports that this lack of access to adequate menstrual hygiene products leads to embarrassment and shame in anticipation of a possible 'leak'.

These aforementioned challenges, that seem to relate to broader structures of inequality, create a number of consequences for women. Sommer (2010) refers to these resource poor contexts as "girl unfriendly environments" – which hinder girls' access to important educational opportunities, decrease school attendance and reduce class participation. For instance, a number of studies link menstrual management related challenges to higher rates of absenteeism amongst girls (see, FAWE, 2004; Sommer, 2009, 2010). In this way, menstrual related absenteeism may lead to many girls missing out on a substantial portion of their school year, depriving them of their basic rights to education and reproductive health (Kanyike, Akankwasa & Karungi, 2005; Roma et al., 2012; World Bank, 2005).

Intervention strategies aimed at rectifying these challenges have focused primarily on the aforementioned structural inequalities (ignoring socio-cultural beliefs and myths). For instance, there have been efforts to distribute sanitary products (reusable pads and menstrual cups) within certain communities (Roma et al., 2012). Other Interventions have focused on informing both male and female learners about the biological processes of menstruation through educational programs (Kirk & Sommer, 2006). However, very few interventions have aimed at promoting alternative discourses, through critically examining current socio-cultural perceptions and beliefs in relation to menstruation. Kirk and Sommer (2006) argue that future research must aim to empower women through hearing their stories, providing nuanced understandings of their personal experiences and focusing on the complex meanings and cultural beliefs attached to menstruation in the sub-Saharan context.

A reason for the noted structural inequalities surrounding menstruation, according to Kirk and Sommer (2006), is that many societies within the Sub-Saharan context have been organized in such a way that the needs of men are catered for above the needs of women (e.g., school administrative boards and leadership committees being male

dominated). Menstruation produces special requirements in institutional settings such as schools and public spaces (in particular, adequate sanitary facilities, clean running water and sanitary bins), and these basic requirements are often unaccounted for and/or seen as peripheral issues. In other words, the decisions pertaining to the provision of adequate resources and facilities for effective menstrual management are deemed unimportant due to broader systems of patriarchy (Kanyike, Akankwasa & Karungi, 2005). Within this context, it is therefore inevitable that women will face challenges in relation to menstrual management (Young, 2005).

2.3. Women's Experiences of Menstruation

Across a range of cultures, the coming of menarche (a girl's first experience of menstruation) signifies the beginning of womanhood (Ussher, 2006). Menarche usually begins at about age 12 and it is experienced in a variety of different ways. Both local and international literature seem to suggest that women experience this natural 'transition' ambivalently. For instance, women have reported feeling grown up, significant, valuable, responsible and mature at the time of menarche (Chrisler & Zittel, 1998). However, these initial feelings are often translated into feelings of shame, embarrassment, confusion and doubt due to the widespread stigma and cultural taboos governing menstruation (see, Adinma & Adinma, 2008; Anjum et al., 2010; Jarrah & Kamel, 2012; Kowalski & Chapple, 2000). At menarche, the maturing girl may exude confidence, maturity and an assurance of health, but is then immediately faced with a cultural context that regards her natural biological processes as monstrous, unhygienic and repulsive. She is then subjected to cultural ideologies that pressure her to conceal her menstrual status and strictly maintain menstrual hygiene and invisibility (see later discussion, regarding cultural ideologies) (Chrisler & Zittel, 1998).

The pressure to conceal one's menstrual status, according to the literature, leads to many women experiencing feelings of shame and embarrassment. For instance, a study by McMahon et al., (2011) exploring the menstruation related experiences of Kenyan school girls, found that the most commonly reported feelings towards menstruation was 'shame'. The girls reported that they knew menstruation was a 'natural' and 'normal' process that most women of reproductive age experience. However, they experienced feelings of shame, fear, confusion and powerlessness in relation to their menses. Added to this, the Kenyan school-girls constructed menstruation as something 'bad', which should be kept hidden (especially from men).

This theme of shame and embarrassment, is further highlighted in a number of other studies conducted in resource poor contexts (Jarrah & Kamel, 2012; Kanyike, Akankwasa & Karungi, 2005; Sommer, 2009). In each study, reference is made to the strict concealment norms governing and/or the largely negative socio-cultural meanings attached to menstruation which result in menstruating women experiencing shame and embarrassment. What is common in each of these aforementioned studies is the great effort many women go through in order to conceal any evidence of their menses.

The literature, therefore, seems to suggest that the complex social and cultural meanings associated with menstruation create a culture of 'shame' and 'silence', which impacts on women's experience of their menses. International literature of women's experiences of menstruation further confirms this by highlighting the sensitivities of women in relation to perceptions and opinions of others. An American study done by Chrisler et al., (2006a) required two separate groups of female students to complete a number of questionnaires relating to their premenstrual symptoms and experiences. The first group was asked to complete the Menstrual Joy Questionnaire (MJQ) (a questionnaire that focused on the positive aspects of menstruation), while the other group completed Menstrual Distress Questionnaire (MDQ) (a questionnaire focusing on the negative aspects of menstruation). A week later the two groups completed the Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire (MAQ), and it was found that the women in the first group were more likely to view their experiences of menstruation positively due to the positive opinions expressed in the MJQ. The mere fact that the experimenters and authors of the questionnaires believed that there were positive aspects to menstruation resulted in more positive aspects being reported by the women in the first group (Chrisler et al., 2006a).

A study by Kowalski and Chapple (2000) further highlights menstruating women's sensitivities to the perceptions of others. This particular study examined the effects of the social stigma toward menstruation on women's impression management concerns. Women were interviewed by a male researcher who was either aware or unaware of their menstrual status. It was found that menstruating women who believed that the interviewer knew they were menstruating perceived that the interviewer liked them less and were less motivated to make an impression on him. Non-menstruating women perceived that the interviewer viewed them more positively than he did the

menstruating women (Kowalski & Chapple, 2000). This suggests that women are sensitive to the negative perceptions of others in relation to their menstrual status and adjust their behavior accordingly.

Ussher (2011) argues that due to the prevailing culture of 'silence' surrounding menstruation women engage in self-surveillance and self-pathologizing practices. Ussher (2011) argues that women internalize negative cultural perceptions and blame their bodies for the distress and moods they are experiencing. This is confirmed by a study by Ussher, Perz and Mooney-Somers (2007) which examined menstruation related experiences of women in intimate relationships. It was found that the women's partners emotionally distance themselves from the women as a result of premenstrual change. Accordingly, women tend to self-pathologize by positioning themselves as 'PMS sufferers', placing the blame for this relational distress on their bodies, instead of looking at their social and cultural contexts for the sources of this discomfort.

In moving towards a nuanced understanding of these experiences, it is important to highlight the complexity and fluidity of menstruation-related experience, which is highlighted in the literature. For instance, a number of studies suggest that the experiences of menstruating women differ according to the sociocultural and discursive context which they inhabit (Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2013; Chrisler, 2013). A study by Ussher (2011) contrasted the menstrual related 'symptoms' reported by women in countries such as Hong Kong and China with those reported in western countries. Women in non-western countries reported fatigue, sensitivity to cold, water retention and pain as the most commonly experienced menstrual 'symptoms'. These were very different from the symptoms reported by western women (such as anger, irritability and moodiness). In fact, Richardson (1995) argues that the 'symptoms' reported by premenstrual women are often so diverse and context specific that a norm cannot be standardized. Added to this, experiences of menstruation differ from one cycle to the next and therefore individual variance must also be accounted for (thus adding to the complexity) (Chrisler & Caplan, 2002).

A study by Chrisler et al., (2006b) further highlights the complexity of experience as it examined the links between cultural stereotypes of the 'premenstrual woman' and actual (self-reported) experiences of premenstrual undergraduate women. It was found that women will accept the dominant cultural stereotypes of premenstrual

women even though it does not describe them or the people they know well. Similar findings were reported in a study done by Burrows and Johnson (2005) that explored the negative language that is used when young women talk about their experiences of menstruation. The participants in the study were asked to explain the positive aspects of their menstrual cycle (such as feeling grown up or healthy). It was found that many of them were embarrassed to speak positively about their menses and preferred to accept dominant (mostly negative) cultural perceptions instead. Burrows and Johnson (2005) concluded that the girls' experiences were at odds with hegemonic cultural scripts of menstruation which were removed from their actual experiences.

Making sense of the fluidity and complexity evident in menstruation related experience, Richardson (1995) states that the experiences of "premenstrual symptoms may tend to be related to how different cultures see menstruation and the general role of women in society" (p. 764). In this way, natural changes in a woman's affect or behavior are more likely to be attributed to the effects of premenstrual change rather than natural fluctuations in mood or due other factors such as relationship dissatisfaction or work-related stress. The literature suggests that women are, therefore, drawing on culturally available discourses in order to make sense of their natural premenstrual changes. Added to this, cultural beliefs regarding the effects of premenstrual change seem to be maintained even in the absence of evidence, and are drawn on in everyday conversation (Chrisler & Caplan, 2002; Chrisler et al., 2006b).

2.4.   Historical and Cultural Constructions of Menstruation

I now turn to the discourses and cultural meanings drawn on by women when making sense of their experiences of menstruation. Here, I provide an overview of the historical, religious and cultural constructions of menstruation in order to ground women's experiences in broader socio-cultural contexts. This discussion is arranged into three sub-sections that capture the significant themes emerging in the literature: religious views and cultural myths/taboos, discourses propagated through popular culture and the media, and medical/psychological discourses.

2.4.1. Religious Views and Cultural Myths/Taboos

Both across cultures and trans-historically, the fecund body has been constructed as out of control, abject (self-abasing, and/or completely without pride or dignity) and

monstrous (Ussher, 2006). Menstruation as a marker of a woman's fecundity has a history of demeaning cultural practices and oppressive religious beliefs associated with its management. These historical practices and beliefs (some of which are still prevalent today) have largely been represented and propagated through many of the world's major religions (including Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism). These religions have had a major influence in constructing menstruation as something unclean, unhygienic and socially repulsive (Bhartiya, 2013). For instance, in Judaism the *Halakha* (Levitical code of law) enforced a strict code of conduct on menstruating women. The law prohibited menstruating women from having any physical contact with another person for a period of seven days (called the *Niddah* period). During this period women were also separated from the men as they were considered 'ritually unclean' and contact with another person would make them equally unclean (Bhartiya, 2013). These prohibitions on physical contact were also evident in Islamic orthodoxy where menstruating women were banned from sexual intercourse with their husbands. Added to this, Islamic injunctions disallowed menstruating women from visiting any religious shrines or mosques, due to proscriptions on prayer during menstruation (Whelan, 1975).

Not only were menstruating women regulated by religious beliefs, menstrual blood itself has long been shrouded in cultural myth and taboo. For instance, menstrual blood has been associated with: combatting river demons (some Indian tribes tie cloths soaked in menstrual blood to the masts of their ships), evil powers, ruining crops, killing bees, destroying gardens, turning wine into vinegar and souring milk (Beauvoir, 1949). Remnants of these ancient beliefs regarding menstrual blood later resurfaced in early medical journals. Whelan (1975) reports that the *British Medical Journal* published in 1878 listed information arguing that a menstruating woman could cause bacon to putrefy. Similarly, in 1920, Dr. Bella Schick isolated a 'menotoxin' in menstrual blood, and argued that these menotoxins could retard human development and kill plants. In 1945, is was also common medical knowledge that menstrual blood could contaminate the penis during sexual intercourse (Whelan, 1975).

Ussher (2006) argues that these religious and cultural beliefs have slowly lost their grip in contemporary society. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that perceptions of menstruation have drastically changed in the 20th century (Young, 2005). However, it is clear that remnants of these demeaning religious beliefs and oppressive cultural

traditions still remain, which continue to construct the fecund body as abject, out of control and monstrous (Ussher, 2006). Presently, the norms governing the fecund body are largely promoted through contemporary consumer culture and psychological and medical discourses, which are discussed below.

2.4.2. Discourses Propagated through Popular Culture and the media

Young (2005) argues that recent revolutions in consumer culture have led to a drastic increase in products aimed at improving menstrual management. For instance, 'feminine hygiene advertisements' present women with an array of menstrual products (from a plethora of different shaped pads, to multi-scented sprays, soaps and creams). The message given to menstruating women is that they must remain contained and regulated as menstruation is considered unclean and unhygienic. These developments in consumer culture have, therefore, willingly or unwillingly added to existing historical constructions of menstruation through their production of a broad range of well scented and germ eradicating products (Young, 2005).

Evidence of this is presented in an Australian study done by Rosengarten (2000) which explored a number of menstrual product advertisements and how they have served to construct the fecund body as 'out of control' and abject. Rosengarten found that menstrual product advertisements are permeated with norms pressuring menstruating women to stay clean, dry, secure and protected. These advertisements encourage women to exercise constraint and discipline in order to keep their menses invisible and aspire to a "seamless, fitting and fitted body with no leaks" (p. 96). This is further confirmed by a US study done by Simes and Berg (2001) which analyzed contemporary menstrual product advertisements from 1985 to 2001. A core theme that emerged in many of these advertisements was the prevention of 'getting caught' while menstruating. The advertisements also depicted the fecund body as being dirty and unhygienic and therefore in need of management, control and concealment. The authors argue that these advertisements have the potential for 'heightening insecurities' in the adolescent girl and in turn reinforce a culture of silence and shame surrounding menstruation (Simes & Berg, 2001).

Studies investigating contemporary cultural perceptions of menstruation further reveal the ways in which popular culture has constructed menstruation as unhygienic, socially repulsive and leading to negative emotions. For instance, Thornton's (2013) analysis of 2211 English-language tweets referencing menstruation on Twitter found that

menstruating women were viewed as irrational, moody, needy, angry and suffering. The tweets from both men and woman were largely offensive and expressed frustration, vexation and humor in reference to menstruation. These cultural perceptions are also reinforced through the information that is supplied on the pamphlets and inserted leaflets of sanitary products. Chrisler and Johnston-Robledo (2013) argue that these inserted pamphlets place emphasis on the 'bothersome' aspects of menstruation which include: cramps, moodiness and leaks. The only positive aspects that was mentioned in these pamphlets were assurances of maturity and 'growing up'. Chrisler and Johnston-Robledo (2013) argue that these pamphlets (that are read from a young age) are permeated with references to concealment and hygiene regulations that further construct menstruation as an 'out of control' and 'abnormal' process.

There is also evidence suggesting that menstrual hygiene advertisements objectify women by portraying them in demeaning ways (Chrisler et al., 2006a; Erchull, 2013; Kissling, 2002; Merskin, 1999). In a study of the content of popular magazines targeting teenage girls, it was found that in more than 50% of the adverts women were depicted wearing tight (often white) clothing (Merskin, 1999). Similar findings were presented in a study by Erchull (2013) which involved a content analysis of feminine hygiene advertisements in popular woman's magazines over a 12 year period. It was found that idealized images of women/girls were the norm in the advertisements, as many adverts depicted the women in flirtatious poses to attract attention to the advertisement. These images also intimate that should women use the control that the products promise then they, too, can be flirtatious. Both studies however, reveal the idealized images of women and their provocative appeal aimed to draw attention to them.

It is therefore clear that popular culture and the media reinforce discourses that construct menstruation as something shameful, dirty and 'out of control' (Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2013; Kissling, 2002; Merskin, 1999). Within the media portrayals of menstruation there is also evidence of the objectification of women (through the demeaning portrayal of actors in the advertisements), which intimately links portrayals of menstruation with the general subordination of women in society. Specifically, advertisements referencing menstrual products promote concealment norms and menstrual etiquette that reinforce the ideology confining women to the private sphere.

In this way women are led to believe that evidence of their menses is best kept hidden, knowing that they risk humiliation and disgrace if any signs of their 'femaleness' should seep through their clothing (Brookes & Tennant, 1998; Merskin, 1999).

2.4.3. Medical/Psychological Discourses

Contemporary medical and psychological texts further reinforce cultural discourses of abject femininity and ideologies of biological imprisonment. This is evidenced by the construction and identification of psychiatric 'disorders' associated with menstruating women. For instance, the term 'premenstrual tension' (PMT) was first described by the gynecologist, Robert Frank, in 1931 due to the physical and psychological symptoms he observed in women prior to menstruation. PMT was later redefined and replaced with the DSM-III category of 'pre-`menstrual syndrome' (PMS) by Katrina Dalton in 1953 (which highlights the fluidity of psychiatric diagnoses and the evolving nature of the DSM) (Chrisler & Caplan, 2002).

In 1985, a new diagnosis called Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) surfaced in psychological literature. This 'disorder' (viewed as more debilitating than PMS) was added to the appendix of the DSM-V after much debate and deliberation. However, Kissling (as cited in Bobel, 2010) argues that there is limited empirical evidence for the existence and etiology of PMDD, yet it is still an official diagnostic label that clinicians use. Ussher (2011) states that "it is estimated that around 8-13 per cent of women meet a PMDD diagnosis each month, with around 75 percent meeting the lesser diagnosis of PMS" (p. 154). Thus, the majority of the women of reproductive age could be deemed 'mad' once a month (Ussher, 2011). In attempts to treat this 'condition', Richardson (1995) found that women participants responded to inactive placebos just as effectively as active preparations, indicating the PMS and PMDD could have psycho-social origins.

According to Ussher (2006), the construction of these 'disorders' (PMS and PMDD) has positioned women in problematic ways, describing them as out of control, irresponsible and prisoners to their own natural physiology. For instance, PMS has been used as a mitigating factor in judicial systems to explain crimes such as murder and shoplifting (Ussher, 2006). Added to this, self-help manuals have encouraged women not to drive during the premenstrual phase of their cycles as they are more prone to having accidents due to heightened levels of clumsiness and slow reaction times. Ussher (2006) explains that many of these assumptions and negative

constructions of the premenstrual women have been deconstructed in recent literature. However, historical constructions have legitimated the medical and psychological management of the fecund body. The claim is that if women follow these medical and psychological protocols, they can avoid premenstrual madness and irregularity, and be subjected to a form of management and containment (Ussher, 2006).

It is therefore clear that the fecund body has long been positioned as a site of danger, dread and disease (Ussher, 2006). The discussion has so far shown that historical beliefs were not circumvented by improvements in the medical sciences; rather remnants of ancient beliefs continue to be reinforced through the media and contemporary medical and psychological discourses. With this as the overarching and broader context of menstruation the discussion now turns to the specific ways in which menstruation is linked to constructions of 'idealized' femininity.

2.5. Constructions of Menstruation and Femininity

A number of feminist scholars (see, Beauvoir, 1949; Grosz, 2006; Swann, 1997; and Ussher, 2006) have made reference to the associations between menstruation and idealized femininity. These discussions have centered on the largely negative social meanings ascribed to women at the point of menarche, and how these are linked not only to constructions of femininity, but also to the general subordination of women in society. Drawing on several relevant studies, this brief discussion highlights a few of the social representations ascribed to women at the point of menarche, and how these are regulated by broader systems of patriarchy.

The 'coming of age' and the first effects of puberty take on very different gendered meanings (Grosz, 1994). For boys, the first issuing of sperm is seen as a symbolic entering of manhood. The first 'wet dream', for instance, is intimately tied up with pleasure and a promise of future sexual conquests. In contrast, a girl's coming into womanhood is symbolized by the development of breasts and the beginning of menstruation. For the girl, these marks of puberty are in no way linked with sexual pleasure or positive social meanings (in contrast to the maturing boy). At the point of menarche women become immersed in the ideologies of patriarchal societies that regard natural biological processes in the female as abject and monstrous. Beauvoir (1949) sums up this connection between the subordination of women and contemporary perceptions of menstruation stating that:

Just as the penis derives its privileged evaluation from the social context, so it is the social context that makes menstruation a curse. The one symbolizes manhood, the other femininity; and it is because femininity signifies alterity and inferiority that its manifestation is met with shame... (p. 340).

Similarly, Grosz (1994) captures the transitions that occur at menarche and the social meanings these carry in the context of a patriarchal society. She states that:

For the girl, menstruation, associated as it is with blood, with injury and the wound, with a mess that does not dry invisibly, that leaks, uncontrollable... The idea of soiling oneself, of dirt, of the very dirt produced by the body itself, staining the subject, is a normal condition of infancy, but in the case of the maturing woman it is a mark or stain of her future status, the impulsion into a future of a past she thought she had left behind (p. 205).

Grosz therefore argues that infantile behavior (associated with 'blood, injury and wound') does not escape the maturing girl at the point of menarche. Instead, women's association with an abject and an out of control status is amplified at the point of menarche. In this sense menarche marks the point at which menstruating women become regulated by a cultural context that shrouds their fecundity in stigma and taboo (Ussher 2006).

Several studies conducted in resource poor contexts confirm the aforementioned associations between constructions of menstruation and idealized femininity (see, Casteneda et al., 1996; Kirk & Sommer; 2006; Sommer, 2009). For instance, a study by Casteneda et al., (1996), which examined beliefs surrounding menstruation in rural Mexico, captures this link. The authors found that menstruation related beliefs are largely linked it to idealized notions of femininity, specifically relating it to a woman's fertility and ability to reproduce. Added to this, menstrual blood was seen as the "supremely feminine substance", both revered and detested by the participants: revered due to its association with fertility and detested due to its association with the 'unclean' (Casteneda et al., 1996).

A study by Kirk and Sommer (2006), conducted in the sub-Saharan context makes specific reference to menarchal experiences and their links with broader constructions of gender. Within this context, they found that menarche symbolizes a loss of the freedom enjoyed in childhood, as the maturing girl is ascribed certain cultural duties

associated with her new status of womanhood. For instance, Kirk and Sommer (2006) found that the onset of menarche symbolized a girl's readiness for marriage and her duty to engage in the practices of traditional womanhood (childrearing and other domestic duties). These findings are further confirmed by Sommer's (2009) study of school-going girls in Tanzania who reported feeling an enormous pressure to conform to constructions of traditional femininity at the stage of menarche (i.e., demonstrating fertility, childrearing and submission to male authority).

There have also been links drawn between broader cultural discourses surrounding idealized femininity and experiences of premenstrual distress. For instance, Ussher (2004) argues that PMS should not be labelled as the root of women's anger and distress. Rather, one should look at constructions of hegemonic and idealized femininity in order to understand premenstrual distress. Perz and Ussher (2006) found that women practice self-silencing in order to meet the unrealistic standards of idealized femininity where women are expected to remain in control and self-sacrificing. By women conforming to this feminine norm, they are suppressing emotional turmoil and avoiding conflict. The argument here is that premenstrual change would be experienced differently if women rejected the tenets of idealized femininity and instead focused on the legitimacy of their expressions and desires (Ussher, 2004). Gendered norms associated with idealized femininity such as "over-responsibility, unrealistic expectations of perfection, self-renunciation, and self-sacrifice" (Ussher, 2004, p. 268) should therefore be challenged.

The links between menstruation and constructions of idealized femininity, although sparse, are clearly highlighted within the literature. As Ussher (2006) so aptly states, "menarche marks the point at which a girl becomes a woman; when childhood innocence may be swapped for a mantle of monstrosity..." (p. 19). This 'mantle of monstrosity', as Ussher describes, is further regulated by broader structures of patriarchy – to which the discussion now turns.

2.6.   Men's Perceptions of, and Actions Concerning, Menstruation

There have been no studies (to my knowledge) done in the Sub-Saharan context that have rigorously examined the perceptions of men in relation to menstruation. Specifically, there is a gap in the literature regarding the discursive positions men adopt when talking about menstruation with other men. The literature that is available on menstruation in resource poor contexts makes minor references to men's

perceptions and actions concerning menstruation. In one particular study, McMahon et al., (2011) noted many cases of verbal abuse from male students (cases that were directly observed by the researcher). Common phrases used to demean menstruating school girls included: "so make a home", "go get married" and, "you have visitors" (p. 5). Similarly, in a report by FAWE (2004) school going girls reported being afraid of being teased by male learners. Added to this it was found that living with the anticipatory anxiety of being teased greatly affected the girls' level of concentration in class and their ability to perform well at school (FAWE, 2004).

A few studies do exist in American and European literature that examine commonly held perceptions and attitudes of men towards menstruation. This brief discussion provides an overview of the relevant literature that I was able to find and access. Numerous studies have revealed that there are gendered differences in perceptions of menstruation (Forbes et al., 2003; Gunn & Ruble, 1986; Marvan et al., 2008). A study done by Forbes et al., (2003) aimed at understanding perceptions of menstruating women among university students. The ratings done by both men and woman revealed remarkable differences. It was found that men described menstruating women as: annoying, unreasonable, unclean, disagreeable, spiteful, unreliable, dependable, and lacking in creativity during their menses. Alternatively, menstruating women perceived themselves and other menstruating women as being trustworthy and maternal. However, a study by Gunn and Ruble (1986) found that men and women's perceptions of menstruation and other menstruating women were in fact similar (specifically in terms of menstrual symptomology). However, the men viewed menstruation as a debilitating condition whereas the women in the study did not hold the same view. These studies, therefore, seem to suggest that men describe premenstrual change and menstruation in a remarkably different way than women, and often choose to construct menstruating women in demeaning ways.

Other studies have shed light on how men behave toward menstruating women and react towards menstruation in general. This is shown in a study done by Roberts et al. (2002) in an experiment designed to assess the reactions of participants to a woman who inadvertently dropped a tampon from her handbag. It was found that male college students exhibited negative reactions towards the woman who dropped the tampon, and saw her as incompetent and unlikeable. The participants also tended to

psychologically and physically avoid the 'women who was suspected to be menstruating' (Roberts et al., 2002).

Reflecting on the views that men hold of menstruation and the behavior they display toward menstruating women, Gunn and Ruble (1986) argue that men are drawing on broader cultural discourses surrounding femininity and the fecund body. Evidence of this is best presented through the number of studies that have explored the ways men position their intimate partners as a result of premenstrual change (see Perz & Ussher, 2009; Ussher, Perz & Mooney-Somers, 2007; Ussher, 2004, 2006, 2011; Young, 2005). In one of these studies, Ussher (2011) argues that due to cultural constructions of premenstrual women, men rhetorically separate the PMS and non-PMS self (i.e., the 'good' and 'bad' woman). In this way, any natural irregularities in mood and behavior are immediately attributed to premenstrual change and as a result are nullified and diminished. In other words, studies have shown that women's emotions, concerns and desires are often negated because they are attributed to the pathology of PMS (Ussher, 2004). Ussher (2011) states that these men are merely "reproducing negative cultural discourses about the 'monstrous feminine' – the premenstrual mad/bad women who must be contained, controlled or rejected" (p. 176). This is similar to Swann's (1997) identification of a dualistic discourse that is frequently drawn on in relation to premenstrual change. Arguing within a discursive framework, Swann (1997) noted how there is often a contrast drawn between the 'premenstrual self' and the 'normal self' in everyday conversations regarding menstruation and premenstrual change. This dynamic, as Ussher (2011) argues, legitimates a lack of intimate partner support and in her specific sample, contributed to relationship dissatisfaction.

2.7.   Conclusion

Based on the available literature, I concur with Ussher's (2006) assertion that women's bodies have long been positioned as abject, out of control and monstrous. Although women may have been afforded equal rights in society, it is clear from the literature that they are still associated with their uncontained biological processes which position them as abject and 'sullied' (Ussher, 2006). I began this chapter by providing an overview of the structural inequalities evident in menstruation related management in the sub-Saharan context and other resource poor areas. I then closely examined the literature available on the experiences of women who menstruate, by drawing on both local and international research. My aim was then to work towards providing a broader

context in which menstruation is conceptualized and experienced. I discussed the historical myths and beliefs surrounding menstruation by investigating the oppressive practices and injunctions of many of the world's major religions. I then argued that advancements in medical science did little to circumvent these historical myths and beliefs, which have been reproduced through contemporary medical and psychological discourses. My intention here was to highlight that the experiences of menstruating women are complexly influenced by the broader discursive context which they inhabit and gendered regimes in which they are located. With this as a foundation, it was shown how menstruating women draw on cultural discourses surrounding menstruation and the female body in order to make sense of their menses. This then followed into a discussion on the gendered differences in perceptions of menstruating women, and the ways in which men discursively position and construct menstruating women through everyday talk. It was then shown how these differences of opinion and the meanings attached to menstruation are informed by broader systems of patriarchy, and the general subordination of women in society. With this as a foundation, the next chapter includes an overview of hegemonic masculinity in the South African context and the historical influences, which have shaped these constructions.

CHAPTER 3: MASCULINITIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1. Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I discussed how masculinities are not natural attributes but collective identities that are socially constructed, and exist within a hierarchical arrangement, where hegemonic masculinity emerges as the most culturally exalted and honoured way of being a man. This gender hierarchy serves to bolster men's privileged position in society and legitimates a system of patriarchy characterized by the subordination of women and other forms of masculinities. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), it is more accurate to speak of hegemonic masculinities in the plural rather than referring to a single hegemonic masculinity in which all men in all societies strive to embody. Instead, it has been shown that there are a plurality of hegemonic masculinities, which involve different configurations of practices generated in particular situations. The existence of different hegemonic masculinities is not an automatic construction, but involves a constant state of resistance and change which is not necessarily violent, but maintained through the active subordination and marginalisation of women and other constructions of masculinity. The process of one definition of hegemonic masculinity becoming hegemonic is a complex and historically constituted progression that is in a constant state of change and resistance (Morrell, 1998).

The following discussion highlights the plurality of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa and how these have been historically constituted. An understanding of the plurality of masculinities in the South African context is important in this research for two main reasons. Firstly, this research was conducted in a resource poor context in the Eastern Cape. Secondly, one of the research questions deals specifically with hegemonic masculine ideals that are highlighted in relevant South African literature. This section will, therefore, provide the reader with an understanding of hegemonic masculinities within this context. I begin this discussion by highlighting the broad usage of the concept of hegemonic masculinity within previous South African research and comment tentatively on the various misuses of the concept. I then provide an overview of historical constructions of masculinity within the South African context, and discuss the various ways in which 'traditional' African masculinity has been disrupted. The discussion then turns to the various ideals and characteristics of 'black' hegemonic masculinity, which have been identified in previous South African research and I end

this chapter by highlighting some of the ways that more equitable constructions of masculinity are emerging.

3.2. Hegemonic Masculinity in the South African Context

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has found much favour in South African research since the 1990s. It has principally been employed to provide an explanation for the country's high levels of violence and to broaden understandings of gender inequality (Morrell et al., 2013). The concept has further been employed in education in order to understand how the patriarchal manifestations of school gender regimes can be better understood. Another significant area in which hegemonic masculinity, as a theoretical framework, has been employed is in understanding issues relating to health (specifically within the context of the HIV/AIDs epidemic). This broad usage and the concepts multidimensional framework has led to it being taken up in a number of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history and epidemiology, with each discipline providing a particular emphasis (Morrell et al., 2013).

The utilisation of the concept has however, often been theoretically incomplete and contradictory in this research. Firstly, researchers have inadequately employed the concept of hegemonic masculinity by using it interchangeably with successful masculinities, heroic masculinities and dominant masculinities (Morrell et al., 2013). This conflation of the concept is indicative of an underdeveloped understanding of Connell's conceptualisation of the concept. Heroic, successful and dominant masculinities, although associated with typical constructions of hegemonic masculinity, fail to capture the complexity of the concept.

Secondly, in much of this research, hegemonic masculinity has become synonymous with problematic male attitudes and behaviour characterized by violence, substance abuse and risky sexual behaviours (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). In this way, researchers have tended to focus on the negative constructions of hegemonic masculinity, ignoring the more equitable and 'positive' definitions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Morrell et al., 2013). The often partial and sometimes erroneous utilisation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in this previous research is understandable, as the multicultural and historically divided nature of South Africa does not lend itself to an easy usage of the concept (Morrell et al., 2013). For instance, there is a plurality of hegemonic masculinities that differ

according to: race, socio-economic position, sexual orientation, location (e.g., urban versus rural) etc., which have made the application of the concept difficult.

Robert Morrell (1998) has provided one of the more comprehensive overviews of masculinity and gender relations highlighted in previous South African research. Morrell identified a plurality of different constructions of masculinities in these studies and identified at least three of these as hegemonic. Morrell (1998) identified: a "white'[3] hegemonic masculinity (represented in the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class); an 'African' rurally based hegemonic masculinity that was perpetuated through indigenous institutions (such as chiefship and customary law) and finally a "black' masculinity that emerged in the context of urbanization and the development of geographically separate and culturally distinct African townships.

In line with Connell and Messerschmidt;s (2005) proposed framework, the identification of 'white', 'African' and 'black' hegemonic masculinities can be understood theoretically as representing 'regional masculinities' (those at the cultural level) that inform the social practices of men at the local level. The intricacies and interconnections between regional and local hegemonic masculinities remains unexplored in South African research. Space does not permit a discussion of the possible inner workings of these relationships, which is irrelevant in the context of this study.

One reason for the irrelevancy of a discussion of the inner workings of these relationships is that the participants in my research are predominantly black males. The following discussion will, therefore, focus specifically on how 'black' hegemonic masculinity has been historically constituted. 'White' masculinity will be employed to refer to the dominant regional hegemonic masculinity that was supported politically (through the Apartheid regime), historically (through the colonial era) and which acted as the ideological model in which African and black masculinities were subordinated and marginalized. A brief discussion of what 'black' masculinity may look like in the present is also included in order to understand the kinds of hegemonic masculine

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[3] I use the terms 'white' and 'black' here as it is the reflected views of the cited authors. The use of these terms seems to be based on the assumption that race is a fixed biological category and thus homogenizes groups of people. The use of apostrophes for these terms is to signify that race should rather be seen as a social construct instead of a biological difference alone.

ideals that regulate men's behaviour and discursive practices in South Africa as well as in the participants" lives in this research. When applying Connell's framework of masculinity to the South African context the emergence of the country's racially and socioeconomically divided gender hierarchy must be understood if the concept of hegemonic masculinity is to be utilized effectively (Morrell et al., 2013). The following discussion includes a summary of South Africa's gendered history.

3.3. South Africa's Gendered History

According to Mager (1998), African (specifically Xhosa) masculinity revolved around the language of war and a man's readiness and willingness to engage in battle. This was reinforced by traditional cultural practices such as stick fighting (a practice in which boys were encouraged to participate from a young age) (Gqola, 2007; Mager, 1998). Hegemonic masculinity within traditional African culture was therefore characterized by boys/men who embodied warlike attitudes and were ready to defend their clan and compete with rivals. Specific qualities such as strength and bravery, therefore, became tokens of African hegemonic masculinity (Mager, 1998).

Historically there has also been a stark contrast between boyhood and manhood in 'traditional'[4] African (specifically Xhosa) constructions of masculinity. This is reinforced through cultural practices such as *ulwaluko* (traditional circumcision) which acted as a rite of passage from boyhood into manhood (Mager, 1998). *Ulwaluko*, a cultural ritual still widely practiced in the Eastern Cape, involves a group of boys trained in *isiko* (Xhosa law) who are then circumcized to symbolize their transition into manhood. Newly circumcized boys are then expected to take on and perform traditional notions of masculinity. For instance, newly circumcised men are expected to be powerful and exert their newly earned male power, over younger (uncircumcised) boys and women. They are also expected to lay down their sticks, as this was considered the domain of boys and rather focus on observing the *isiko* (Xhosa law) (Mager, 1998). Boys that chose to rebel against the cultural tradition of *ulwaluko* are often immediately marginalized and never acknowledged and/or recognized as 'real' men. Instead they

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[4] The word 'traditional' is placed in parentheses as I am aware that it homogenizes practices and creates a potential bifurcation between the traditional and the modern. As this discussion reports on previous research conducted on masculinity in South Africa, the term's employment is unavoidable as it reflects the views of the cited authors.

are marked as 'boys' and denied their right to marry (as women according to culture traditions cannot marry 'boys') (Gqola, 2007).

'Traditional' African masculinity was also characterized by heteronormativity and the subordination of women. Boys were encouraged to engage in sexual play with multiple partners, but when they become men they were expected to choose and carefully consider a single woman for marriage (Mager, 1998). This relationship was often characterized by violence and abuse where men were expected to assert dominance over their wives (Mager, 1998). Added to this, any hint of independence from women was often crushed through violent means, as these men felt threatened by this (Morrell, 1998).

In traditional African masculinity, an 'ideal boy' was, therefore, characterized by his: bravery, strength, ability to stick fight and war like disposition; while the ideal man was expected to be knowledgeable and exercise restraint in the *isiko*. This was traditional cultural template in which constructions of African hegemonic masculinities arose (Mager, 1998).

3.4. The Disruption of Traditional African Masculinity

The imposition of colonialism introduced a new political system and rapid societal change that had a profound impact on these traditional African masculinities. According to Morrell (1998) white masculinities in the post-colonial era included a complex blend of Afrikaner and English masculinities (the dynamics of which remain unclear). What is known at the time (early 1930's) is that white men were "predominantly employers, law makers, decision makers, heads of households, possessors of bank-accounts or in income generating positions" (Morrell, 1998, p. 619). This privileged position led to the creation of racially exclusive and authoritarian constructions of hegemonic 'white masculinity'. This 'white masculinity' provided oppressive cultural ideals and a patriarchal order that reinforced broader gender inequality. 'White' masculinity was politically reinforced and its hegemony had a profound effect on traditional African masculinity (Morrell, 1998). For instance, white masculinity embodied oppositional cultures such as institutionalized Christianity which disrupted traditional African masculinity. The church forbade cultural practices such as stick fighting and community rivalry, and instead promoted a more peaceful construction of masculinity based on practices such as learning, hard work and participation in the market place (Mager, 1998; Morrell, 1998). The church also

promoted the idea that homosexual practices were illegal, deviant and immoral (Morrell, 1998). Various Christian values and practices were, therefore, worked into the 'tapestry' of African masculinities leading to a redefinition of traditional African masculinities (Morrell, 1998).

At this point it is important to emphasize that even in spite of colonial rule and the more recent effects of the Second World War and the Apartheid era, elements of traditional African masculinity continued to exist. In this sense, colonial rule did not completely eradicate African masculinity; it merely disrupted it, causing new constructions of masculinities to emerge. Morrell (1998) contends that African masculinities still emerged within their own distinct gender regimes which, although interrelated, still retained a basic separation from the colonial white masculinities (Morrell, 1998). It is for this reason that it has been suggested that there is a 'patchwork of patriarchies' in South Africa, relating to the many different gender regimes that were all interrelated but yet still retained aspects of their original heritage (Morrell, 1998).

With growing political pressure brought about by the Apartheid regime, there was a drastic increase in urbanisation which led to the creation of an urban proletariat. This led to many black people leaving their homesteads and the countryside to search for work in urban areas. Morrell (1998) argues that it was around this time that aspects of traditional African masculinity metamorphosized into a new 'urban black masculinity'. This new urban black masculinity retained many of the aspects of a traditional African masculinity but took on a slightly different identity. For instance, these urban masculinities were working class masculinities that were no longer tied to traditional African kinship and chiefs and the countryside (Morrell, 1998). This was partly due to the laws of the Apartheid regime that prohibited black males from entering urban areas if they did not have jobs. Work was, therefore, a ticket into the city, and a means of financial independence (Morrell, 1998).

This working class black masculinity was related to white masculinity in hierarchical ways under the Apartheid regime. This is captured in the meaning of the word 'boy' in South African English which was a word often used by whites to refer to black employees. These black men were often required to do the menial work which required 'strong', 'energetic' and 'powerful' bodies (qualities that were eventually adopted by black men in the construction of their own gendered identities). The use of these

derogatory and condescending terms positioned black men as inferior to white men and the relationship between the white colonizer and black colonized became one characterized by emasculation (Morrell, 1998).

Morrell (1998) argues that the emasculation experienced by black men in urban areas (under the Apartheid regime) led to the construction of a number of violent and negative masculinities. These violent masculinities grew not only out of a response to the emasculation experienced by urban black men but out of a number of other socio-economic issues. For instance, urbanization disrupted family dynamics leading to children being raised without adequate parental support (Morrell, 1998). Added to this, the process of acquiring jobs and living in urban areas led to increased economic independence which subsequently led to many black men ignoring traditional African customs, such as prohibitions on sexual intercourse before marriage (Morrell, 1998). Even though there was a general disregard for traditional African customs, there also seemed to be a complex blending of traditional African masculinity and the new black urban masculinity. Mager (1998) argues that Xhosa boys held on to specific characteristics traditionally embodied within African masculinities such as the adoption of warlike attitudes, bravery and one's ability to fight (Mager, 1998). These traditional African notions were amalgamated into constructions of urban masculinities that exalted characteristics such as street wisdom, crime, flashy clothes and colloquial urban rhetoric (Glaser, 1998).

In light of these loose approximations to traditional warlike attitudes, many of these new 'urbanized' youth emerged as an 'anti-social force', becoming petty criminals or gangsters. The tsots[5]i gangs of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the Soweto gangs of the 1960s and 1970s were expressions of this new young 'urbanized' masculinity (Glaser, 1998). The tsotsis embodied an oppositional masculinity, deriving their masculinity from a combination of traditional African masculinities and transnational masculinities characterized by materialistic and consumerist Hollywood symbols and celebrities. The means by which the tsotsis asserted their masculinity was through violence and through opposition to the state (Morrell, 1998). Morrell (1998, p. 627) states that "the old idea central to African masculinity that being a man meant to be in

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[5] Typically referring to a young black urban criminal

control of oneself, not to resort to violence and to be wise was replaced with a tough masculinity."

The emergence of new black urban masculinities characterized by traditional African notions of masculinity such as toughness, independence and a readiness for war, and new urban expressions such as violence and material status make sense in light of the historical emasculation experienced by black men in South Africa. Morrell (1998) cautiously argues that the many attacks that were launched against white women in the Johannesburg area can partly be attributed to expressing the emasculation these men felt and their hatred towards the system of white dominance (Morrell, 1998).

Along these lines, Suttner (2007) provides a powerful critique of Connell's framework of masculinity arguing that it does not take into account contexts where masculinity has been denied in a racist political regime such as Apartheid. Connell (1995) does assert that there is a denial of masculinity in some cultures, but does not address situations where manhood is actually assaulted. Suttner (2007) argues that the assertion of black masculinity within South Africa can be understood as a struggle for freedom and a reclaiming of a masculinity that had previously been 'stolen' and historically subordinated. It is for this reason that "African masculinities are hegemonic and subordinate at the same time, a logical contradiction that is hard to resolve" (Ratele, 2014, p.118). Specifically, Ratele (2013) argues that black masculinity has become a subordinated construction of masculinity with the South African context as many young black men are unable to obtain the broader hegemonic ideals (such as financial wealth and social power) as these were historically stripped from them during the Apartheid Era. Although this exclusion has denied many young black men from meeting these ideals, Ratele claims that there has been an emergence of a variety hegemonic masculinities in the present South African context, to which the discussion now turns.

3.5. Hegemonic Black Masculinities in the Present

I begin this section by offering a 'snapshot' of the various constructions of black hegemonic masculinity, as outlined in previous South African research, which signify some of the ideals which men strive to embody in this broader context. According to these studies (as cited below), black hegemonic masculinity is associated with an embodiment of a number of ideals such as: promiscuity and sexual experience (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele, 2006; Ratele et al., 2007);

uncontrollable and virile male sexuality (Ratele, 2008); financial independence and the ability to 'provide' for family (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Ratele, 2001; Ratele et al., 2007; Salo, 2007); expressions of power and authority, where men should make decisions in their role as the 'head of the household' (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele, 2001, 2006; Sideris, 2004); body size and physical stature (Bhana, 2005); feeling proud of one's racial identity (Ratele, 2001); spiritual and psychological toughness (Ratele, 2008); having a family (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007); and defiance of institutional authority, within the school context (Bhana, 2005). In light of the broad characteristics of hegemonic masculinity identified in this aforementioned research, two other significant themes emerge. Firstly, hegemonic masculinities and their associated ideals, seem to relate to the degree to which men can maintain a distance from femininity and feminine practice. Secondly, these ideals are upheld and reinforced through blatant homophobia and appeals to heterosexuality. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

3.5.1. Distance from Femininity

A pertinent issue in much of this literature on constructions of masculine identity is how men frequently define themselves in relation to femininity, where those considered 'masculine men' are those who are able to distance themselves the most from femininity and feminine practice (see, Ratele et al., 2007). For instance, Sideris (2004) explored constructions of masculine identity in Mpumalanga, and found that men expressed a great deal of anxiety in relation to conducting household domestic duties (a typically feminine practice). More specifically, the men constructed domestic duties as a threat to masculine identity and involving themselves in these practices, was associated with the relinquishment of masculine identity. This theme is further shown, in Ratele et al's., (2010) study of adolescent boys in a number of schools in the Western Cape, which highlights the gendered division of labor in everyday discursive practices. In the study, the young men reflected on household chores and whose responsibility these are. In their accounts, they claimed that fixing leaks in the roof was acceptable masculine labor, whereas cooking for the family was a task reserved for women. The participants claimed that if men were to involve themselves in the process of cooking they should only assist, so as not to be seen as being responsible for these typically more feminine practices (Ratele et al. 2010).

A study by Bhana (2005), which explored the gendered negotiation of masculinity among young 6-10 year old Zulu speaking boys in Durban, reveals how this theme may relates to hierarchies of gender. The participants in the study, identified a marginalized/subordinated group of men referred to as *yimvu* boys. The *yimvu* boys were those who had willingly or unwillingly adopted a 'rebellious position' in relation to constructions of hegemonic masculinity. In the study, this rebellion was associated with *yimvu* boys expressing their emotions openly, being effeminate, and physically distancing themselves from those typically embodying more masculine ideals. As a result, these boys were often excluded from playing games like soccer and marbles and therefore faced the humiliation associated with this exclusion. Most importantly perhaps, Bhana (2005) suggested that the *yimvu* boys were marginalized and subordinated primarily due to their associations with the feminine.

3.5.2. Associations with Homosexuality

Bhana's (2005) study reveals an important aspect relating to configuration of gender practice within the South African context, and her findings echo Connell's (1995) initial understanding of how subordinate/marginalized masculinities are defined by their distance from and dis-identification with hegemonic masculinity. Constructions of masculinities, such as the *yimvu* boys, are therefore subordinated due to their identifications with femininity and distance from hegemonic masculinity, and their position within the gender hierarchy is reinforced as a result. This subordination, is further revealed in Ratele's (2014) study examining two cases of homophobia in Malawi. Ratele (2014) argues that an analysis of the subordinated status of homosexuality is important in gaining a fuller and more developed understanding of hegemonic masculinities within the South African context (Ratele, 2014).

In his examination of documented cases of homophobia, Ratele (2014) reveals how hegemonic African masculinities are unsettled by the existence of homosexuality and other 'nonheteronormative' sexualities (Ratele, 2014). Specifically, homosexuality is constructed as a threat to hegemonic masculinity, and therefore subordinated and/or marginalized. Ratele (2014) reveals how many men express a great deal of anxiety with regards to being perceived as 'gay' and discursively position themselves closer to hegemonic masculine ideals in order to ward off these feelings of anxiety. Ratele, argues elsewhere, that many men strive to 'prove their heterosexuality' through discursively emphasising typically more masculine characteristics (such as sexual

prowess and frequency) (Ratele et al., 2007; Ratele et al., 2010). Hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, associated with a rejection of homosexuality, and "the homosexual, then, is what a real African man is not." (Ratele, 2014, p. 118). Constructions of hegemonic masculinity within the South African context, characterized by maintaining a distance from femininity, and demonstrating homophobia therefore provide important insights into the hierarchies of gender. These studies further reveal how masculine identity is not a fixed, unitary and static essence, and instead has to be discursively 'done' and/or accomplished (Ratele, 2014).

3.6.   Alternative Masculinities in South Africa

In spite of the dominant hegemonic views in contemporary South Africa highlighted in the studies above, there is also evidence (in the same studies) of these hegemonic masculinities being contested. For instance, more positive constructions characterizing men who are loving, caring and committed to the welfare of their family are becoming more desirable (Ratele et al., 2007). Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) argue that these alternative masculinities seem to specifically promote positive values within the family context or home environment. For instance, Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) argue that there is some evidence to suggest that it is becoming more desirable for men to be more active in household duties, avoid getting drunk and assist their wives in the care of their children. The degree to which these alternative masculinities are displacing current models of hegemonic masculinity and in turn promoting positive hegemonic masculinities remains unclear.

In Suttner's (2007) exploration of masculinities in the recent ANC liberation movement, there is further evidence of alternative masculinities. Although, revolutionary and heroic masculinities were embodied in the struggle to reassert black masculine identities, there is also evidence of a great commitment and longing for family involvement in these movements. Suttner (2007) argues that political leaders such as Chris Hani humanized the struggle against oppression and emphasized the importance of men showing love, raising children and caring for their families in these challenging times. Chris Hani also encouraged men to share their emotions, concerns and bare one another's burdens through the struggle (Suttner, 2007). Within the ANC legacy there is, therefore, evidence of elements of traditional African masculinities (such as war-like attitudes, strength and bravery). Yet, at the same time, other constructions of masculinity within this movement were conducive to gender equality

(Suttner, 2007). However, Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) argue that views of more equitable constructions of masculinities are not embodied by recent political figures. They argue that the new political movement in South Africa embodies a masculinity that promotes violence, sexual entitlement, and patriarchy. This new masculinity is backward looking and stands in direct contrast to earlier more equitable constructions of masculinity advocated by historic public figures such as Nelson Mandela and Chris Hani (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012).

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how the current hierarchy of gender relations in South Africa emerged within a complex history of violence, struggle and oppressive political regimes. It has been argued that pre-colonial African masculinity defined a more peaceful and less violent form of masculinity. With the imposition of colonialism, a system of white rule violently interjected into the lives of black South Africans. Along with this colonial rule came a dominant form of white hegemonic masculinity at a regional level which governed over and marginalized African masculinities. In many ways, African masculinities incorporated aspects of white masculinities into their gendered tapestries, which did not destroy African masculinities but led to a redefinition of them that reflected aspects of a pre-colonial past. The new black masculinities emerged in the wake of the Apartheid regime and an increase in urbanization. In this way, black masculinity clung to its historic roots but incorporated violence and crime into its identity. The emergence of these (mostly negative) constructions of black masculinity can be understood as a struggle for freedom and the desperate need to reassert a masculinity that was stolen through political oppression and colonial rule.

After providing an overview of the core characteristics of black hegemonic masculinities in the present, I then identified how these revolve around two broader themes in the literature. Firstly, I argued that associations with femininity and feminine practice are constructed as a threat to masculine identity. Secondly, I identified how homosexuality seems to trouble 'traditional African' masculininites and how men discursively work to prove and assert their heterosexuality. Remembering that hegemonic masculinity represents an unattainable ideal for many men, this overview provided an understanding of how South African men may discursively 'jockey for position' in order to avoid "a charge of unmanliness, unnaturalness, or being a "moffie"

(Ratele, 2008, p. 35). However, my discussion of how the literature provided alternative constructions of masculinities which provides hope for more equitable notions of hegemonic was important. The discussion now turns to an in depth overview of the theoretical and masculinities framework informing this research, and a description of some of the research mechanics (including data collection, sampling, analysis proper and the ethical considerations adhered to).

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

I begin this chapter by highlighting the overarching research aims and the particular questions guiding this research. I then provide an overview of the discursive framework that was employed and discuss three core components of this analytical framework: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions (discussing each in turn). As this research is principally concerned with the ways that men talk about menstruation, and how this subsequently positions women and other men, Raewyn Connell's influential framework of masculinities will be drawn on in order to understand the ways in which men position themselves and others around the topic of menstruation. I provide an overview of Connell's approach by documenting the emergence of 'new' dynamic conceptualizations of masculinity that influenced the theoretical view of Connell, and subsequently informed the basis of her framework. This is followed by a critical discussion of Connell's framework of masculinity, and focuses on a number of core criticisms such as: its tendency towards reification (Speer, 2001), its failure to acknowledge the plurality, complexity, and contradictory nature of masculine experience (Moller, 2007), and its inability to explain how hegemonic masculinity actually prescribes or regulates men's lives (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This critical overview of Connell's framework then leads into a discussion highlighting Wetherell and Edley's (1997, 1998, 1999, 2014) contributions, which provide an important analytical lens through which to analyse the way men talk about menstruation.

After providing an overview of the theory and analytic approach guiding this research, I then highlight some of the logistical and mechanical aspects of the research including the demographics of the participants included in this study, the sampling technique employed and the way in which the data were collected. This builds into a discussion of the data analytic procedures employed, and how the discursive framework was applied in this research. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the various ethical considerations adhered to.

4.2. Research Questions/Aims

This study aims to investigate: the discourses employed by young men with regards to menstruation and the way these discourses serve to enable specific subject positions that may reproduce, comply with and/or resist hegemonic masculinity. In

order to adequately meet the aims of this research, the following questions will be used as a guide:

1. What discourses do young men employ when talking about menstruation in a focus group context and with their male peers?
2. What masculine and feminine subject positions do these discourses enable?
3. How do these discourses and subject positions reproduce, comply with or resist hegemonic masculinity ideals as outlined in previous South African research?

4.3. Discursive Framework

Staying true to the aims of this research, I utilize Potter and Wetherell's (1987) perspective on discourse analysis which they have referred to as discursive analysis in which to analyse my data. To bolster the analysis, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) earlier work will be augmented by Wetherell and Edley's (1997, 1998, 1999, 2014) collaborative research on the reproduction and 'accomplishment' of masculinity, conducted within a similar framework (this will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). Macleod (2002) argues that discourse analysis is not an uncontested methodology that can be applied in an uncontested manner. Discourse analysis is a fluid methodology that is constantly being reshaped and reproduced in methodological practices and discussions (Macleod, 2002).

Potter and Wetherell's approach to discursive analysis is strongly influenced by speech act theory, ethnomethodology, post-structuralism and semiotics (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Language was traditionally seen as existing intra-psychically, as a system of meanings derived at the individual level. However, discursive analysis rejects the basic presupposition that language is an "abstract, essentially referential system" or a "neutral, transparent medium between the social actor and the world", which can be taken at face value (Edley, 2001, p.190). Rather the discursive framework highlights the considerable variability in individual accounts which do not form part of the coherent, consistent image of language previously held onto (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Instead, the action and outcome orientated nature of language is emphasized, arguing that people are, at the same time, "both the products and producers of discourse, the masters and the slaves of language" (Edley, 2001, p.190; Potter et al., 1990; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Emphasis on the action and outcome orientated nature of language is important because the complexity and variability inherent in everyday conversation serves specific functions, which construct a particular version of social reality (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For instance, an individual recounting an event may change their perspective and 'stance' on a particular issue multiple times, depending on the context and whom they are addressing. This variability, according to Edley (2001), and the function it serves, is of particular interest to researchers conducting discursive analyses. Added to this, the variability in the language we use and the social actions we perform are historically embedded (Edley, 2001). In this sense, the linguistic resources we draw on in everyday conversation are largely constrained/informed but our socio-cultural context and broader historical context.

On a practical level, discursive psychology is not principally concerned with the micro-instances of a participant's accounts including metaphors, figures of speech, grammatical choices (although these are important). Rather the approach outlines the broader theories and themes that form part of the participant's worldview and shared inter-subjectivity (Wetherell et al, 1987). Typically, a discursive analysis must highlight how discourse is both constructed (linguistic building blocks: words, categories, idioms, repertoires that create a certain version of the world) and constructive (these versions of the world are a product of the talk itself) (Wiggins & Potter, 2007). Secondly, analysis must highlight how discourse is action orientated (talk and texts are the primary mediums for social action) (Wiggins & Potter, 2007). Lastly, discursive analysis must investigate how discourse is situated (words are understood according to what precedes and follows them). In other words, individual utterances that occur are context specific and rhetorically situated, within a particular argumentative framework (Wiggins & Potter, 2007). To achieve these broad aims, there are three concepts that lie at the heart of discursive psychology: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. (Edley, 2001). Each of these will be discussed in turn.

4.3.1. Interpretative Repertoires

As discussed earlier, adopting a discursive framework allows the researcher to account for the variability inherent in the everyday use of language. However, Potter and Wetherell (1987) do not go as far as to say that there is no regularity in language at all. Rather, they argue that the internal consistency found in language can be found

in units which they refer to as interpretative repertoires. Interpretative repertoires have been defined as "broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions, common-places, and figures of speech often clustered around metaphors or vivid images and often using distinct grammatical constructions and styles" (Potter et al., 1990, p. 212). In describing the concept of interpretative repertoires, Edley (2001) argues that they can be thought of as books on the shelf of a public library to which every citizen has access, and which can permanently be borrowed and drawn upon. In this sense, conversations are complex patchworks of culturally shared statements from a number of interpretative repertoires.

It is for this reason that the term interpretative repertoire is closely linked to the previously discussed conceptualizations of discourse. Edley (2001) claims that the difference between the terms 'discourse' and 'interpretative repertoire' comes down to "a matter of disciplinary ring-fencing" (p. 192). For instance, the concept of discourse is often used within a Foucauldian framework and are seen as constructing entire institutions, such as medicine. Interpretative repertoires, on the other hand, place more emphasis on human agency and the flexibility and variability inherent in the use of language (Edley, 2001). According to Wetherell (1998), the term interpretative repertoire is an attempt to capture the 'doxic' nature of discourse as it is a term that encapsulates a "culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognizable themes, common places and tropes (doxa)" (p. 400). However, Wetherell and Potter (1988) argue that the concept of interpretative repertoires, should not replace previous theories of discourse and should rather be seen as an added component in the systematic study of discourse.

On a practical level, the interpretative repertoire is one of the basic analytic units in discursive analysis (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). For instance, in an interview transcript certain figures of speech, metaphors and grammatical maneuvers will reoccur. The analyst's identification of these common threads of language use will signal the employment of a particular interpretative repertoire (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). Once a number interpretative repertoires have been isolated, the analyst must investigate the particular functions that they serve within the conversation (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). For example, a community repertoire can be characterized by a set of words describing a style of cohesive social relationships. Particular words such as 'relationships', 'closeness', 'integration' and 'friendliness' signal the use of a

community repertoire. Similarly, metaphors such as: 'close-knit', 'growth' and 'evolution', further signal the use of this interpretive repertoire (Potter et al, 1990). A community repertoire can function to support group cohesiveness and unity and by implication be used to delineate certain cultural groups from others. The identification of this repertoire within the context it is used will aid is in ascertaining what function it serves (Wetherell, 1998).

4.3.2. Ideological Dilemmas

The second important concept in discursive analysis is that of 'ideological dilemmas', which made its first appearance in the book with the same title by Billig et al., (1988). The concept provides an alternative understanding of the classic Marxist definitions and conceptualizations of ideology, which understood ideologies as "well integrated and coherent sets of ideas that served to represent the domination of ruling sections of society as natural or inevitable" (Edley, 2001, p. 202). The concept of ideological dilemmas within a discursive framework, creates a distinction between 'intellectual ideologies' (resembling a Marxist understanding of ideology) and 'lived ideologies'. Essentially, lived ideologies capture the common sense cultural understandings that individuals draw on in everyday conversation. A core component here is that 'lived ideologies' are inconsistent, fragmented and contradictory. Individuals do not draw on common sense understandings in a unitary way, and instead our lived ideologies are 'flexible resources' that we draw on in every day sense making (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998).

In this research, Billig et al.'s (1988), concept of ideological dilemmas will be drawn on to understand how the relationship between the participants' everyday accounts may echo broader lived ideologies around gender and menstruation. The concept of ideological dilemmas, as its name suggests, will highlight the contradictory nature of these lived ideologies, and how these common-sense understandings have a dilemmatic or two-sided quality. A practical example of an ideological dilemma is provided by Edley and Wetherell (1999) in their work on the 'imagined futures' of men. The data reveal an ideological dilemma of work versus family. Here the male participants are caught between apparently opposing desires of wanting an income, yet at the same time wanting to spend time with their families. In the extracts, some of the participants saw these as mutually exclusive and opposing ideals, and were caught in an ideological field of negotiation. The identification of such a dilemma reveals how

lived ideologies create various ideological dilemmas and form part of our everyday conversation and sense making.

4.3.3. Subject Positions

The third concept relevant in conducting a discursive analysis is that of subject positions. In everyday interactions, people draw on a range of intersecting discourses that have a number of important effects. To understand these effects in everyday life, Davies and Harré (1990) argue that the discourses people draw on in everyday interactions invoke certain images, metaphors and story lines that inform their views of themselves and others which are referred to as 'subject positions'. To reiterate, discourses provide us with ways of describing people in a particular way such as feminine/masculine, and healthy/unhealthy (Burr, 1995). These particular ways of describing oneself and others, by drawing on various prevailing discourses, make available numerous subject positions which can either be accepted or resisted. It is this process of resistance or acceptance of subject positions in everyday conversation that brings discourses to life. Our everyday conversations with people go beyond just the immediate social context, and these exchanges represent important arenas in which identities become constructed and power relations played out (Burr, 1995). When an individual takes up a particular subject position, that person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position (Davies & Harré, 1990; Parker, 1997, 2002; Shotter, 1989).

Davies and Harré (1990) argue that subject positions shape and constrain what we do; they inform our behaviour, the language we use, and the extent to which our voices are heard and our opinions count. Subject positions also inform our subjectivity, providing us with our sense of self and the identities we take on, ascribing to us various rights, obligations and expectations (Davies & Harré, 1990). Within these positions, we become emotionally invested and develop appropriate systems of morality in order to support them. As Burr (1995) so aptly states, "our sense of who we are and what it is therefore possible and not possible for us to do, what it is right and appropriate for us to do, and what it is wrong and inappropriate for us to do, all derive from our occupation of subject positions within discourse" (p. 146).

Within a discursive framework, Edley (2001, p. 210) argues that subject positions can be defined as "locations within a conversation", that make particular identities relevant in the social construction of selves. In this sense, the concept of subject positions will

make sense of the discursive construction, and accomplishment of masculine identity. It will reveal how men, in everyday conversation, have a range of social identities that they can draw on to construct themselves, which are largely historically and contextually determined, and within a constant state of fluidity (Wetherell, 1998). For instance, young men in South Africa may be drawing on a paternalistic repertoire in their interactions with women which may be unintentionally/intentionally positioning women in subordinated or inferior ways. Another practical example is provided by Hollway (1984, as cited in Burr, 1995) who identified the 'male-sexual-drive' discourse which suggests that a male sexuality arises out of his biological drive. Sex is, therefore, constructed as an urge that needs to be satisfied, which often positions women as 'objects' of a males natural biological drives. A man that continuously adopts this subject position allows this discourse to inform the nature of his subjectivity and the subsequent way he positions women (Burr, 1995). If these discourses/repertoires are not recognized and the positions they makes available are not resisted and made known, they will maintain their hegemony (Davies & Harré, 1990).

4.4. Masculinities Framework

The discussion begins by documenting the emergence of 'new' dynamic conceptualizations of masculinity that influenced the theoretical view of Connell, and subsequently informed the basis of her framework. I then provide an overview of Connell's framework, showing how her initial formulation received a range of criticisms that eventually led to a re-formulation of hegemonic masculinity. This overview then leads into a discussion highlighting Wetherell and Edley's contributions, which provide an analytical method in which to understand how hegemonic masculinity is employed in everyday talk.

4.4.1. The Emergence of 'New' Masculinity Literature

Connell (1995) introduced a ground breaking and dynamic re-conceptualization of masculinity that developed out of a growing dissatisfaction with sex role theory and other essentialist theories of gender. Much of the prior research on gender was located in what was called the socio-biological framework, which argued that gender arose as a result of the complex combination of an individual's biological predisposition (behaviour coded in the genes or a result of hormones) and process of socialization (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This framework assumed that there were two distinct 'roles' within society, a masculine role and a feminine role

that are stable, unitary and continuous (West & Zimmerman, 1987). A theory that encapsulated this socio-biological framework and dominated prior research on gender was called, 'sex role theory'. Sex role theory argued that people learn their roles, just like actors, and then perform these roles under social pressure. These specific roles are conveyed to boys and girls growing up, and are then assimilated into their gendered behaviour and identity (Connell, 2001). The 'roles' that became assimilated and learned by men/women were largely the result of an internalization of various cultural norms of what it means to be a man or a woman (Connell, 2001). Within this framework, these internalized sex roles were seen as normal, healthy and necessary social functions that men and women should embody (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Connell moved away from the essentialism and theoretical inadequacy of sex role theory for a number of important reasons: its inability to acknowledge and understand how power is part of wider social dynamics (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985; Connell, 1995, 1996, 2001; Demetriou, 2001), the conceptualization of gender identities and roles as being fixed, incontestable and unchanging (Connell, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987), its drastic oversimplification of gender identity (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985), its heteronormative foundations (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985), its inability to account for multiple masculinities that are culturally specific and historically constructed (Connell, 1996), its reinforcement of a dominant political agenda that serves to normalize the subordination of women in society (Connell, 1995), the inability of sex role theory to understand change and resistance as a 'dialectic' within gender relations, instead of something enacted out from elsewhere (such as technological change) (Connell, 1995), its tendency toward 'categoricalism' which limits gender into two homogenous categories that are not representative of social reality, and the failure to account for race, class and structure within these categories (Connell, 1995). For Connell (1995), masculinity should no longer be conceptualized in fixed and rigid ways (as a set of norms, natural behavioural characteristics or innate character types).

Connell drew on a number of theories in order to formulate her masculinities framework. Firstly, she used a combination of the feminist critique and the theoretical work of the gay liberation movement both of which challenged many of the traditional assumptions espoused by sex role theory, such as its fundamental neglect of power (i.e., how the subordination of women is linked with the hierarchical struggle of men) (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985). Secondly, Connell drew on the psychoanalytic theory

of androgyny that was popularized in the 1970's, which held the view that men and women had a complex mixture of both masculine and feminine characteristics (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985). Lastly, Joseph Pleck's influential work in the late 1970's aided Connell's understanding of gender as fluid and constantly changing over the lifespan (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985).

Drawing on these aforementioned theories and critiques, Connell introduced a more dynamic conceptualization of masculinity, arguing that masculinities do not have some kind of pre-existence that is an intrinsically fixed and stable essence. Rather an individual's construction of masculinity comes into existence as they act and perform. Connell, therefore, conceptualized masculinities as enacted patterns of social practice that are accomplished in everyday conduct and communication (Connell, 1996, 2001). As West and Zimmerman (1987) concluded, we 'do gender'. In this way, a great deal of effort goes into constructing and maintaining one's masculine identity (think of the effort of bodybuilders in the gym) (Connell, 2001). When we speak of masculinity and femininity, we are referring to configurations of gender practice that are not isolated to the individual but are rather collective social practices, projects and performances that we use to make ourselves (Connell, 2001). Masculinity is, therefore, not an intrinsic or biological entity but is rather socially constructed, fluid, and context specific. In this view, there is no universal masculinity but instead a broad plethora of different constructions of masculinity (Connell, 1995). Connell's (1995) framework, therefore, highlights the "multiple, local, fragmented and highly contextual nature of gender identities" (p. 159).

However, Connell (1995) argues that a recognition of the diverse and fragmented nature of masculinities is not enough, as we must also recognize the relationships between these different types of masculinities, specifically relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. To account for this, Connell (1995) introduces the term hegemonic masculinity to provide a framework to understand these relations of power and the subsequent hierarchical gender structure produced by them in society. With the introduction of the term hegemonic masculinity, Connell is able to grasp the complex and dynamic nature of femininities and masculinities, the power relationships between and within genders, and the possibility of change and resistance (Wetherell & Edley, 1998). As Demetriou (2001, p. 339) so aptly states; "the concept of

hegemonic masculinity, embodies Connell's critique of sex role theory while it is also the qualitative transcendence of it."

4.4.2. Hegemonic and Other Masculinities

Connell (1995) draws on Gramsci's notion of hegemony in her conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony refers to "the ability to impose a definition of a situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues are discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 644). Gramsci's concept of hegemony is, therefore, a useful concept that embodies the cultural dynamic that a certain group uses to maintain power over other groups in society. This hegemony does not imply violence, as it is often persuasively achieved through consent rather than through aggression (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Speer, 2001). For example, the ruling classes can maintain their power through legitimating a certain definition of a situation (such as what it means to be a man) which as a result is viewed as natural and ordinary by society (Connell, 1995).

Connell (1995) argues that in the same way one definition or form of masculinity can become culturally exalted over other forms of masculinity, that, in turn, creates a hierarchy of gender relations where hegemonic masculinity emerges as the most culturally desired or honoured way of being a man, or the most powerful form of masculinity within that context (Connell, 1995). Connell (1995, p. 77) defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer of the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." This configuration of gender practice legitimates male dominance not only over women, but over alternative forms of masculinity (such as gay or effeminate masculinity).

Connell's (1995) conceptualization of masculinity is, therefore, built on a hierarchical understanding of gender, which positions men in relation to one another under hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Within this hierarchy of gender, Connell (1995) expanded the idea of multiple masculinities to reveal how men position themselves in relation to other men, in the form of complicit, subordinate and marginal masculinities. These positions are all defined in relation to hegemonic masculinity, with complicit masculinity defined by its identification with hegemonic standards, and subordinate

and marginal masculinities defined by their distance from and dis-identification with hegemonic standards (Connell, 1995).

As the most culturally honoured version of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity symbolises an unattainable ideal for most (if not all) men. Connell (1995) acknowledges this, arguing that most men are unlikely to ever fully embody hegemonic masculinity. However, she argues that men are still regulated by it and judge other men's conduct according to its ideals. Connell employs the term 'complicit masculinity' to refer to the men who do not specifically embody hegemonic masculinity but instead gain from what she calls its 'patriarchal dividend' (i.e. men's privileged position in society) (Connell, 1995). There is a distance and a tension between the collective ideal (hegemonic masculinity) and the actual everyday lives of men. Although many men cannot live up to these hegemonic masculine standards (depicted in the media and embodied by sports stars for instance), they are complicit in sustaining and reproducing this hegemony (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985). For example, Connell (1995) argues that complicit masculinity can be understood as the difference between rugby players that actually run onto the field and those that sit cheering from the side-lines. The supporters applaud an exalted version of masculinity (the rugby players) even though they do not embody the ideals themselves. The very act of positioning themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity passively sustains and reproduces its ideals (Demetriou, 2001).

Those who dis-identify and distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity are associated with what Connell (1995) refers to as subordinated and marginalized masculinities. To reiterate, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is centrally linked to the subordination not only of women but of other styles of masculinity such as effeminate masculinity or gay masculinity (Connell, 1995; Demetriou, 2001). It is these forms of effeminate and gay masculinities that often become subordinated under the version of masculinity that is honoured in a particular context. Those who are subordinated are often called names that are blurred with femininity such as 'sissy', 'ladyfinger', 'pantywaist' and 'mother's boy' (Connell, 1995). When gender affects broader social structures such as class and race, it can lead to what Connell refers to as marginalized masculinities. These marginalized masculinities depend on what type of hegemonic masculinity has been authorized by the dominant cultural group. An

example is the marginalization of African masculinity in the wake of politically dominant 'white' masculinities during the Apartheid era in South Africa (Morrell, 1998).

What is important is that these terms (hegemonic masculinity, subordinate/ marginalized masculinity and complicit masculinity) are not fixed character types or arrangements of gender (Connell, 1995). Rather these masculinities are constantly shifting, changing and being contested (Connell, 1995). To Connell (1995) hegemonic masculinity is constantly being produced and reproduced and, therefore, exists in a constant state of tension. Its maintenance of power is not something automatic but it is rather reproduced through this constant process of resistance and struggle (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Hegemonic masculinities are therefore open to historical change, and it is entirely possible that older forms of masculinity within a culture can become displaced by new forms. This change does not always mean a change for the better, (for instance the hegemonic masculinity characterized by violence and crime among the *tsotsis* in South Africa) (Glaser, 1998). However, it provides hope and possibility for a more humane, egalitarian and less oppressive construction of hegemonic masculinity to emerge (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

4.4.3. The Institutionalization of Hegemonic Masculinity

In Connell's (1995) framework, the analysis of power is central in understanding the ways in which certain power relations re-produce a hierarchical arrangement of gender in society. Connell (1995) argues that it is not only individual behaviours that reproduce this power but organized collective social practices that are embodied in various institutions. Individual personalities and characters are, therefore, not solely responsible for the maintenance of power; rather broader social institutions such as rugby teams, corporations, educational systems and governments are all involved in the construction of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, 2001). The hierarchical relations of gender within a society are, therefore, reinforced by these various institutions.

As this research is located within a school context, Connell's example and analysis of gender hierarchies in an educational context will be used. The hierarchical arrangement of gender in institutions (such as schools) is what Connell refers to as a 'gender regime' (Connell, 2001, 2005). Connell (1996) highlights four components of a school's gender regime:

- Power relations: the masculinized patterns of authority and contestation of physical space for the playing of aggressive games;

- Divisions of labor: masculine subjects such as maths and physics and feminine subjects such as language and literature;

- Patterns of emotion: the different emotional roles expected by different positions of leadership, e.g., the strong deputy principal and the expressive drama teacher; and

- Symbolization: masculine and feminine uniforms, and formal language codes (Connell, 1996).

By using the case of an education institution, Connell (1996) shows how a particular versions of masculinity become hegemonic, leading to a particular hierarchical gender regime. An example of how these gender regimes reinforce hegemonic masculinity is in the institutionalization of competitive sports. A male learner's ability to play sport often becomes his test of masculinity even if he despises sport. Those in the school that reject this hegemonic standard of masculinity are often marginalized and subordinated (Connell, 1996). Male learners who are in the 'first team' are, therefore, seen as embodying a culturally honoured form of masculinity within the school. This structure of sport also has implications for female learners, as it becomes socially admirable to be a cheerleader, who has greater access to dating those who are in the first team[6] (Connell, 1996). At both the schools where the data were collected, there are specific gendered uniforms and gendered sports. For instance, the female learners are required to wear school dresses and stockings, whereas the male learners wear longer trousers and collared shirts. Added to this, the female learners are exempted from playing rugby and soccer and the male learners are discouraged from playing netball.

It is, therefore, evident how particular institutions such as schools embody a set of practices that reinforce hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Connell, 1996, 2005). Hierarchical gender arrangements are not a result of individual expressions of power alone, but rather result from collective expressions that become arranged in various

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[6] It is important to note that Connell is referring to a particular culture and context. While Connell's assertion may be true for many schools in the USA, the example may not reflect the dynamics and practices of schools located in resource poor areas of South Africa. For instance, these schools typically do not have cheerleaders.

institutions. Using a school as an example, Connell (1996) shows how hegemonic masculinity moves from the abstract and symbolic realm to the reality of gender regimes in an institution. Upon entering a school learners are therefore inevitably faced with an institutionalized gender regime that forces them to adopt a position in relation to its standards (Connell, 1996).

4.4.4. A Critical Discussion of Connell's Framework

While Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity has been widely accepted and prolifically used in recent masculinity studies, it has also been criticized for a number of reasons. Broadly these include: its tendency towards reification (Speer, 2001), its failure to acknowledge the plurality, complexity, and contradictory nature of masculine experience (Moller, 2007), and its inability to explain how hegemonic masculinity actually prescribes or regulates men's lives (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). These criticisms culminated in an article by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) which highlighted the inadequacies in the original conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, and argued for a reformulation of specific aspects of the concept. What follows is a discussion of these criticisms and the subsequent reformulation of Connell's framework. The criticisms highlighted here are by no means exhaustive, and only the major criticisms have been mentioned for the sake of relevance and applicability to the framework and goals of this research.

Hegemonic masculinity was criticized for its tendency toward reification. Speer (2001) argues that even though many men align themselves with hegemonic masculinity, this does little to prove that hegemonic masculinity actually exists in reality or has an 'object like' status. We cannot, therefore, identify a specific hegemonic person, as all we have is a cultural category or way of describing masculinity (that we all use) which does not necessarily exist in reality (Speer, 2001). Speer, therefore, argues that we cannot reify hegemonic masculinity by treating the concept as something that exists outside of or prior to particular conversations.

Edley (2001), however, does not share the same view and argues that hegemonic masculinity can exist outside of everyday conversation in at least two ways. Firstly, it exists as a particular way of being in the world. An example is the association of particular versions of black hegemonic masculinity in South Africa with financial wealth (see, Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). This quality exists in a physical reality where men

wear flashy clothes and expensive suits to meet the abstract ideal. Secondly, Edley (2001) argues that hegemonic masculinity exists as part of our common sense. It shows up in our everyday conversations and is part of the vocabulary men and women draw on in everyday conversations. An example is our common sense understandings and constructions of 'masculine men' as strong and courageous, which are often rhetorically separated from the feminine 'other'.

According to Connell & Messerschmidt (2005), the problem with the reification of hegemonic masculinity is not whether or not it has an 'object like status' but that it has often been used as an explanation (or an excuse) for various acts of violence or power. Added to this, hegemonic masculinity has often excluded positive masculine behaviours that may better serve the interests of women. Research that is socially responsible will, therefore, do well to identify and promote positive constructions of hegemonic masculinity with the aim of promoting gender equality and the emancipation of women. This, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), is a key strategy in future conceptualizations of the concept.

Secondly, Connell's initial conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity was criticized for being a fixed, coherent pattern of masculinity that ignored the plurality, complexity, and contradictory nature of masculine experience (Moller, 2007). In line with this, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) place emphasis on the idea that there is no single hegemonic masculinity but rather multiple hegemonic masculinities that are context dependent, historically constituted and fluid. Within Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) re-conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, it is emphasized that hegemonic masculinity does not refer to a universal all-encompassing standard that all men in all cultures strive to embody; rather hegemonic masculinity is viewed as being unique to the specific context in which it manifests. The type of masculinity that becomes hegemonic in one culture may look very different from the type of masculinity that becomes hegemonic in another culture (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). An example is Morrell's (1998) contrast of traditional African hegemonic masculinities (associated with a war like disposition and dominance) and colonial white hegemonic masculinities (associated with independence and authority). In this sense there are multiple hegemonic masculinities that include different patterns of social practices and behaviour depending on the historical, cultural and social context in which they arise. Hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, not intended to be a catch all concept, and should

rather be seen as a means of grasping a certain aspect of masculinity within a particular societal context (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

To account for the existence of a plurality of hegemonic masculinities and to further the analytical lens, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) propose a simple framework. This framework is introduced to account for the interplay and links between different hegemonic masculinities that exist at different levels of society. They propose that there are: local (face to face interactions and communities), regional (at the level of culture), and global (within transnational arenas such as business and the media) hegemonic masculinities that are all complexly interrelated and inter-determinant. For instance, hegemonic masculinities at the regional level affect the daily interactions and social practices of hegemonic masculinities at the local level. In other words, a regional hegemonic masculinity can act to provide a cultural framework which is drawn on and becomes materialized in everyday practices and interactions. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize that multiple hegemonic masculinities can exist at the local level which often intersect and overlap. However, at a regional level, a singular hegemonic masculinity can act as an overarching cultural ideal (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) provide little discussion on how this framework may be applied practically.

Lastly, Wetherell and Edley (1999) have criticized Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity arguing that it does not explain how hegemonic masculinity actually prescribes or regulates men's lives. Hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, a concept describing an idealized goal rather than a lived reality for men. In line with this, Moller (2007) argues that men's actual everyday practices and motivations are often more complex than the concept of hegemonic masculinity allows. The plurality, complexity and contradictions of masculine experience need to be explored instead of merely locating the positions of men in a fixed, coherent, and singular pattern of masculinity (Moller, 2007). The very concept of hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, used to explain a type of masculinity that extends beyond local practices and actions (Speer, 2001). In light of these criticisms, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is still useful as even though models of hegemonic masculinity may not correspond to the actual lives of men, these models express ideals, fantasies and desires that men strive to live up to in their everyday lives.

However, what this looks like practically is left unsaid in Connell's framework (This is discussed in the next section).

In spite of the aforementioned criticisms, the concept of hegemonic masculinity remains a powerful theoretical lens in research on masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that even in the wake of such criticism, certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity should remain. Firstly, within the original formulation of hegemonic masculinity is the notion of multiple masculinities that exist in a hierarchal relationship. The concept of hegemonic masculinity, therefore, presupposes the subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities which has been uncontested since the formulation of the concept over 20 years ago (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Secondly, the concept of hegemonic masculinity works through the production of members in society that symbolize hegemonic masculine ideals (such as sports stars). Although many men do not fully live up to these ideals, the exemplars responsible still carry authority and it is this authority that regulates men's lives and serves to legitimize the subordination of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In conclusion, it is clear that Connell's framework of masculinity is important in understanding the hierarchical arrangement of gender relations in society. Connell has provided a powerful theoretical framework that makes sense of the legitimation of patriarchy and hierarchical relations of gender. What is left un-theorized in Connell's work is an adequate analytical framework in which to verify the micro social processes that are constituted by hegemonic masculinities. In other words, there is good empirical evidence to suggest that gender exists in a hierarchy, but little evidence exists explaining how this may be translated into the everyday social practices and interactions of individuals

In terms of bridging the theoretical and analytical side of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Wetherell and Edley's (1998, 1999) contributions have added great depth and richness to Connell's theoretical framework. The discursive approach, promoted by Wetherell and Edley (1997, 1998, 1999, 2014), provides a way to understand how hegemonic masculinity influences everyday social practices and interactions. They argue that hegemonic masculinity is not representative of a certain type of man, but rather as a way men position themselves through discursive practices. The discussion

now turns to what the concept of hegemonic masculinity may look like in the everyday social practices through the specific discursive strategies employed by men.

4.4.5. Discursive Approach in the Context of Masculinities

In the context of masculinities, the discursive approach highlights how men draw on a number of intersecting discourses to construct their masculine identities and discursively position themselves to either negate responsibility, ward off anxiety or avoid feelings of powerlessness (Connell & Messerchmidt, 2005). The discursive approach, therefore, focuses on how masculinities are 'done' and/or accomplished, through everyday discursive practices (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Wetherell & Edley, 2014). In this view, our gendered identities are not passively sustained through belief alone, but are instead actively enacted by the subject (Kiesling, 2005). This enactment is often done relationally where certain acts or rhetoric are recognized as being masculine or feminine (Kiesling, 2005). In the everyday interactions of men there is, therefore, a reaction to a set of cultural discourses (shared meanings and ways of being, doing and speaking) that serve to construct their masculine identities. In a discursive approach, men are, therefore, viewed as subjects who are acted on by these discourses but at the same time they are the active participants in the development and reproduction of these discourses (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kendall & Tannen, 2003; Kiesling, 2005; Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012).

Wetherell and Edley (1999) acknowledge the usefulness of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in understanding the broader hierarchical arrangement of gender. However, they argue that Connell's framework of masculinity does little for understanding the 'nitty gritty' of negotiating masculine identities and the discursive strategies men use. Added to this, Connell (1995) drew on a post-structuralist standpoint in many regards, yet erroneously assumed that discursive positions are fixed and stable for individual men. In this sense, once a male positions himself as hegemonic, he will remain hegemonic in his interaction with others. This assumption has been criticized by Wetherell and Edley (2014), who argue that men are not locked into any of these 'masculine' categories but instead constantly shift between different constructions of masculinity. In this way an individual speaker can be subordinate, then complicit, then hegemonic at any given time.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) further argue that we cannot use either/or labels to describe how men discursively position themselves in relation to hegemonic

masculinities. Rather, we must consider the complex ways in which men discursively position themselves and others. The concept of hegemonic masculinity must, therefore, be seen as a relative position that men adopt in complex, contextually specific, inconsistent and fluid ways (Kendall & Tannen, 2003; Wetherell & Edley, 1999, 2014). Any attempt to confine or classify men according to fixed 'types' must therefore be avoided. A discursive analytical framework must then aim to conceptualize how hegemonic masculinity is constructed, resisted and/or sustained in everyday interaction (Wetherell & Edley, 2014).

To reiterate, the task of being a man involves a constant taking on and negotiating of prevailing ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Within everyday conversation men formulate temporary positions that are often variable and rapidly changing depending on the context. Wetherell and Edley (1999) have proposed three discursive positions that men adopt in the construction of their masculine identities: 'imaginary' positions, 'ordinary' positions and 'rebellious' positions (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Each of these is discussed below.

3.4.5.1. Imaginary positions

In a discursive framework the self is constructed as fragmentary and non-unitary and in a constant state of tension where multiple discourses intersect to construct the individual (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). However, when we begin to speak in everyday conversation, the self becomes constructed as a full and complete image that appears unitary and non-fragmentary. This persona or self-description often does not correspond to one's lived identity, which is often fragmented and incoherent (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Instead, men produce emotionally charged presentations of themselves where a clear difference exists between their actual lived identities and the masculine persona that is 'put on'. These self-descriptions or personas conform to definitions of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., tough, strong, macho) which are prevalent in that context. For example, Kendall and Tannen (2003) found that men tend to discursively take on the role of an expert in their communication (which is an imagined position). In their study, the male participants took turns reciting monologues of various subjects in which they were 'experts', such as fixing cars, making beer and being knowledgeable about sport, which did not correspond to their lived identities, but related to the specific definition of masculinity which had become hegemonic in that context (Kendall & Tannen, 2003).

The degree to which an imaginary masculine position is taken up is largely dependent on the micro context in which a man finds himself. For instance, a man can be caring, loving and emotionally available around his family, but at the flick of a switch metamorphosise into a patriarchal and authoritative man around his friends (Parker, 1997). This is echoed by Warren (2003) who argues that men's behaviour and masculine positioning change around their male peers. Their social practices become governed by a need to perform so that their sense of masculine identity is reinforced by others (which, of course, has implications in terms of the male only focus groups that were conducted in the current research). For example, Warren (2003) found that the men placed great importance on publicly demonstrating their football skills in order to gain masculine recognition. This demonstration was most evident in the way they took on the 'expert' position about football in conversation with their male peers. The men who were not knowledgeable about current football trends were immediately subordinated. This led to a pressure to erect a persona (imaginary position) to avoid feelings of anxiety and possible subordination (Warren, 2003). Warren (2003), therefore, provides evidence of how subject positions (in this case imaginary positions) are taken up within a group context.

3.4.5.2. 'Ordinary' Positions

The second position identified by Wetherell and Edley (1999) is 'ordinary' positions. This position is characterized by a discursive separation from hegemonic notions of masculinity. Men adopting an 'ordinary' position construct themselves and find their identity in their ordinary, moderate or average masculine selves. (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Men adopting ordinary positions are, therefore, separating themselves from the imaginary positions of the heroic and celebrated male (which are constructed as over the top and extreme) and instead see themselves as average and normal (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). In other words, a contrast is drawn between the social ideals of masculinity (hegemonic masculinity) and the ordinary, and actual masculine self (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

For example, Wetherell and Edley (1999) found that some men do not frequently engage in heroic masculinity (characterized by attributes such as strength, boldness, toughness and winning). In their study, they found that the men portrayed themselves as 'ordinary' and considered the ideals of hegemonic masculinity as extreme and over the top. The men viewed these macho, hegemonic masculinities as being styles that

were embodied by men who were not comfortable with who they were or had not developed their own personal styles of masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

3.4.5.3. 'Rebellious' Positions

Third, Wetherell and Edley (1999) identified a rebellious position that men adopt in relation to prevailing ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Men adopting rebellious positions toward hegemonic masculinity often define themselves in terms of unconventionality and a distance from hegemonic masculinity. The celebration in this discourse revolves around the men's courage not to conform to conventional or hegemonic notions of masculinity; these men are courageous in the sense that they are willfully choosing to embrace potential subordination and marginalisation (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). However, men who adopt a rebellious stance towards hegemonic masculinity, and face the resulting subordination/marginalisation often choose to realign themselves with hegemonic masculinity. Evidence of the subordination/marginalisation experienced by adopting a rebellious stance is found in a study by Bird (1996). He argued that men who resisted hegemonic masculine ideals did little to alter the gender order and influence other men. Instead, these men were punished for their failure to conform to hegemonic masculine ideals by being ostracized by other men (Bird, 1996).

These three positions identified by Wetherell and Edley provide important examples of how the everyday interactions of men are governed by prevailing discourses of hegemonic masculinity. Each position identified provides an understanding of how complicit, marginalized and subordinated masculinities are discursively enacted in everyday conversation. These three positions also highlight that in everyday conversation hegemonic masculinity is seen as an ideal that can act both as a source of 'invested identity' and as a standard or ideal against which men discursively position themselves. This framework makes it clear that the everyday subject positions that men adopt in the construction of their masculine selves is not a straightforward and tightly packaged process (as initially assumed by Connell). Instead, the discursive production of selves is a complex and inconsistent process involving a wide variety of different identity positions that are context dependent (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

What Wetherell and Edley (1997, 1999) specifically show is how prevailing ideals of hegemonic masculinity inform and regulate the everyday conversations of men. All three discursive positions (imaginary, ordinary or rebellious positions) serve to

reinforce hegemonic masculine ideals. In fact, Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that men are being hegemonic precisely because they choose to distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity. They state that "perhaps what is most hegemonic is to be non-hegemonic" (p. 351). In other words, men can align themselves with hegemonic masculinity as a source of identity or they can position themselves against it. In positioning themselves for or against it, they in fact reproduce it (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

This argument is supported by Wetherell and Edley's (1997) study of high school learners in a UK based single sex school. Strength and dominance are qualities associated with hegemonic masculinity in many contexts (including the South African context). The ability to exercise strength and appropriately express one's dominance are, therefore, ideals that men will position themselves for or against (in the form of ordinary, imaginary and rebellious positions, for instance). In a school context, male learners associated with and seen as embodying macho masculinities often define strength and dominance in relation to expressions of physicality (e.g., playing boisterous games and play fighting). Wetherell and Edley (1997) found that men who are associated with macho masculinity will, therefore, enact the hegemonic quality of strength and dominance in physical ways.

Men who are associated with 'less macho' forms of masculinity are still regulated by the hegemonic masculine ideal of strength and dominance, but embody these ideals in different ways. These men alternatively associate strength and dominance with one's ability to excel academically and hold an intelligent conversation. Both the 'macho' men and 'less macho' men are regulated by the hegemonic ideals of strength and dominance yet enact and define these in different ways. It is, therefore, hard to say which group of men is being 'more hegemonic' as both are conforming to cultural and hegemonic ideals of masculinity. In this way Wetherell and Edley show how complicity becomes far more complex when understood in the actual lives and discursive practices of men. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore being reinforced and reproduced regardless of whether a man chooses to conform to hegemonic masculine ideals or distance himself from them.

4.5. Research Method

This section details how the research was effected throughout each stage of the research process. I begin by discussing how the data were collected, and how the

participants were selected, detailing the rationale behind some of my decisions. I then discuss the various steps taken in the analysis of the data covering aspects such as transcription and translation, coding procedures, how the analysis itself was effected and the reflexivity maintained throughout the process. I end this the chapter by discussing the various ethical considerations adhered to prior, during and after the commencement of this research.

4.5.1. Data Collection

This research involved collecting data from focus group discussions in two former DET[7] schools in Grahamstown. The group discussions were guided by Kitzinger's (1994, 1995) methodology on focus groups which emphasizes the importance of maintaining interaction between participants. The use of focus groups was justified, as the interest was not in how young men talk about menstruation individually, but rather, in how young men talk about menstruation with their male peers in a group context. Here the aim was to gather naturally occurring data, with learners from the same peer group and attending the same school, in order to understand the ways in which young men talk about menstruation.

Before conducting the focus groups, I attended a Grade 10 Life Skills programme, that was facilitated by FAMSA[8]. This Life Skills programme formed part of an intervention called the *Siyahluma* project which was a partnership between the Critical Sexualities and Reproduction Unit (CSSR), the Community Engagement Division and the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics at Rhodes University. The aim of the *Siyahluma* project was to address a gap in current research on menstruation and identify menstruation related challenges for school-going girls in the Eastern Cape. The life skills programme that I attended, formed part of the monitoring and evaluation component of this project and aided me in gaining a preliminary understanding of the various ways young men talk about menstruation. The emphasis in these observations were on the input on menstruation within the class discussions, and the collection of

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[7] DET (Department of Education and Training) is a term used to describe the schools reserved for black learners during the Apartheid era. Typically, these schools have poorer educational quality in relation to the model C schools (the school system that was available for whites only). The two former DET schools included in this research are located in an under-resourced area within Grahamstown.

[8] FAMSA (Families South Africa) is an organisation that provides preventative and remedial services in order to enable people to deal with modern day stressors and issues that threaten family life.

group write-ups[9], which the learners were required to complete. My observations and collection of this stimulus material was written in the form of an observation report that was presented to FAMSA and the Community Engagement Office of Rhodes University. Permission to use this material was sought and obtained from these two bodies. Based on the stimulus statements, a focus group discussion guide was devised (see appendix 1), and statements were taken from the observation report to be used as discussion material within the focus groups. The use of this stimulus material strengthens the validity of the research as issues pertinent to the target group were raised for discussion in the focus groups.

Before the commencement of the data collection at the schools, I conducted a pilot focus group with first year Rhodes psychology students. The purpose of this session was to gain feedback from the 'participants' in order to refine the methodological process and to determine the cultural appropriateness of the focus group discussion guide. However, no data were collected during this session, as it was intended only for training purposes. After advertising the proposed group in the first-year psychology lectures, a total of five isiXhosa speaking men volunteered to participate. This group was conducted in the Rhodes University Psychology Department, and was observed by the supervisor of this research, Prof Catriona Macleod and several postgraduate and doctorate level students (many of whom were members of the CSSR).

The 'participants' then provided feedback, claiming that more reflections and input from the co-researcher (Manale Makuse) should be incorporated. After the participants had provided feedback, the observers were given an opportunity to provide their input. The observers input led to some minor revisions and refinements of the focus group discussion guide (please see appendix 1) such as: promoting culturally appropriate phrasing in the reflected statements, restructuring the format of the focus group discussion guide to promote a better 'flow' of ideas, and providing valuable input in terms of the logistics of running focus groups[10]. Overall, this pilot focus group aided in

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[9] The learners were divided into four groups and were required to list some of the things they knew about menstruation. The learners then presented these lists to the rest of the class in order to generate discussion around some of the points raised. At the end of the Life Skills session, I collected a total of four group write-ups and used these to generate some of the items in the focus group discussion guide.
[10] Further reflections regarding the feedback given during the pilot focus group are added to the reflexivity section of this chapter.

the refinement of the procedure and it was an important process to engage in before the commencement of the data collection at the schools.

The medium of instruction at both former DET schools is English and the majority of the participants' home language is isiXhosa. The focus groups were conducted in both English and isiXhosa and were dependent on the participants' level of comfort in each language. Each session was therefore accompanied by a bi-lingual (isiXhosa/English) male co-researcher (Manale Makuse) whose role was to translate where necessary and meet with the facilitator (Jonathan Glover) after each discussion to discuss the particular cultural nuances that emerged. A total of six focus groups were conducted (three within each school, with a mean of 6 per group) reaching a combined overall time of 318 minutes (on average 53 minutes per focus group).

4.5.2. Participants and Sampling

Participants for these focus groups were sampled only from the grade 10 classes that were involved in FAMSA's Life Skills programme. The rationale for inviting participants who had undergone the Life Skills programme was twofold. The first reason was that many of these participants had taken part in the group activities and creation of the group write-ups (which were used as stimulus material in the focus group discussion guide), and I could therefore generate further discussion by reflecting the statements back to them in the focus group. Secondly, the topic of menstruation (a taboo topic) had already been opened up in the Life Skills programme and, therefore, the participants who had taken part in the programme would possibly be open to discussing it. Purposive sampling was therefore used to select particular participants for these focus groups and depended on each participant's availability and willingness to partake in the research (Kelly, 2006). Please see the table below for an overview of basic characteristics of the participants included in this research.

Table 1: Characteristics of Participants

	Focus Groups Conducted	Mean Age of Participants	Number of Participants
School 1	3	18.4	20
School 2	3	18.2	17
TOTAL	6	18.3	37

4.5.3. Data Analysis Procedures

The following section will discuss the transcription conventions employed in this research, the specific coding procedures used and how the actual analysis itself was effected. Added to this, I include some of my reflections regarding the possible power dynamics at play during this research and how I addressed these.

4.5.3.1. Transcription

The focus groups were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis and each transcript was translated into English. The transcription and translation process were completed by an independent translator, who has aided in numerous other CSSR research projects. Many of the focus groups were, however, conducted in English (as requested by the participants) and therefore only minor sections required translation from isiXhosa into English. I then individually reviewed each completed transcript to ensure that there were no words or phrases were omitted. To further validate the accuracy of the translations, the transcripts were reviewed by an isiXhosa speaking colleague familiar with the work. Ian Parker's (1992) transcription conventions were used (please see appendix 2) in order to avoid interfering with the readability of the completed transcripts. This research is not interested in a detailed linguistic analysis that focuses linguistic elements such as syntactic categories, semantic distinctions or pragmatic acts; rather, what is important is the actual content of the language for the purpose of identifying repertoires. Punctuation was employed in the transcriptions for the sake of readability (Edwards, 2003).

4.5.3.2. Coding

Once the aforementioned 'checks' had been completed on the focus group transcriptions, I then began to code the data. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) coding is distinct from doing analysis itself as the goal is simply to turn large volumes of discourse into manageable chunks, which is done as inclusively as possible. In the initial stages of the coding I read and re-read the transcript several times, making notes on the re-occurring themes which emerged. After gaining familiarity with the data I compiled a transcript, which categorized the data into five themes which included: 'the reported changes in women during menstruation', references to the 'disgusting and abject nature of menstruation', a 'sexual theme', and the threat posed by menstruation to masculine identity. It must be made clear to the reader that analysis was not the goal at this stage, but rather understanding all instances, no matter how vague, of the repetitive categories of talk in the transcripts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). These broader

themes aided in organizing the data into manageable chunks, in order to effect the actual analysis, to which the discussion now turns.

4.5.3.3. Analysis Proper

Potter and Wetherell (1994) argue that discursive analysis cannot be applied in a formulaic, step-by-step way, as it is largely a 'craft' skill. This is not to say, however, that 'stages' or 'phases' of analysis do not serve an important purpose. Rather, these stages should act as a guide to the researcher, to highlight variability, contradictions, "how discourse is put together, and what is gained by its construction" (Parker, 1990; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 160).

In line with this, I followed the guidelines proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1994) when conducting my analysis. The first of these involved using variation as a lever, where I would pay close attention to the substantial variability in a single speakers account, in order to understand how the account was orientated to action, had a range of consequences and served a particular purpose (which I then elaborated on and discussed in detail). Secondly, I was careful to focus on the details (micro units) of analysis such as pauses, metaphors, repairs, and word usages, paying attention to the specific rhetorical organizations in the accounts (Potter & Wetherell, 1994). Here again, the identification of these micro units and rhetorical organizations aided in uncovering the function served by their utilisation. Lastly, I bolstered the analysis by cross referencing other relevant studies that dealt with similar issues, which is an analytical technique encouraged by Potter and Wetherell (1994). Throughout the analysis of the data I maintained a critical awareness of my own presuppositions, knowing that I am inevitably involved in the interpretation of the data (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The discussion now turns to a reflexive overview of some of the presuppositions, prejudices and biases of which I maintained an acute awareness throughout the data collection, analysis and the research process as a whole.

4.5.3.4. Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity refers to the constant self-reflection, disclosure and acknowledgement of the researchers own theoretical positions, perspectives and political assumptions with regards the research (Bloor & Bloor, 2007; Macleod, 2002; Parker, 1990; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Macleod (2002, p. 20) argues that "researcher reflexivity should address the interactional, relational and power dynamics of the research at hand, rather than focusing on a confession of emotional or discursive

positioning of the individual researcher." In this way, the researcher should develop an understanding of how their involvements (including emotional and discursive positions) are implicated in the operation of power in the research process (Daley, 2010; Macleod, 2002). As Macleod (2002) argues, discourse analysis is closely linked with political activism, and our positions and implicit power dynamics should be made clear throughout the process.

My initial concern related to my identity as a white, English speaking male from a socioeconomically advantaged context, and how this may impact on the power dynamics of the research process. Keeping in mind that I would be interviewing young 'black' men, from a previously disadvantaged context, I decided to voice some of these concerns in the pilot focus group conducted with a group of first year Rhodes Psychology students. Their reflections on the possible power dynamics at play gave me important insights and eased some of my initial assumptions. For instance, the volunteers of the pilot focus group indicated that it would be easier for the participants to speak to a white facilitator due to the strict cultural taboos placed on men talking about menstruation in isiXhosa culture. Added to this, the volunteers claimed that having a white facilitator encouraged a greater depth of discussion, as my limited knowledge of isiXhosa culture encouraged them to reflect and expand on some of these cultural nuances. When conducting the actual focus groups, these recommendations provided by the volunteers proved to be correct. Firstly, the participants' were able to speak freely and claimed that they enjoyed sharing aspects of Xhosa culture with a 'white' male facilitator.

The question I had at the onset of this research was whether I was theoretically mystifying an issue that was really quite simple. I initially thought it an exaggeration to claim that cultural perspectives on menstruation had any direct relationship with the actual lived experience of menstruators. I reasoned that menstrual etiquette (practices expected of women to conceal menstruation) is no more oppressive that the norms governing the concealment of nakedness and the cleanliness associated with other excretions. I further assumed that men avoid talking about menstruation for the same reasons that society in general avoids talking about bodily excretions such as feaces, seminal fluid, and blood. However, whilst reflecting on this and reviewing the literature, I realized that menstrual blood carries remarkably different connotations (which are largely negative) to those associated with the aforementioned bodily excretions. A

thorough reading of feminist literature and relevant studies, therefore, pointed to the broader context of patriarchy. Throughout this research process I have come to stand in agreement with the claims of feminist scholars (see Beauvoir, 1949; Grosz, 1994, Ussher, 2006; Young, 2005) who suggest that the norms governing menstruation are more closely linked with the general subordination of women than norms surrounding the concealment of nakedness and the maintenance of hygiene.

4.5.4. Ethical Considerations

This section highlights some of the Ethical Considerations that were adhered to prior, during and after the commencement of this research. The themes highlighted here cover the steps I took in relation to gaining permission from the various gatekeepers and the participants themselves. I then discuss how privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

4.5.4.1. Obtaining Consent

Before the commencement of the data collection and the recruitment of participants, this research was subjected to a stringent process of gaining consent from all the required gatekeepers. In the initial stages, the research proposal was reviewed by the RPERC (Research Proposal and Ethics Review Committee), who approved the continuation of this research, with minor revisions (please see appendix 3). The research proposal and relevant ethical letters[11], were then reviewed by the RUESC (The Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee), as some of my participants were adolescents younger than 18 years of age (please see appendix 4). After receiving approval from both the RUESC and RPERC, my next step was to gain permission from the Department of Education (DOE) in order to conduct my data collection in the two former DET schools in Grahamstown, and consent was granted on the 27/11/2015 (please see appendix 5). I then approached the headmasters of each of the schools in Grahamstown, and requested to meet with each of them individually in order to discuss the proposed research, recruitment of participants and data collection methods. A letter was given to each principal, providing a more detailed account of the proposed research, and they were required to sign it before I continued with the data collection (please see appendix 6). After gaining consent from the two principals, I approached the classes that had been involved in the FAMSA Life Skills

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[11] Note that each ethical consent and information letter included in the appendices was translated into isiXhosa.

programme, and introduced my proposed research. I then arranged times and dates with the participants, ensuring that the focus groups would be conducted after school hours and not be in conflict with any curriculum activities. Those who were younger than 18 were given information letters and consent forms to give to their parents, who were also required to give permission before the participants could take part in the research (please see appendix 7 and 8). The final step was to obtain consent from the participants themselves who were required to complete an informed consent form (please see appendix 9). Before the start of each focus group, I would ensure that each participant was familiar with the content of the consent from and understood their rights and responsibilities as research participants. The discussion now turns to a more detailed overview of some of these considerations.

4.5.4.2. Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality of Data

Prior to the commencement of each focus group, the voluntary nature of the researched was emphasized and explained in detail to the participants. Specifically, I explained to them that they were not obliged or forced to participate, and if they had reason to remove themselves from the study (for any reason), they were free to do so. I also emphasized that the study was not an assessment of their performance at school, and their decision to participate (or not participate) would, in no way, affect their relationship with the school or the educators. Added to this, I made them aware that they would not be expected to share any information that they felt too personal, or that would made them feel uncomfortable.

Prior to each focus group, I further explained that the information that they shared through the group discussions will not be disclosed to anyone (such as principals, educators, and/or other learners). In addition, I explained that their names would not appear on any written reports and no identifying features would be provided (such as the name of the school). When transcribing the audio-recordings, each participant was given a pseudonym to further protect their identities. These audio-recordings were stored on a password protected computer, and only researchers affiliated to the CSSR and the third party transcriber/translator had access to them (this was made clear to the participants). The third party transcriber and translators were expected to maintain the same levels of confidentiality as the researchers involved.

From the outset of the research the risks were envisaged as being relatively minimal (some embarrassment or discomfort) as a result of talking openly about menstruation.

However, the benefits from partaking in and conducting such research substantially outweighed any potential risks to the participants, in the end. The data collection method encouraged reflexive discussion of the social issues and biological processes of menstruation. The participants commented that they hoped to experience improved relationships with their partners as a result of better informed knowledges and an improved understanding of the social stigma attached to menstruation.

4.5.5. Validation of Research

To ensure the validity of my analysis, two aspects of Guba's (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1990) model of trustworthiness relevant to the qualitative methods were drawn upon: credibility and transferability. Three techniques were utilized to ensure that these two aspects of trustworthiness were maintained which included: conducting member checks (i.e., pilot focus group), keeping a field journal, and maintaining constant researcher reflexivity. Member checking is a technique that involves a continuous checking with the participants to ensure that the researcher has accurately translated their viewpoints into data (Krefting, 1990). Member checks were done (during the focus groups) with the participants and the co-researcher after each session to ensure credibility. Secondly, I kept a field journal to account for the various feelings, attitudes and frustrations throughout the research process. In this way, I constantly managed the way the data were approached which I believed adds to the credibility and transferability of the data (Krefting, 1990). Lastly, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, which has been discussed.

4.5.6. Conclusion

I began this chapter by providing a broad overview of the discursive framework employed in this research, arguing that a discursive framework is best suited to answering the posed research questions and meeting the overall research aims. After providing a broader overview of this discursive framework, I then introduced Connell's framework of masculinity which I used to understand the ways men talk about menstruation with other men. Here it was shown how both men and women are implicated into a gendered hierarchy where hegemonic masculinity emerges as the most culturally honoured or 'ideal' version of masculinity. I was careful to emphasize the fluidity of masculine identity and how there is not a single hegemonic masculinity, but rather a plurality of hegemonic masculinities. I then provided a critical overview of Connell's framework, by highlighting some of the core criticisms in relation to her

conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity. As mentioned, one of the criticisms of hegemonic masculinity related to the difficulty in translating the concept into an analytical method. With this in mind, I augmented the theoretical aspect of this research with Wetherell and Edley's (1997, 1998, 1999, 2014) contributions, which provide a powerful and relevant analytic framework through which to understand the everyday discursive positioning of men. Here it was highlighted that a discursive framework, sheds light on how masculine identity is 'done' or 'accomplished' through everyday talk.

The discussion then turned to an overview of the logistical aspects of this research. I provided a detailed and reflexive overview of the data collection methods, and provided a clear rationale for the sampling technique used and the participants chosen to be included in this research. Building on the prior discussion of the discursive framework, I provided a section highlighting how the analyses was effected in this research, by discussing coding procedures, transcription, analysis proper and the reflexive lens which was maintained. Lastly, a discussion of some of the ethical considerations and step-wise negotiations with the various gatekeepers (ethical review committees, Department of Education, school principals, teachers and parents) was included to show the strict adherence to core ethical research principles.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS CHAPTER

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the repertoires that were drawn on by the young men with regards to menstruation, the specific subject positions made available through the utilisation of these repertoires and the ideological dilemmas faced by the participants in relation to menstruation. I begin this chapter by describing three main repertoires emerging in the data in relation to menstruation and menstruating women. Firstly, I identify a dualistic repertoire which functioned to discursively draw the distinction between 'menstruating women' and 'non-menstruating' women in terms of behaviour, appearance and emotional expression. Secondly, a repertoire of bad (versus ideal) femininity is identified where the young men discursively positioned women as 'mad', 'bad' and 'out of control', due to stepping outside of the norms and roles of idealized femininity. Lastly, I identify how the participants drew on repertoires of abject femininity which constructs menstruating women as somehow 'dirty', 'sullied', and 'disgusting' during their menses. In the remainder of the chapter, I highlight additional repertoires to reveal how masculinity within this sample of young men is discursively 'accomplished' and how this accomplishment serves to reproduce, comply with and resist constructions of hegemonic masculinity as outlined in previous South African research. Specifically, it will be shown how associations with menstruation (the highly feminine and taboo topic) are constructed as a threat to masculine identity and leads to the young men 'jockeying for position' in order to reinforce their position in the gender hierarchy. In the final section, I examine how menstruation serves to disrupt one of the core identity strategies of local hegemonic masculinities in the South African context: virile sexuality.

5.2. Dualistic Repertoire

When asked to describe menstruating women, the participants frequently drew on a dualistic repertoire which functioned to discursively contrast 'menstruating women' with 'non-menstruating women'. This dualism can be seen in the participants' descriptions of premenstrual/menstruating women in the following extracts:

Extract 1

> **Anele:** ...she is not her usual self; that's what I've noticed

Extract 2

> **Mandisi:** you see my brother (1) she becomes irritable you see /mm/ ... so she changes a lot man but then when the period has come to an end she becomes the person you know her to be in the first place

Extract 3

> **Thabo:** ... you know your girlfriend, for instance when you call her and ask her to visit, per usual, she can easily tell you that she can't make it (.) they will tell you that they cannot come because they are menstruating, or maybe you can see it for yourself when you are walking <u>together</u> (.) when you touch her 'hi babe' and you try to pull her closer, and so on, she pulls away and then I will know that (.) <u>it's not</u> because she is shy because of the people around, <u>it's because of the period</u> of menstruation she is currently in (.) <u>she's used to,</u> and loves, being held and being cosy together, but now during her menstrual period she doesn't feel like being touched do you get what I mean (.) so she distances herself and then you will pick it up from there that she's menstruating and you must also try distance yourself because she is moody and she could say anything any moment, you see what I mean?

The above extracts clearly show how the young men discursively separate 'premenstrual/menstrual women' from 'non-menstruating women'. As Mandisi states: "when her period has come to an end she becomes the person you know her to be in the first place", which emphasizes the perceived 'changes' that women undergo during their menses and further indicates the dualistic contrast drawn. Functionally, menstruating women are positioned in a way that marks them as 'emotional', 'moody' 'irritable', 'unusual', 'different', 'shy', and unpredictable ("she could say anything any moment"), during their menses. According to Anele, menstruating women are not their "usual selves", and fail to embody characteristics representative of their general dispositions. The term 'usual' is also employed by Thabo to further denote that non-menstruating women are 'normal' and 'usual' and by implication menstruating women are 'abnormal' or 'unusual'. In doing this, Thabo positions himself as a loving, caring and attractive partner, and his explanation for a rebuff from his 'girlfriend' relates to her embodied changes as a result of her menstrual status.

Premenstrual/menstruating women are further contrasted from 'non-menstruating women', as the participants describe how menstruation impacts on the way a woman walks:

Extract 4

> **Thandile**: she walks funny...

Extract 5

> **Mandisi:** I can tell if a girl is menstruating, the walk (.) they walk differently than they usually do you see (.) the walk changes...

Extract 6

> **Thabo**: the way they walk changes they walk uncomfortably and seem tense [Participants laugh]

Extract 7

> **Khaya:** err she walks slowly (.) and she's a bit nervous /ok/ you can see that she's nervous and she walks slowly with the legs in-between /ok/ yes

Here the participants claim that a woman's menstrual status is evident in the embodiment of how she walks. In the above extracts, menstruating women are constructed as 'unusual', 'tense' and 'nervous' which causes them to 'walk differently'.

Added to this, menstruating women are further marginalized and 'othered', when the participants describe them as moody and highly emotional during their menses. This is shown in the following extracts:

Extract 8

> **Mpumzi:** she's a bit sensitive...

Extract 9

> **Cebo:** ...you see perhaps =/they're not in the mood (being moody)/= they're not in the mood (being moody) you see (.) you realise she is menstruating, she's going through a err you see (.) a <u>rough</u> day [participants laugh] that thing aaah

Extract 10

> **Kagiso:** another thing, when they are menstruating they become moody (.) there are certain things that they are interested in talking about, some things they do not want to talk about and some things bore them all of that

Extract 11

> **Yanga:** ... (.) he err she maybe a girl doesn't feel comfortable around people (.) always moody (.) doesn't want to talk to anyone

Extract 12

> **Soyama**: I think she's moody /ok/ moody yes that's what I think

In the above extracts, it can clearly be seen how any natural irregularities in mood and behaviour are immediately attributed to premenstrual change by these young men. The participants claim that women are 'moody', 'uncomfortable' and 'a bit sensitive' during their menses which impacts on their ability and willingness to engage interpersonally. In describing menstruating women in this way, these young men are

implicitly positioning themselves as rational and emotionally stable, which are ideal features of masculinity in this context (Ratele et al., 2007).

The participants describe menstruating women as appearing 'different', 'unpredictable', 'overly moody and emotional', and walk in a 'funny' way. Overall, the dualistic repertoire, identified here, seems to reaffirm the 'mad', 'bad' and out of control status of menstruating women. By rhetorically separating the 'menstrual self' from the 'non-menstrual self', menstruating women are positioned as the 'other'. This is similar to Swann's (1997) identification of the dualistic discourses surrounding premenstrual change. In Swann's (1997) study, it was found that women constructed themselves in terms of the cartesian dualism of mind and body where the 'premenstrual/menstrual self' was separated from the 'non-menstrual self'. The women reported feeling a loss of control and being 'taken over' each month, constructing themselves in terms of uncontrollable and unpredictable tendencies. This is similar to Ussher's (2011) claim that due to cultural constructions of premenstrual women, men rhetorically separate the PMS and non-PMS self (i.e., the 'good' and 'bad' woman). A similar trend emerges in the data when the participants draw on repertoires of bad (versus ideal) femininity.

5.3.   Bad (Versus Ideal) Femininity Repertoire.
Another repertoire that was consistently drawn on by the participants, in their explanations of menstruating women, is the bad (versus ideal) femininity repertoire, where women are positions in largely negative ways as a result of stepping outside of the norms and roles of idealized femininity. In the South African context, Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) observed that there is a strong tendency for men to position women in subservient roles within society (such as: the care of families and children). The following extracts reveal how the men construct menstruating women as deviating from idealized femininity. Specifically, it can be seen how the male participants construct menstruating women as aggressive and controlling:

Extract 13

   Chuma: she can be (.) she can be aggressive too

Extract 14

   Sizwe: they like get aggressive and call the shots, "like do this do that" /ok/

Being 'aggressive' and "calling the shots" (making decisions) are characteristics that are in direct contrast to the submissive, meek and mild notions of idealized femininity

in the South African context (Ratele et al. 2010; Salo, 2007). Added to this, to "call the shots" as Sizwe states, reveals how the largely negative constructions relate to the relational contexts of the participants lives and not only on the internal characteristics (i.e., aggression) of menstruating women. To "call the shots", is a typically masculine relational ideal which again stands in contrast to ideal femininity in this context.

The participants further make this contrast, in their constructions of menstruating women as excusatory and 'lazy', as indicated in the following extracts:

Extract 15

> **Thabo:** if a girl don't want to work at home you see (.) maybe you have (.) you have a sister at home you see, she doesn't want to work (.) she doesn't want to do household work and cooking (.) and when it comes to her boyfriend, she don't want to go there to his (inaudible) she makes excuses you see ja

Extract 16

> **Lonwabo**: ... they just make that excuse *uyabo* (you see) saying they are menstruating =/I am busy/= I am busy I need to treat this you see /mm/ it's always it's their excuse always when they want something =

Extract 17

> **Qhama**: yes because (.) like Bayanda said (.) they like to sleep a lot (.) they won't do house chores /YES/

Extract 18

> **Kagiso**: and another thing they use it to their advantage because maybe if the house is dirty and when, maybe our mother is out (.) she uses it as an advantage (.) she will say to you (.) clean the house because I'm on periods now and you will have that sympathy too (.) to think oh shame I should do this for her /mm/ maybe she will return the favour but she won't return the favour

The above extracts highlight how the participants construct menstruating women as stepping outside of the cultural ideals associated with idealized femininity. Menstruating women are constructed as 'lazy', 'excusatory', 'demanding', and unable to fulfil the typical gendered roles expected of them (household chores, such as cleaning). The data suggest that menstruating women's' inability to attain these ideals leads to them being constructed in demeaning ways. These demeaning constructions, as seen in the above extracts, seem to have a relational focus (i.e., how women are expected to relate to or behave towards men in a relationship) and refer to the gendered divisions of labor which are disrupted when a woman is menstruating.

Relationally, woman seem to become threatening during their menses and embody typically more masculine ideals (aggressiveness, assertiveness, 'calling the shots',

lack of discipline), and men therefore criticize this in order to maintain their masculine identities. In terms of the gendered division of labor, women are constructed as transgressing these typically accepted gender arrangements (such as conducting household chores). For instance, the participants, in the above extracts claim that during menstruation women "don't want to work", "make excuses", "won't do house chores", and expect men to "clean the house". Here, menstruating women are seen as transgressing and disrupting these gendered divisions of labor during their menses, which serves as a threat to these young men's masculine identities. In this way, by positioning women as the 'other' and a 'different person' during menstruation the participants are in fact preserving the masculine ideal. In other words, the participants' rhetorical posturing in relation to menstruating women provides these young men with positions which allow them to maintain and accomplish their masculine identities.

As seen in the final extract, when women are able to meet the standards of 'cleanliness and presentability' (typically more feminine ideals) a rhetoric of compassion and care is again seen:

Extract 19

> **Soyama**: no you won't treat her badly like they will always say that (.) you will she's neat and clean and smells good (.) so you can comfort with her and cuddle nothing will you see.

Here Soyama, seems to suggest that he will not treat his girlfriend 'badly' if she is "neat and clean and smells good" and does not see any evidence of her menses (indicated by "nothing will you see"). This extract again builds on the theme of how menstruating women are seen to deviate from the 'clean', 'tidy', 'nice-smelling' notions of idealized femininity. Soyama's comment highlights how a woman's ability to resemble notions of idealized femininity promotes a rhetoric of compassion and care. Those who are unable to resemble these ideals, are constructed in demeaning ways as 'more masculine', 'lazy', and 'excusatory'. The problem that these young men seem to have is not that these women are personally 'horrible' but that menstruation gives them license to undo accepted gendered arrangements (e.g., women being responsible for household chores, and men being in charge of making decisions). The above findings are similar to the conclusions drawn by Swann (1997) in relation to constructions of premenstrual syndrome. The women in the study positioned themselves as 'mad', 'bad', and 'out of control', due to stepping outside of the norms and roles of idealized femininity. The women, knowing that they were unable to meet the already

unattainable ideals of hegemonic constructions of idealized femininity, positioned themselves in largely demeaning ways.

5.4. Abject Femininity Repertoire

The following extracts reveal how the participants draw on repertoires of abject femininity in their statements about menstruation as something 'dirty' and 'foul smelling'. Added to this, the participants are seen to construct the fecund body (within the context of talking about menstruation) as the cause of embarrassment and disease. This is similar to Ussher's (2006) assertion of monstrous and abject femininity. Specifically, the following interchange reveals the detestable nature of menstrual blood, and signifies the participants' negotiation of this taboo topic.

Extract 20

> **R**: ok so you're speaking a lot about (.) about the smell /yeah/ describe the smell to me
> **Mandisi:** /laughs/ the smell is *yho* (.)
> **Thabo:** it's like fish =
> **Mandisi:** = you see a fish when a fish is dead *uyabo* (you see) (.) it just went out of the water (.) when the sun is burning that smell yeses *yho* that smell =
> **Thabo:** = it's a <u>fish</u> my brother rotten fish =
> **Mandisi:** *uyabo* (you see) in her <u>vagina</u> you <u>smell</u> it *uyabo* (you see)
> **Thabo:** even when you are walking far away from her *yoh* =
> **Cebo:** = you can smell it even from a distance =
> **Thabo:** = even when you walk past her =
> **Cebo:** = you get that smell (.) you get that smell
> **Mandisi:** if she's dirty down (.) I, *eish,* I don't know what's going on =
> **Thabo:** = maybe she's standing there I'm gonna smell that smell [participants laugh]
> **Mandisi:** maybe she's around here next to you, they really smell =
> **Thabo**: no she's not next to you [participants laugh] she's <u>there</u> [All laugh]
> **R:** ok so you (.) you smell the smell /yeah/ and then what do you do?
> **Mandisi:** YOH /laughs/ (.) guys say something
> **Lonwabo:** you get a headache, [all laugh] you cannot concentrate if she's sitting next to you
> **Masixole**: you don't want (.) you wish you could be very far from her so that you don't smell the smell (.) sometimes you wanna puke

This facetious interchange is a clear example of the enactment of masculinities, in relation to constructions of menstruation and menstruating women in this context. First, these young men discursively separate the abject female body from male bodies (as the male body does not carry the same smell). Second, there is a general agreement between the participants that menstruation can be likened to the smell of 'rotting' fish. They go on to describe the circumstances in which you can smell menstruating women. For instance, they claim that "you can smell it [menstruation], even from a distance", or "even when you walk past her". In the final interchange, the participants agree on some of the negative effects caused as a result of the smell of menstruation. One participant claims that, "you get a headache, and you cannot

concentrate if she is sitting next to you". Following from this Masixole claims that the smell causes him to "wanna puke". By drawing on repertoires of abject femininity in relation to menstruation, these young men are able further position menstruating women as the 'other'.

The repertoire of abject femininity is further drawn on when the participants differentiate between menstrual blood and 'non-menstrual blood'. This differentiation is clearly seen in the following extracts, as the participants describe menstrual blood as 'dirty blood'.

Extract 21

> **Siya:** because the thing is the blood that comes out I doubt that it's clean blood that's example number one (.) it might be dirty blood that's why it is coming out

Extract 22

> **Khaya:** = I think it's err something like (.) like a digestive system because I think that the menstruation, maybe in the girl's, in the body (.) err but /inside/ inside the girl's body there's a certain part that releases dirty blood /ja/ I think it's dirty blood that comes out of there

Extract 23

> **Sizwe**: I think the disgusting fact is like (.) the blood from the part of the body and stuff like that /mm/ is like usual (.) you're used to it I get cut, my finger gets cut, I bleed but like the menstruation blood is like (.) the fact that there's like the girl pees and then it's very disgusting, it's disgusting

Here the repertoire of abject femininity and its association with the unclean is reproduced in the participants' account of menstrual blood. Linguistically the young men, in their descriptions of menstrual blood are drawing distinctions between 'clean blood' and 'dirty blood'. This 'clean blood' is likened by one participant to the blood resulting from a cut on the finger, whereas 'dirty blood' receives this title due to its origination from the fecund body. As Siya claims, the 'dirt' can be explained by the body rejecting the blood, as it is something which needs to "come out". In a similar way, Khaya makes the comparison between menstruation and the "digestive system". Here is seems to be implied that menstrual blood is a waste product that the body needs to dispose of, in much the same way as the digestive system dispels bodily waste. In the final extract, the association which Sizwe draws between menstrual blood and other bodily waste (indicated by the statement: "the girl pees") assists in creating this notion of 'disgust' and clearly signals the function of the repertoire of abject femininity in this context.

The 'dirty' 'infectious' and 'smelly' descriptions of menstrual blood also took on gendered meanings when the participants were asked to reflect on how menstruation should be managed. Their descriptions in relation to menstrual management reproduced repertoires of abject femininity ('disgust' and 'smell'), and clearly revealed the gendered meanings attached to menstruation. The following interchange, reveals this:

Extract 24

> **Sizwe:** I think schools should allow like girls (.) <u>especially</u> those who have just started menstruating to like (.) if it's that time of the month then they don't come to school for like two or three weeks /mm/ that thing should be like a law here at school
> **R:** ok so you're saying so that girls should stay at home when they are menstruating (.) it should be a law /yes/ ok (.) what do the other guys think about that?
> **Kagiso:** I agree with him on that because (.) that moment will be very awkward for a boy to see a girl's blood (.) for example, if I see a girl menstruating next to me (.) I'll want to get up and walk out of the class because I've seen something awkward and I've never seen it before /ok/
> **Odwe:** I agree with that guy, because if a boy sees a girl menstruating they say "you see that girl *ntoni ntoni* (what what)" they talk funny things and make it uncomfortable for that girl /oh/ so she must stay at home
> **R:** ok so she must stay at home because she is gonna get teased /yes/ by the guys /yes/ so a girl that's menstruating (.) you're sitting next to her (.) what is it that makes you feel uncomfortable, is it the blood or something else?
> **Akhona:** blood and smell
> **R:** ok it's the smell hey /ja/ ok mm
> **Sizwe:** I think it's the blood and the smell and the fact that <u>I'm</u> sitting next to her (.) like people will be like (.) she's menstruating on you or something like that
> **R:** o::k so will other guys tease you =
> **Sizwe:** = they will tease me and say I was close to her so I smell like that also /ok/ yes

In extract 24, one of the participants (Sizwe), drawing on a legal repertoire, states that it should be a "law" at school that girls should remain at home during their menses. Functionally, this repertoire constructs menstruation (and menstruating women) as needing to be regulated and controlled, and kept distant from others. In the extract, this distancing is performed in a number of ways. Firstly, in agreement with Sizwe's statement, Kagiso claims that women who are menstruating should remain at home for 'two or three weeks' during their menses. Here Kagiso is suggesting that men should not be placed in awkward circumstances (as his comfort as a man is important). Given the construction of menstruation as 'disgusting' and therefore uncomfortable for men, the removal of menstruating women from public spaces seems to be suggested to retain this comfort. Secondly, Odwe, agreeing with Kagiso, takes on the somewhat patronizing position of caring for the menstruating woman. However, in contrast to Kagiso's stance, he indicates that it is for the woman's own good to remain at home. Lastly, Sizwe makes reference to the possibility of being contaminated by the

menstrual blood as indicated by the statements "she's menstruating on you" and "I will smell like that also". This possibility of contamination further positions menstruating women as the 'other' and further reveals the discursive distancing tactics employed by these young men in relation to menstruation.

Despite the more blatant references to the sight and smell of menstrual blood, the participants raise a final point that further highlights the gendered meanings attached to menstruation. In the ensuing discussion: the participants link their feelings of 'awkwardness' to fears of being ridiculed by other men. As one participants states "they [other men] will tease me, and say that I was close to her so I smell like that", indicating his fears of being associated with menstruation. By drawing on repertoires of abject femininity and the gendered nature of menstruation, the participants are able to create numerous subject positions (as discussed above), which allow them to distance themselves from menstruation (and femininity in general).

5.5. Menstruation as a 'Threat' to Masculine Identity

Ratele et al's., (2007) study of young men in the Western Cape showed that black hegemonic masculinity is defined in contrast to anything resembling femininity. In the study, the men who were considered 'masculine men' were those who were able to distance themselves the most from femininity. One of the initial questions posed to the participants in my focus group discussions involved hearing their thoughts and feelings in relation to men talking about menstruation. There was great variability in the responses given to this enquiry, as to be expected in the ideological field of everyday talk. However, despite the variability, the participants drew on a number of repertoires that served to discursively distance themselves as 'men' from menstruation and femininity in general. When responding to the question of whether men should talk about menstruation, the participants stated that menstruation is 'not their business':

Extract 25

>   **Vuyo:** [laughs] no (2) /ok/ no because (2) menstruation (1) is not our business /menstruation is not our business ok/ so we can't talk about (1) menstruation (2) it's what I can say

Extract 26

>   **Luzuko:** I think you must ignore it because it's not your business

When asking the participants to elaborate on their responses, the pattern of responses revealed a striking trend relating to masculine identity. The participants seemed to suggest that menstruation "is not their business" because "it is not a guy thing". It is evident here how the young men are reproducing binary repertoires of gender, which constructs masculinity in relation to its contrast with, and distance from, femininity. In the following extracts, it can be seen how the participants were rhetorically separating themselves from the highly feminine topic of menstruation:

Extract 27

> **Thandile**: …it's not really a man's issue /ok/ because we don't experience that u::m blood coming out (.) we don't use the pads so why should we care?

Extract 28

> **Zama**: so I feel (2) I feel shocked because (.) I wasn't expecting that we, (.) the males, (.) that we are going to speak about menstruation

Extract 29

> **Mandisi:** I'm not comfortable *uyabo ta* (you see my brother), cause, it's not a guy thing you see such that I can even talk about it, you see, so that's why, you see, I don't feel ok but then I am interested to hear and talk about it and maybe tell other people about it

Extract 30

> **Thabo:** just because guys they don't experience that menstruation /ok/ it's only girls' stuff, it's not guys' stuff /ok/ so you can't talk with girls' stuff with guys' stuff (.) guys' stuff is guys stuff (.) even with our stuffs we can't talk with them (.) with our stuff

Here the participants, drawing on a binary repertoire of gender, are discursively distancing themselves as males from menstruation. In the first two extracts, this distancing takes the form of a non-committal stance (indicated by Thandile's rhetorical question: "we don't use the pads so why should we care?") and of strong emotional reactions ("I feel shocked") in relation to speaking about menstruation. Thabo is more explicit in his stance and states that "guys' stuff is guys' stuff", and menstruation is "girls stuff" and should not be spoken about as men. Added to this, these young men claim that menstruation "is not really a man's issue", and similarly, as Mandisi states: "it's not a guy thing".

It is important here (in the context of menstruation as a threat to masculine identity) to highlight the ideological dilemma in Mandisi's statement. Despite his assertion that menstruation is "not a guy thing", he goes on to claim that he is "interested to hear and

talk about it, and maybe tell other people about it". Here Mandisi seems caught in a dilemma between 'the anxiety produced as a result of talking about menstruation as a man' and the prized masculine notions of 'learning' and 'teaching'. The caveat he provides allows for a quick negotiation of this ideological dilemma and permits him to indicate why he volunteered for the discussion. This justification to the apparent contradiction and his adoption of a more conciliatory approach, allows him to appease his own feelings of anxiety in the context of talking about menstruation as a man.

In considering whether menstruation should be spoken about in a group of men, the participants, therefore are positioning themselves in such a way, that they can distance themselves from this taboo and highly feminine topic. Functionally, it appears that associations with menstruation are constructed as a threat to masculine identity, and therefore by discursively positioning themselves as distant from menstruation, these young men are able bolster their masculine identities. As a final observation, based on the above extracts, hegemonic masculinities in this context seem to be defined by their distance from and di-identification with the feminine.

This discursive positioning in order to bolster masculine identity is more clearly shown when the young men talk about menstrual sex. In the following interchange, we see how one of the young men initially positions himself in a 'rebellious stance' towards hegemonic masculinity claiming that in an 'honest' relationship men should 'chat' about menstruation openly with their girlfriends. However, as Bird (1996) found, men who resisted hegemonic masculinity by positioning themselves against it were noted to be ostracized by other men, and failed to alter the gender order. In the following interchange, we see how one of the young men's adoption of a rebellious stance is questioned by one of the participants:

Extract 31

> **Khaya:** ...when a girl has to menstruate she has to menstruate (1) it's not about liking having sex (.) it doesn't go that way (3) but if you are honest to your girlfriend and your girlfriend is honest to you (.) you will, you you will be chatting about those things
> **Soyamo:** may I ask *wena* (you) you are asking about your girlfriend's menstruation *neh*?
> **Khaya:** I never asked her (.) she told me about menstruation

In an accusatory tone, it can clearly be seen how Khaya is challenged by one of the participants for his willingness to talk about menstruation openly with his girlfriend. By being challenged, his masculine identity is immediately under threat, and either he accepts the subsequent marginalisation, subordination and ostracism which may

result from his 'rebellious' stance, or he can realign himself with hegemonic masculine ideals to bolster and reaffirm his masculine identity. Faced with possible subordination, it becomes clear how Khaya does the latter and discursively tries to reaffirm his masculine identity, claiming that as a man you must never 'ask about menstruation', but should rather be told:

Extract 32

> R: mm and with menstruation you mustn't ask your girlfriend she must tell you =
> Khaya: = <u>she</u> must tell you, not you asking about menstruation because it's none of your problem that one
> R: so you should never ask your girlfriend (.) why is that (.) it's not your problem?
> Khaya: yes /wow/ [participants laugh]
> Mdingi: I think it's not a problem when you want to do sex you don't ask questions that do you do this, you don't do this (.) you just go and do it, [participants laugh] you don't even ask are ready are you not ready /ja/ if she's responding to what you are doing (.) keep on moving man, [participants laugh] and if she's not ready she's going to tell you no I'm not ready because I'm on menstruation /mm/ but if she's not on menstruation you will sleep with that girl for sure
> R: ok (7) so if a girl says to you (.) you are about to have sex, 'I can't have sex I'm menstruating' you say you must just go for it hey?
> Khaya: <u>no</u> you must see you must check if she's really menstruating or not, [participants laugh] =/P: you need proof/= yes you need proof of that I must see the pad, /ok/ oh she is menstruating =/P: or the blood/= or the blood that comes out /mm/ if she's lying [participants laugh] we will have sex

In the final statement by Khaya, we see a remarkedly different rhetoric, when compared to his initial statement. Khaya's initial rhetoric of "honesty" and his willingness to speak "openly" with his girlfriend about sex, is replaced (in the final statement) by a rhetoric of 'needing proof' and physically 'checking to see if she is really menstruating or not'. Here we see how Khaya discursively aligns himself in a way that distances him from menstruation and therefore wards off feelings of anxiety associated with possible subordination. Added to this, Khaya and Mdingi are aligning themselves with the notion of 'men being entitled to sex' in the South African context. As claimed in the above interchange, a woman claiming she is 'not ready', due to her menstrual status, is an insufficient reason for withholding sex from a man and without proof of her menstrual status, sex should continue. These findings are in line with some of the research conducted on coercive sex in the South African context. Wood and Jewkes (2001) found that an essential component of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa is the ability to control women sexually and is, therefore, essential to being a 'real' man in this context. These findings, according to Wood and Jewkes (2001) have implications for discursive positioning in relation to sexual consent amongst same-gender peers (as seen in the above extract).

The extract, therefore, clearly reveals how threats to masculine identity, characterized by possible subordination and marginalisation, are discursively negotiated within the context of menstruation. In this particular example, the possibility of subordination and ostracism proved to be too great for this young man to manage and therefore his 'safest' option was to realign himself with hegemonic masculinity.

The possibility of subordination within the gender hierarchy is again revealed in the data when men talking about (and being associated with) menstruation brings into question one's sexual orientation. This is revealed in the following interchange:

Extract 33

> **R**: ok so what if you see (.) what if you see a guy talking to a girl about menstruation (.) what will you think of that guy? [participants laugh]
> Thabo: *yoh* that guy =
> **Lonwabo**: = it's a gay =
> **Siyamthanda**: =it's a gay [participants laugh] =
> **Mandisi**: you see (1) there are those, you see, i*moffie* (gays), you see, the gay guys (.) those guys they <u>do</u> know about menstruation, you see, because all the things they are related to girls and stuff, you know gay people (.) it's not like we're discriminating them, we're just making a (.) they understand (.) you see *ke* (then) if you saw a guy with a girl talking about that you'll just assume that he's a gay guy, he's dating another guy /*ja*/ so you won't know if it's a guy really guy or it's not /ok/
> **R**: ok so do you all agree with that?
> **All**: YES
> **R**: ok (4) what will you say to him if you see him (.) will you say something or will you leave it?
> **Lonwabo**: /laughs/ we will just walk past them /laughs/
> **Thabo**: if that guy I know that guy is talking about menstruation *mhlambi* (maybe) with that girl /mm/ I will ask him (.) 'Hey *fondini* (man) why are you talking about menstruation, where do you <u>fit in</u> all of that', you see what I mean that, <u>what does it have to do with you</u> that's girls' stuff, why are you even having a conversation, it's ok to hear bits and pieces but not a full on conversation with a girl about such things (.) this girl is telling you about menstruation and you are even responding you're not a doctor

Here the participants construct knowledge about "girls stuff" and associations with menstruation in general, as being synonymous with being gay. As Connell (1995) argued, gay men in the hierarchal gender configuration are often subordinated and marginalized. The subordination of gay men is further confirmed by Ratele et al's., (2007) study of black masculinity in the Western Cape in which boys' showed how the young men were pressured to prove their heterosexual identities. In the study, many of the participants would perform exaggerated beliefs of masculinity that were in contrast to femininity and other subordinated versions of masculinity (Ratele et al., 2007).

In the above extract, it is clear how the men who associate themselves with menstruation (the highly feminine topic), are immediately assumed to be gay (the

subordinated version of masculinity). Mandisi makes his position clear and suggests that one can assume that another man is gay based on his knowledge about menstruation and his associations with menstruating women. He further states that if this hypothetical man were talking to a girl about menstruation "you won't know if it's a guy really". The other young men, when prompted by the researcher, seem to be in agreement with this statement. This distancing (of the subordinated version of masculinity) is performed in two main ways in the extract. Firstly, the use of a derogatory name *'imoffie'* indicates the distancing taken up by one of the participants Mandisi. Secondly, the this distancing is shown by the renditions of challenging a 'gay' person about his conversation with a young woman about menstruation (as indicated by Thabo's last statement in extract 33). Again we see how these young men are negotiating their masculine identities by discursively positioning themselves in ways that align them closer to hegemonic masculine ideals in order to avoid being associated with 'being gay', and therefore facing possible subordination themselves.

5.6. "Buying Tampons" – an Ideological Dilemma

Within the data, a similar discursive pattern emerged when the participants were asked whether they would buy menstrual products for their girlfriends. In the following extracts, these young men seem to be caught in a double bind, an ideological dilemma, where two opposing ideals are being negotiated. On the one side, the young men are claiming that if you love your girlfriend and care for her, you will and should buy her menstrual products. On the other side, the young men fear that in buying these products for their girlfriend, their masculine identities are at risk and will be scrutinized and questioned by others. In terms of the former ideal, the participants draw on a relational repertoire characterized by love, care and compassion and position themselves in a 'rebellious stance' (see Wetherell and Edley, 1999) towards prevailing ideals of hegemonic masculinity. We see this in the following extracts:

Extract 34

> **Anele:** if you love your girlfriend (.) you will <u>buy</u> (.) those pads =

Extract 35

> **Thabo:** sometimes you see (.) *ja* you can buy it (.) you can go and buy it, you see, just because she's your girlfriend, you love her, you see, and she's in that situation and in that situation you love her (.) she will expect, you see, your help that girl, you see, she will expect oh my man will help me and go there and buy pads, you see, and give her (.) and she will be surprised (.) just because it's not (.) that thing, it's not happening /mm/ all the time to people, you see, she will

be surprised, 'oh my man is buying pads for me' this thing is private, you see, (.) she will be sup... *ja* it's not a nice thing for guys, you see, but if you love your girlfriend (.) you can buy

In these extracts, the young men are drawing on a relational repertoire to create certain conditions around buying menstrual hygiene products. In this sense, the degree to which 'love' is present in a relationship is the extent to which permission is granted for buying menstrual hygiene products.

The young men are, however, quick to position themselves in a way that aligns them closer to black hegemonic masculine ideals, in the face of possible marginalization and subordination by their male peers. The same young men, who spoke of love and compassion and adopted a rebellious subject position towards hegemonic masculine ideals are later seen to position themselves in ways that align them closer to local hegemonic masculine ideals, when their masculine identities are under threat. The following extracts represent this:

Extract 36

> **Thabo:** just because that thing your girl will always expect (.) that pads when she's on her menstruation and tell her friends [participants laugh] he's buying me pads, you see, (.) my boyfriend is buying me pads, you see, and now people will look at you that thing will go all over (.) that guy buys pads for her girlfriend [participants laugh]
> **R:** so if you hear that a guy is buying pads for his girlfriend are you gonna tease him? /All: *JA and laugh*/
> **Thabo**: yes *yoh* what will I call it, 'you are not man enough', you are being controlled by the woman [participants laugh]
> **Mandisi:** it's like when you do that (.) you buy your girlfriend pads, it's like (.) you are her slave [participants laugh *ja ja ja*] it's like you are her slave, although you are her boyfriend you see (.) when you when you start buying her some pads, *yoh,* you are going to do things 'hey wash that menstruation' you don't know about that /laughs/
> **Thabo:** people will look at you as if you are washing her panties /her panties/ =
> **R:** =what I'm hearing (.) can I tell you what I am hearing in this is that (.) if I do those things I'm not gonna be seen as a man /All: *JA YES*/
> **Mandisi:** Half man /half man/ [participants laugh]

Faced with possible subordination and marginalisation, these young men are discursively distancing themselves from anything representing femininity (in this case menstrual hygiene products). They speak clearly about fearing what others will think of them, not wanting to be controlled by their girlfriends (being seen as "her slave" and "washing her panties"), and fearing that they will be seen as "half men". Functionally, this 'jockeying for position' in relation to prevailing ideals of hegemonic masculinity (in this case, being in control) is done in order to preserve their masculine identities. The ideological dilemma identified here reveals the negotiation of two opposing ideals. The young men, on the one hand, desire to show kindness, love and compassion but are

faced with a discursive context that associates these ideals with 'being a half man'. In other words, by agreeing to purchase menstrual hygiene products for their girlfriends, and therefore adopting a 'rebellious position' (towards black hegemonic masculine ideals), they risk facing subordination and marginalisation. Many of the young men, realising the marginalization that may be induced by aligning themselves in this way, opted to instead discursively position themselves in a way that aligns them closer to prevailing hegemonic masculine ideals.

The relational repertoire associated with 'care', 'love', 'kindness' and 'compassion', therefore posed too great of a threat to the young men's masculine identities. By discursively distancing themselves from anything resembling femininity (i.e., relational repertoires and the highly feminine menstrual hygiene products), these young men could maintain an 'imaginary position' that would prevent them from facing marginalisation and subordination. Here, yet another element of their lived ideology comes into play, where 'compassion, love and care', is discursively opposed to 'being a man', and therefore being in control. These young men become the battle ground where the struggle between these opposing ideals are played out (Edley, 2001). This final interchange, involving the young men talking about buying menstrual hygiene products for their girlfriends, builds on this theme and further reveals how the young men are discursively bolstering their masculine identities:

Extract 37

R: so what sorts of things are people going to say if they see you (.)what are things are you afraid of (.) that people will say to you guys if you are carrying pads from the shop?
Zama: no you are not going, just going to take the pads to let everyone see in public (.) maybe you are just going to put it in a packet because, [participants laugh] because if you take it so that everyone can see it they will say 'no you are just a coward you're just afraid of your girlfriend", or something (5)
R: so even though you will (.) am I hearing you correctly (.) even though you will (.) you say it's fine to buy for your girlfriend because you're just gonna hide it, /yes/ would you still buy it?
Zama: yes I will still buy it
R: ok (.) why would guys you hide it though? (.) That's what I wanna know (.) is it because you are afraid of what people will say? [some participants laugh] (3) help me understand why you guys are afraid to show that the pad=
Vuyo: =because people will doubt about you (.) that you are a male or a female /ok/
Zama: I don't think they will doubt but they will say you are afraid of your girlfriend /mm/ and some other stuff and they will think that you are afraid of your girlfriend and then (.) your girlfriend is going to beat you up if you didn't buy her pads [participants laugh]
R: so a man if he buys tampons or pads for his girlfriend it's because she's controlling him (.) telling him what to do (5) and you said because (.) is he a male or a female (.) what do you mean by that? (3) [participants laugh]
Vuyo: what I mean (2) I mean (1) they will make some jokes about you (2) say you are a female there you are buying pads /mm *uyimoffie* (you're gay)/ you are gay or something like that

In the above interchange, I was trying to understand the participants' hesitations and fears surrounding buying menstrual hygiene products for their girlfriends, as the question generated a great deal of discussion. In the interchange, one of the young men admits that he fears having his masculine identity questioned when others start doubting whether he is "a male of a female". Added to this, the young men talk about fears of being seen as "a coward" who is afraid of their girlfriends and/or controlled by them. Having one's gender identity questioned in this context, and being seen to be a coward who is controlled by his girlfriend, are associated with masculinities which have been subordinated and marginalized. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, is associated with being courageous (not 'cowardly'), in charge ('not controlled'), and to not be mistaken for a woman or an effeminate man ("gay"). Added to this, Zama's negotiation of whether or not he will buy menstrual hygiene products for his girlfriend reveals that hegemonic masculinity is largely a performance. His reference to be being seen in public and fearing what others will say, reveals the staged and show-like nature of hegemonic masculinity in this context.

5.7. Male Sexual Drive Repertoire

The data revealed that different repertoires were drawn upon when the young men spoke about having sex with 'non-menstruating' women in comparison to 'menstruating' woman. When talking about having sex with non-menstruating women, the young men are clearly seen to be utilizing the male sexual drive repertoire. The male sexual drive discourse, originally identified by Hollway (1984, as cited in Burr, 1995), suggests that male sexuality arises out of a man's biological drive. Sex is therefore constructed as an urge that needs to be satisfied which positions women as 'objects' of a male's biological drives. By drawing on this repertoire, men construct their sexuality in such a way that their biological sexual urges overpower reason, intellect and self-control. We see the utilization of this repertoire in the following interchange:

Extract 38

> **Thandile:** u::m /laughs/ um, sometimes, um, when a guy gets horny um (.) at that point u::m a guy is <u>brainless</u> (.) he just <u>does</u> (.) I don't know man I can't explain it (2) there's like that <u>force</u> (.) let's have sex now now now *ja* /mm/
> **R:** ok so when a guy wants to have sex it's like there's a force /*ja*/ tell me about that (.) what does that mean?
> **Luyanda:** you are desperate of this [/All laugh/ /desperate/]

> R: ...so you're desperate (.) you're desperate, there's a <u>force</u> (.) describe what does that force <u>feel</u> like? (3)
> Mpumzi: you are not thinking straight
> Thandile: there's like a <u>trance</u> that like (.) you, you, you, you're not thinking straight (.) you just wanna <u>stick</u> that penis into the vagina /mm/ that's all
> R: so do you feel like you lose control a bit /ja/
> Luyanda: you <u>don't</u> listen /you don't listen/ <u>at all</u> /ok/ (3)

In the above extract we see how these young men metaphorically liken male sexuality to a "brainless force", and a "trance". They elaborate, on this 'trance-like' state stating that it causes a man to "lose control", "not listen", and develop an inability to "think straight". Male sexuality is constructed as a powerful and seemingly uncontrollable "force".

Further, the male sexual drive repertoire is drawn on in a way that objectifies women and constructs them in demeaning ways. In the following extract, it can clearly be seen how men, within the context of sex, liken women to "meat", and further strip them of their subjectivity:

Extract 39

> **Buhle:** as Aya said a meat is a meat [all still laughing] so you just get to the point if that girl have that thing or what
> **Mdingi:** as you said it he likes to say a meat is a meat so =/P: men must eat/= men must eat [all laugh]
> **R:** meat is meat and men must eat
> **Mdingi**: men must eat (.) it's his status [participants laugh]
> **R:** so let's look at that (.) meat is meat but men must eat (.) what does that mean?
> **Mdingi:** every girl even if the girl is =
> **Khaya:** = it doesn't matter if she's ugly or she's beautiful (.) a <u>vagina is a vagina</u> (.) you must always shoot [participants laugh]

In the above extract, it is clear how the statement "meat is meat and a man must eat", has become a catch-phrase for male sexuality in this particular socio-cultural context. Meat, here, is a metaphor for women's bodies and the phrase "a man must eat" symbolizes the 'uncontrollable' nature of male sexuality (as constructed by the male sexual drive repertoire). Functionally, as stated earlier, this repertoire positions women's bodies as objects of male sexual desire, which satisfy and remedy the "force" and "trance-like" state of male sexuality. The male sexual drive discourse and the inherent construction of male sexuality is closely aligned to local hegemonic masculine ideals in the South African context, and reveals how these young men are aligning themselves with these ideals. However, remembering that the aforementioned extracts refer to sex with 'non-menstruating women', an important contrast (in terms of what repertoires are utilized and the discursive positioning) can be seen when the

young men are asked to reflect on having sex with a woman who is menstruating. In the following interchange, the young men move away from the hegemony of the male sexual drive repertoire and adopt a more 'ordinary' position which constructs a more controlled and compassionate version of male sexuality:

Extract 40

> **Thulani:** um I think you must control your emotions (.) when you sleep with the girl you must control yourself because you know she is on her period
> **Sipho:** I have a question for this man (.) what if *kengoku* (now) it's <u>very</u> cold? (2)
> **Thulani:** you <u>must</u> control yourself (.) what else can you do
> **Sipho:** and a blanket is made for you to warm you up (.) not other person to warm you up [participants laugh]
> **Mdingi:** as Sipho said if what if it's cold (.) as we are guys when it's cold you think (.) where is that girl [participants laugh] when it's cold *ja* all you think is I wanna touch my girl and then touch (3) you see /laughs/
> **Aya:** but you do the sex and then you feel shame after all (.) when you're finished having sex (.) a lot of blood is coming (.) mess
> **Sipho:** I have to understand that Thulani's opinion that you must control yourself, your emotions (.) because it <u>depends</u> that you are a man or a husband or something (.) as a man you are sleeping with your wife, you must try to control your emotions to sleep and to understand her (.) pains [referring to menstrual cramps] that's all /mm/

Here the young men, although utilizing aspects of the male sexual drive repertoire, are discursively positioning themselves against it. In doing this they draw on the notions of exercising self-control (which is more acceptable than the notion of "being controlled" by menstruating women as highlighted earlier), regulating one's emotions and "understanding her pain". This is in contrast to previous constructions of male sexuality as a "force" and a "trance" that could not be controlled. Added to this, the construction of a more 'sensitive' position in relation to male sexuality is further motivated by a fear of being contaminated by the menstrual blood during sex. To paraphrase Aya's statement: having sex with a menstruating woman, means that the man shares the "mess" and takes on the "shame" that is usually confined to the woman. These less demeaning constructions of male sexuality within the context of menstrual sex, therefore, serve to disrupt male sexual desire.

These more equitable constructions of sexuality within the context of menstrual sex are further shown in the following extracts:

Extract 41

> **Lungiso:** (2) I want her to sleep next to me in my bed, <u>if</u> I trust her, I will listen to her when she says she's on her period, then we're not going to have sex until she is done with her periods

Extract 42

> **Sizwe**: I wouldn't have sex with a girl who is menstruating /mm/ like I would <u>actually ask</u> her if she is on her periods /mm/ and if she is (.) I just have to keep my body to myself

Here the young men are further positioning themselves against the male sexual drive discourse, and promoting a less 'forceful' ("I will listen to her") and more 'controlled' ("I just have to keep my body to myself") version of male sexuality.

In summary, everyday talk on male sexuality within the context of non-menstrual sex often invokes the male sexual drive repertoire. Drawing on this repertoire, male sexuality is constructed as an uncontrollable "force" that objectifies women, labelling them as "pieces of meat". This rhetoric is in contrast to men's talk about menstrual sex which serves to disrupt the "force" and trance-like nature of male sexuality. Everyday talk about menstrual sex, promotes a more positive rhetoric characterized by "listening", "understanding", and "self-control", and therefore constructs a more equitable version of male sexuality. Again, menstruation serves as a threat to one of the core strategies of local hegemonic masculinities in the South African context: virile sexuality.

5.8. Conclusion

This analysis of men's talk about menstruation and menstruating women reveals two overarching themes. The first of these is the way men construct menstruating women in demeaning ways. These positions are made available by the aforementioned repertoires of dualism, bad (versus ideal) femininity and abject femininity. Firstly, the utilisation of the dualistic repertoire, as seen by the rhetorical contrast drawn between the 'menstrual self' and 'non-menstrual self', functioned to position menstruating women as the 'other'. Secondly, the bad (versus ideal) femininity repertoire built on this theme, and revealed how menstruating women were constructed as embodying typically more masculine qualities. This seemed to pose a threat to the young men's masculine identities and provided an explanation for their criticisms and demeaning constructions of menstruating women. Lastly, the repertoire of abject femininity revealed the gendered meanings attached to menstruation where participants constructed menstrual blood as "dirty blood" due to is origin in the fecund body.

The second overarching theme, which emerged in the data revealed how menstruation was constructed as a threat to masculine identity. Specifically, it was shown how the participants claimed that menstruation was "not their business, as it was not a guy

thing". Added to this, it was revealed how fears of being associated with menstruation led to men 'jockeying for position' in a way that aligned them closer to local hegemonic masculine ideals. I then highlighted an important ideological dilemma, which emerged in relation to the young men considering whether or not they would purchase menstrual hygiene products for their girlfriends. The ideological dilemma showed how the relational concepts of 'compassion, love and care' were constructed as being discursively opposed to 'being a man'. Overall, it seems that associations with menstrual hygiene products and menstruation in general poses a threat to masculine identity. The data reveals that the young men are discursively positioning themselves in ways that align themselves with hegemonic masculinity in their context. Menstruation, as a marker of a woman's fecundity, and the hallmark of femininity (along with highly feminine products such as pads and tampons), therefore poses a threat to masculine identity. By constructing menstruation in demeaning ways, and therefore creating distance from it, the men are able to preserve their masculine selves and discursively secure their position in the gender hierarchy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This study aimed to investigate: the discourses employed by young men (in a resource poor context in South Africa) with regards to menstruation and the way these discourses serve to enable specific subject positions that may reproduce, comply with and/or resist hegemonic masculinity. In this chapter, I conclude by providing an overview of the different theories and frameworks that were utilized in order to best meet the broader aims of this research. I then provide an overview of the significant findings of this research and how the research questions were addressed. I end, with my reflections on some of the limitations of this study and my suggestions for further research.

6.2. Overview of the Research

In Chapter 2, I provided a broader context in which to understand the perceptions and beliefs relating to menstruation and menstruating women in contemporary society. I did this by exploring the structural challenges related to menstruation in the sub-Saharan context and other resource poor areas. I then explored religious beliefs and historical myths associated with menstruation, which led into a discussion of the contemporary medical and psychological discourses related to menstruation. Staying true to the aims of the research, I explored social constructions of menstruation and femininity, and men's perceptions of, and actions concerning menstruation.

This study was located within a social constructionist paradigm and was, therefore, guided by a number of assumptions about the nature of social reality. One of these assumptions, was that the gendered subject is constructed through numerous intersecting discourses that are historically located and context specific. Within these discourses, unequal power relations are created which serve to subordinate women and bolster men's positions in society. Connell's (1995) conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity was therefore used to understand the intricacies of these hierarchical arrangements of gender in society. Here it was shown how hegemonic masculinity embodies an overarching cultural ideal in which all men strive to live up to. This ideal was understood as a pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that legitimates the subordination of women by allowing male dominance over women to continue (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was, therefore, important in this research as it aided in understanding the particular functions of the gender hierarchy and how it is reproduced. I showed how Connell (1995) identified a broad array of definitions and constructions of masculinity, that become organized (hierarchically) in the form of hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinities. Working towards the theoretical application of Connells (1995) framework, I drew on the contributions of Wetherell and Edley (1998, 1999, 2014) which provided a powerful theoretical lens in which to analyze the data. Here I discussed how men rhetorically construct masculinity choosing to either identify or deidentify with hegemonic masculinity according to three subject positions: 'ordinary positions', 'heroic positions' and 'rebellious positions'.

Chapter 4, aided in grounding Connell's (1995) masculinities framework in the South African context and provided a way in which to understand the construction of hegemonic masculinities in resource poor areas. In doing this, I drew on previous South African research on hegemonic and other masculinities by identifying two overarching themes. The first of these related to hegemonic masculinity being defined by its distance from femininity and feminine practice (Ratele et al., 2007). The second, was the tendency for hegemonic masculinities to be reinforced through blatant homophobia and appeals to heterosexuality (Ratele, 2014).

Through purposive sampling I managed to recruit a total of 37 young men from two former DET schools in the Eastern Cape. With the assistance of my co-researcher (Manale Makuse) I was able to conduct six focus groups in both isiXhosa and English. The focus groups were then transcribed with the relevant checks done by an independent bi-lingual translator. In the analysis, I drew on Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive framework and Wetherell and Edley's (1997, 1998, 1999, 2014) contributions. I now turn to some of the core findings of this research and the ways in which the research questions were addressed.

6.3. Summary of Research Findings

The core findings of this research related to the threat posed by menstruation to the participants' masculine identities. What remained clear throughout the analysis was the pressure that these young men expressed in discursively performing hegemonic masculinity when talking about a the 'highly feminine' topic such of menstruation. A

significant way in which this was performed and exaggerated was in the discursive separation of hegemonic masculinity from anything resembling femininity (i.e., menstruation). By drawing on the repertoires of abject femininity, bad (versus) ideal femininity and a gendered binary repertoire, these young men were able to discursively distance themselves from menstruation in order to bolster and affirm their masculine identities.

Firstly, it was shown how the abject femininity repertoire assisted in creating a notion of 'disgust' which allowed the participants to distance themselves from menstruation (and femininity in general). Secondly, the bad (versus ideal) femininity repertoire revealed how menstruating women were constructed as 'lazy', 'excusatory', 'demanding', and, therefore, unable to fulfil the typical gendered roles expected of them (e.g., household chores, such as cleaning). Menstruating women were, therefore, constructed as transgressing traditionally accepted gendered arrangements (such as women being responsible for household chores, and men being in charge of making decisions). Lastly, by drawing on the gender binary repertoire, it was shown how the participants rhetorically separated the 'menstrual self' from the 'non-menstrual self', so as to further position menstruating women as the 'other', and affirm their masculine identities.

In the second major theme highlighted in the analysis, I discussed how menstruation was constructed as a threat to participants' identities as men, and their overall position in the gender hierarchy. Firstly, I revealed how the participants' constructed knowledge about "girls stuff" and associations with menstruation in general, as being synonymous with being gay. This finding echoed Ratele's (2014) exploration of how homophobia and appeals to heterosexuality are linked to constructions of hegemonic masculinity in the South African context (Ratele, 2014). The participants in my study made frequent references to fears of being called 'gay' within the context of talking about menstruation and buying menstrual hygiene products for their girlfriends. Secondly, it was shown how the powerful and seemingly uncontrollable "force" of male sexuality was disrupted by menstruation in general. A remarkably different rhetoric was seen when the young men spoke about menstrual sex, and how it was associated with taking on the "shame" that is usually confined to women. Menstruation, therefore, served as a threat to one of the core strategies of local hegemonic masculinities in the South African context: virile sexuality. Lastly, it was shown how many of these young

men complied with and reproduced constructions of hegemonic masculinity in their context, when talking about menstruation in a group of male peers. By discursively distancing themselves from menstruation (and femininity), they were able to avoid possible marginalisation and subordination and bolster their positions within the gender hierarchy.

In conducting this research, I have come to stand in agreement with the influential feminist scholar Simone De Beauvoir (1949) who first articulated how broader systems of patriarchy disrupt gender equality by imposing strict norms governing the fecund body. Beauvoir reasoned that biological differences between the sexes are "insufficient for setting up a hierarchy of the sexes; and they fail to explain why woman is the other" (p. 65). Rather, patriarchal ideologies have associated the fecund body with demeaning and oppressive meanings. Beauvoir's statement is especially true within the context of menstruation as the strict norms governing menstruation and stigma related oppression have further subordinated women in society. It was Gloria Steinem (1978) who imagined that "if men could menstruate, menstruation would become an enviable, boastworthy and masculine event" (as cited in Chrisler & Dunnavan-Robledo, 2013, p. 13) Menstruation only seems to be shrouded in taboo and stigma because women do it and I concur with Kissling (2002, p. 5) who states that "you can tell a lot about how a society views women by looking at how they deal with menstruation."

6.4.   Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Building on my discussion regarding the data collection in chapter 3, the advantages of being a non-insider (in terms of the cultural taboos in relation to men speaking about menstruation) were however, accompanied by some disadvantages. One disadvantage was the language differences between myself and the participants. This language barrier led to an overreliance on the co-researcher to translate what was being said in the focus group, which often interrupted the flow of these discussions. Added to this, the opportunities to ask follow-up questions in relation to what the participants had said (due to these language barriers) led me to miss out on important cultural nuances. This was discovered in my discussions with the co-researcher (Manale Makuse) after the conclusion of each focus group. The stop-start nature of the focus group discussions, therefore, quite possibly impacted on the quality of the data obtained. Regardless, the advantages of being a non-insider in this research

seemed to outweigh these aforementioned disadvantages. Added to this, the chosen methodology led to the voices of alternative men being suffocated and silenced by the dominant discourses of abject femininity being employed by many of the young men in the focus groups. Future research could possibly include individual interviews in combination with focus groups to give voice to these alternative voices.

Another limitation in this study was the focus on men alone in the reproduction of the discourses surrounding menstruation, hegemonic masculinity and femininity. According to Macleod (2007) South African masculinities' studies are often guilty of falling into the phallocentric trap (i.e., focusing on men and male power alone). Masculinity studies, therefore, largely exclude women as participants and as subjects of the research. According to Macleod (2007) by focusing solely on men in masculinity studies a risk is created for reproducing the marginalized status of women in South Africa. Authors writing on masculinity may criticize feminism for its focus on women alone. However, as Macleod (2007, p.8) so aptly states: the "focus on women serves to foreground what has historically been neglected either to the absent trace or to the exoticised 'other', while focus on men risks re-producing their status as the taken for granted." By ignoring women and focusing exclusively on men in masculinity studies little is done improve the position of women in society. However, Macleod does acknowledge that bringing a 'highly feminine' topic (such as menstruation) into the domain of male talk, could prevent researchers from falling into this trap.

Future research should, therefore, aim to investigate the specific ways in which women reproduce constructions of hegemonic masculinity and the discourses surrounding menstruation in South Africa. Specifically, it would beneficial to conduct women-only focus groups with the aim of understanding the discourses employed by young school going girls in relation to menstruation. Added to this, mixed focus groups (including young women and men) may add important data to the discussion of the gendered challenges related to menstruation in the South African context.

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Appendix 1: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus Group Discussion Guide

This study aims to investigate: the discourses employed by young men with regards to menstruation and the way these discourses serve to enable specific subject positions that may reproduce, comply with and/or resist hegemonic masculinity. Throughout the interaction within the focus groups the moderator is encouraged to pay specific attention to the different subject positions taken up by members of the group.

Welcome

Begin by Introducing facilitator and the co-researcher and then distribute relevant consent letters and forms to each participant. Make sure each form is filled in adequately and handed back to either the facilitator or co-researcher. Ask which language (English and/or Xhosa) the participants would prefer the focus group to be conducted in.

1. **Explanation of the process**

   Explanation of who we are and what wAe are aiming to do and what will be done with the information that is gathered.

2. **Logistics**

   - This focus group will last approximately 1.5 hours
   - You are allowed to go to the bathroom if needed
   - Please help yourself to refreshments
   - You are welcome to leave if you are at any point feeling uncomfortable

3. **Ground Rules**

   Ask the participants to brainstorm some ground rules to adhere to throughout the discussion. Essential ground rules include:

   - Equal participation
   - confidentiality
   - Turn off cell phones if possible
   - Have fun

4. **Begin the recording of the session**

5. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

6. Introductions

- Ask each participant to begin by introducing themselves and telling the group an interesting fact about them.

7. Engagement questions

1. How comfortable is everyone today knowing that menstruation is the topic of our discussion?
2. Discuss whether or not you think men should talk about menstruation? Give reasons?
3. Briefly begin by describing some of the things you know about menstruation?
   - Explain what you know about biological process of menstrual cycle?

8. Exploration questions

1. What are some of the cultural beliefs that you have heard of regarding menstruation?
2. What are some of your personal beliefs about menstruation?
3. How would you describe a woman who is menstruating?
4. Would you treat a women differently if you knew she was menstruating? How so?
5. How do you think that you as men should respond to menstruation?
6. What are your thoughts about sex with a girl who is menstruating?
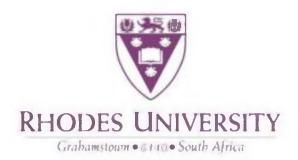   - What do you think of men who do this?

9. Exit questions

1. Of all the things we discussed today what were some of the key things that stood out for you?
2. What was the most difficult thing for you to talk about today?
3. What has it been like talking about menstruation with a group of men?

Appendix 2: Transcription Conventions

Ian Parkers (1992) Transcription Conventions	
Symbol	Meaning
Round Brackets (like this)	Where doubts arise regarding the accuracy of the material
Square Brackets e.g., [ ]	To clarify something to the reader
Forward Slashes / /	When there are noises, words of assents and others
Equals sign =	Indicates the absence of a gap between one speaker and another at the end of one utterance and the beginning of the next utterance
Round brackets with a number inserted e.g., (2)	Indicates pauses in speech with the number of seconds in round brackets
Round brackets with a full stop e.g., (.)	Indicates pauses in speech lasting less that one second
Colon e.g., ::	Indicates an extended sound in the speech
Underlining e.g., _____	Indicates emphases in speech content
Italics	Indicates use of i*siXhosa* word or a *colloquial* or *slang* phrase

Appendix 3: RPERC Approval Letter

RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT • Tel: (046) 603 8500 / 8501 • Fax: (046) 603 7614 • e-mail: psychology@ru.ac.za

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

3 June 2015

Jonathan Glover
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Jonathan

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2015/15

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2015/15 and title, 'Young men's talk about menstruation and hegemonic masculinity: A discourse analysis', served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 3 June 2015. The project has been given ethics clearance.

Please ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.
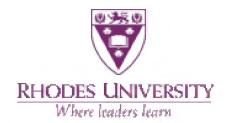
Yours sincerely

Dr Jacqui Marx
CHAIRPERSON OF THE RPERC

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Appendix 4: RUESC Approval Letter

Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee, Rhodes University, P O Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140

Tel: +27 46 603 7366 . Fax: +27 46 603 8934 . Email: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

23-Sep-2015

Dear Jonathan Glover

Ethics Clearance: Young men's talk about hegemonic masculinity and menstruation: A discourse analysis

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Glover

This letter confirms that a research proposal with tracking number: RU-HSD-15-06-0010 and title: **Young men's talk about hegemonic masculinity and menstruation: A discourse analysis** was given ethics clearance by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether or not the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor M. Goebel: Chairperson RUESC.

Note:
1. This clearance is valid from the date on this letter to the time of completion of data collection.
2. The ethics committee cannot grant retrospective ethics clearance.
3. Progress reports should be submitted annually unless otherwise specified.

Appendix 5: Department of Education Approval Letter

Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

Mr. Jonathan Glover

16 Osborne Road

Selborne

East London

5201

Dear Mr. Glover

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A MASTERS THESIS: YOUNG MEN'S TALK ABOUT MENSTRUATION AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY – A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.

2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research in a selected school under the jurisdiction of Grahamstown District of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:

    a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;

    b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;

    c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;

    d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;

    e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as educators' programmes should not be interrupted;

    f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;

building blocks for growth

g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;

h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;

i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis.

j. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary.

k. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation upon completion of your research.

l. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.

m. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).

n. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation.

3. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE.

4. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.

5. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Ms. NY Kanjana on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email nykanjana@live.co.za should you need any assistance.

NY KANJANA
DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH & SECRETARIAT SERVICES

FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION

Appendix 6: Letter to Principals

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a Master's student at Rhodes University wanting to conduct research within your school. The overall aim of this research project is to investigate how young men talk about menstruation, and subsequently how this positions women in society.

The research forms part of the Siyahluma project that is a collaborative programme that aims to identify the challenges faced by school going girls in relation to menstruation. The researchers that will be involved are:

- Prof Catriona Macleod, SARChi Chair of the Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (CSSR) unit at Rhodes University and supervisor of this research.
- Jonathan Glover, Masters student in Psychology and a member of the CSSR, under the supervision of Prof Catriona Macleod.
- A bi-lingual male research assistant

In this letter I request permission to conduct the research in your school. One other school in the Makana Municipality district will be approached to participate in this study. Permission to approach schools in order to request that they participate in the research has been obtained from N. Y Kanjana in the Strategic Planning Policy Research Division of the Department of Education of the Eastern Cape. This specific component of the research is being conducted by Jonathan Glover under the supervision of Catriona Macleod. Prof Catriona Macleod, can be contacted on: 046 603 7328 and by email: cmacleod@ru.ac.za. Jonathan Glover can be contacted on 082 390 8634 and by email: jonomglover@gmail.com.

The research will involve six focus groups (three within each school), lasting approximately one and a half hours each and consisting of between 6-8 grade 10 learners.

Before the study is implemented, informed consent will be gained from the learners and their parents. Those learners who are minors must have parental consent to participate. Information shall be provided through letters and participants will sign an informed consent form. Please find the letters and informed consent forms that will be used for each of the above-mentioned groups attached for your perusal.

We wish to draw your attention to the fact that, in addition to the usual ethical principles of voluntary participation, assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, and the right to withdrawal, the following principles will be applied:

- The name of your school will not appear in any publications or research reports that emanate from this study. Although contextual information regarding the school (type of school, number of learners, socio-economic and demographic feature of the area) will be included in the

research reports, the area will not be revealed and all efforts will be made to ensure that your school is not identifiable.

- The research is not meant as an evaluation of your school's or the educators' performance.
- In the feedback reports, the results from all the schools will be aggregated in such a way as to not make it possible to identify a particular school, or set of learners.
- In line with the principle of confidentiality, the specific information learners share with the researchers will not be reported to you. However, once the stages of data collection and analysis have taken place, the researchers will distribute feedback reports to all of the stakeholders and participants (learners, educators, principals and parents).
- Parents of the learners will be informed that their children's performance in the focus groups will not be assessed through the research, and that the information their children provide will not be shared with the educators or principals.

A full ethical protocol has served before the Rhodes University Ethics Committee. Ethical clearance was obtained on 23 September 2015. Pease see ethical clearance letter attached.

I formally request your permission to conduct this research at your school and the authority to approach the learners in terms of their participation in the research. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have any further questions regarding this project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Catriona Macleod: _____

Jonathan Glover: _____

Appendix 7: Letter of Consent to Parents (Also Translated into isiXhosa)

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR YOUR SON'S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am a Master's student at Rhodes University wanting to conduct research within the school that your son attends. The overall aim of this research project is to investigate how young men talk about menstruation, and subsequently how this positions women in society.

The research forms part of the Siyahluma project that is a collaborative programme that aims to identify the challenges faced by school going girls in relation to menstruation. The researchers that will be involved are:

- Prof Catriona Macleod, SARChI Chair of the Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (CSSR) unit at Rhodes University and supervisor of this research.
- Jonathan Glover, Masters student in Psychology and a member of the CSSR, under the supervision of Prof Catriona Macleod.
- A bi-lingual male research assistant.

In this letter we request that you allow your son to participate in this research. One other school in the Makana Municipality district will be approached to participate in this study. Permission to approach schools in order to request that they participate in the research has been obtained from N. Y Kanjana in the Strategic Planning Policy Research Division of the Department of Education of the Eastern Cape. This specific component of the research is being conducted by Jonathan Glover under the supervision of Catriona Macleod. Prof Catriona Macleod, can be contacted on: 046 603 7328 and by email: cmacleod@ru.ac.za. Jonathan Glover can be contacted on 082 390 8634 and by email: jonomglover@gmail.com.

Your son's participation will involve being part of a small group discussion (lasting one and a half hours) on issues related to menstruation and masculinity.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of your son's rights, should you decide to allow him to participate in this study. Please note that an ethical clearance for this project was obtained from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee on 23 September 2015.

Your son's involvement in this study would be entirely voluntary. This means that he does not have to participate and if he or you have reason to remove him from the study, he or you are free to do so. Please be aware that this study is not an assessment of your son's performance at school and your or his to decision to participate (or not participate) will in no way affect his relationship with the school or the educators. The group discussion and classroom interactions will be tape-recorded. However, no recording will take place unless everyone involved feels comfortable with being recorded and gives their consent. Your son will not be expected to share any information that he feels is too personal, or that would make him feel uncomfortable.

Please note that any information your son shares through the group discussions will not be shared with others involved (such as principals, educators or yourself). At the beginning of the group discussion, the group will asked to agree to not share any information, ideas or thoughts that participants in the group express with anybody outside the group. In addition, your son's name will not appear on any written reports and no identifying features will be provided, in order to protect his identity. All of the data collected will be stored on a password protected computer (located at the CSSR) for a period of five years, and only researchers affiliated to the CSSR and selected transcribers involved in this project will have access to them.

In addition, please note that:

- The name of the school will not appear in any publications or research reports
- In the feedback reports, the results from all the schools will be presented together in such a way as to not make it possible to identify a particular school, or set of learners.
- Your granting permission for your son to participate will be followed by our seeking permission from him, whose consent to participate is also required.
- In the unlikely event that your son experiences any distress as a result of his participation FAMSA may be contacted for further support on (046) 622 2580 or by email: famsa@imaginet.co.za.

Once the stages of data collection and analysis have taken place, the researchers will distribute feedback reports to all of the stakeholders and participants (learners, educators, principals and parents).

We formally request that you grant permission for your son to participate in the research. Please see the attached consent form which we shall ask you to sign should you agree to this. Please do not hesitate to ask any further questions regarding this project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Catriona Macleod: _____

Jonathan Glover: _____

Appendix 8: Consent Form for Parents (Also Translated into isiXhosa)

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND RESEARCHER

I, _____, agree to allow my son_____ to participate in the research project of Jonathan Glover which involves a study of how young men talk about menstruation. I have read the information letter which outlines the broad aim of the research.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Psychology at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 082 390 8634 or by email: jonomglover@gmail.com . The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee, and is under the supervision of Prof. Catriona Macleod who is the SARChI chair of the Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (CSSR) research program at Rhodes University. Catriona can be contacted on (046) 603 7328 or by email: c.macleod@ru.ac.za

2. The researcher is interested in how young men talk about menstruation in a classroom context with their male peers.

3. Your son's participation will involve a single focus group discussion lasting approximately one and a half hours.

4. Your son may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but he can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of his life which he is not willing to disclose.

5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my son's participation in the study, or consequences he may experience as a result of his participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. FAMSA may be contacted for further support on (046) 622 2580 or by email: famsa@imaginet.co.za.

6. The research is not an assessment of my son's academic performance in class and his participation will in no way change his relationship with the school or the educators.

7. My son is free to withdraw from the study at any time. However, he will commit himself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or he or I have concerns about his participation that he or I did not originally anticipate.

8. I understand that my son's identity will be protected, and that details of the focus groups will only be used for the purposes of the project.

9. What my son says in the group will not be shared with the principal, educators, other parents or learners.

10. The name of the school will not appear in any reports and it will not be possible to identify either the school or my son.

11. The group discussion will be audio-recorded; I grant permission for this with the understanding that only the CSSR affiliated researchers and one or more nominated third party transcribers, will have access to these recordings and that the recordings will be stored on a password protected computer (located at the CSSR).

12. All data will be stored for the five years and then destroyed.

Signed on _____

Participant: _____   **Researcher:**_____

Appendix 9: Letter of Consent to Learners (Also Translated into isiXhosa)

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am a Master's student at Rhodes University wanting to conduct research within your school. The overall aim of this research project is to investigate how young men talk about menstruation, and subsequently how this positions women in society.

The research forms part of the Siyahluma project that is a collaborative programme that aims to identify the challenges faced by school going girls in relation to menstruation. The researchers that will be involved are:

- Prof Catriona Macleod, SARChI Chair of the Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (CSSR) unit at Rhodes University and supervisor of this research.
- Jonathan Glover, Masters student in Psychology and a member of the CSSR, under the supervision of Prof Catriona Macleod.
- A bi-lingual male research assistant.

In this letter we request that you participate in this research. Your participation will involve being part of a small group discussion (lasting one and a half hours) on issues related to menstruation.

Your involvement in this study would be entirely voluntary. This means that you do not have to participate and if you have reason to remove yourself from the study, you are free to do so. Please be aware that this study is not an assessment of your performance at school and your decision to participate (or not participate) will in no way affect your relationship with the school or the educators. Each group discussion will take place after school and will be tape-recorded. However, no recording will take place unless everyone involved feels comfortable with being recorded and gives their consent. You will not be expected to share any information that you feel is too personal, or that would make you feel uncomfortable. All of the data collected will be stored on a password protected computer (located at the CSSR) for a period of five years, and only researchers affiliated to the CSSR and selected transcribers involved in this project will have access to them.

Please note that any information you share through the group discussions will not be shared with others involved (such as principals, educators, other learners). At the beginning of the group discussion, the group will be asked to agree to not share any information, ideas or thoughts that participants in the group express with anybody outside the group. In addition, your name will not appear on any written reports and no identifying features will be provided, in order to protect your identity.

In addition, please note that:

- The name of the school will not appear in any publications or research reports.
- In the feedback reports, the results from all the schools will be presented together in such a way as to not make it possible to identify your particular school.
- If you are younger than 18 years, then your parent/guardian needs to grant permission for you to participate in the research. A separate letter and consent form will be sent to them.
- In the unlikely event that you experience any distress as a result of your participation, FAMSA may be contacted for further support on (046) 622 2580 or by email: famsa@imaginet.co.za.

Once the stages of data collection and analysis have taken place, the researchers will distribute feedback reports to all of the stakeholders and participants (learners, educators, principals and parents).

We formally request that you participate in the research. Please see the attached consent form which we shall ask you to sign should you agree to participate. Please do not hesitate to ask any further questions regarding this project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Catriona Macleod: _____

Jonathan Glover: _____

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I _____, agree to participate in the research project of Jonathan Glover on how young men talk about menstruation.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Psychology at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 082 390 8634 or by email: jonomglover@gmail.com . The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee, and is under the supervision of Prof. Catriona Macleod who is the SARChI chair of the Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (CSSR) research program at Rhodes University. Catriona can be contacted on (046) 603 7328 or by email: c.macleod@ru.ac.za

2. The researcher is interested in how young men talk about menstruation in a group context with their male peers.

3. My participation will involve a single focus group discussion lasting approximately one and a half hours.

4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.

5. I am invited to voice to the researcher, any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. In the unlikely event that I experience any distress as a result of my participation, FAMSA may be contacted for further support on (046) 622 2580 or by email: famsa@imaginet.co.za

6. The research is not an assessment of my academic performance in class and my participation will in no way change my relationship with the school or the educators.

7. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. However, I will commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation that I did not originally anticipate.

8. I understand that my identity will be protected, and that details of the focus groups will only be used for the purpose of the project.

9. What I say in the group will not be shared with the principal, educators, other parents or learners.

10. The name of the school will not appear in any reports and it will not be possible to identify the school.

11. The group discussion will be audio-recorded; I grant permission for this with the understanding that only the CSSR affiliated researchers and one or more nominated third party transcribers, will have access to these recordings and that the recordings will be stored on a password protected computer (located at the CSSR).

12. All data will be stored for the five years and then destroyed.

Signed on _____

Participant: _____   **Researcher:**_____