

# Primary school boys' narratives about masculinity

by

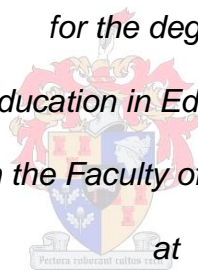
**Anne McDonald**

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**Supervisor: Prof Doria Daniels**

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of masculinity is complex, and many theories on how gender is constructed exist. The central premise of this study is that gender construction is the result of dynamic social interaction and, as such, a post-structuralist paradigm is ascribed to. The concept of multiple masculinities exists to explain the influences different contexts have on how masculine ideas are constructed. This is not a passive process and individuals are considered active creators of their own identity. However, research demonstrates that not all masculinities are equal. Hegemonic masculinity maintains its leading dominant position status through using strategies of power and dominance to maintain the pinnacle position of status in the hierarchy of masculinities. The purpose of this study is to listen to the narratives of pre-adolescent boys about masculinity.

Post-structuralist and social constructivist ideas that meaning is fluid and open to change, is influenced by culture and the individual meanings that people make. This understanding provides the theoretical framework for this qualitative study. Through a narrative-inquiry design, meaning was made of the individual experiences of six boys within the context of a single-sex preparatory school. The narratives of these participants, purposively selected, were obtained using the data-collecting methods of interviews, a focus group and the construction of a collage. The analysed data was presented both in the form of the narratives of the participants and through a thematic analysis.

The findings indicate that within this private, single-sex preparatory school context, multiple constructions of masculinity are formed, and they all appear to be constructed in relation to hegemonic notions of masculinity. It was found that fathers play an important role in the way in which boys construct their masculine identity. However, their peers and the school context also play a significant role. Further, the findings revealed that although hegemonic notions of masculinity in this context had a powerful impact on these participants' construction of masculinity, there are indications some are challenging overt expressions of hegemonic masculinity and, as such, hold more complex, transitional constructs of masculine identity.

## OPSOMMING

Die kwessie rondom manlikheid is kompleks en daar bestaan baie teorieë oor hoe geslag gebou word. Die sentrale uitgangspunt van hierdie studie is dat die konstruksie van geslag 'n resultaat van dinamiese sosiale interaksie is en dus aan 'n post-strukturalistiese paradigma toegeskryf word. As sodanig bestaan die konsep van verskeie vorme van manlikheid om te verduidelik hoe verskillende kontekste manlike idees beïnvloed. Dit is nie 'n passiewe proses nie. Individue word as aktiewe skeppers van hulle eie identiteit beskou. Navorsing toon egter dat nie alle vorme van manlikheid gelyk is nie. Hegemoniese manlikheid hou 'n dominante posisie in stand deur die gebruik van strategieë van mag en oorheersing; die hoogsteposisie van status in die hiërargie van manlikheid word dus gestaaf. Die doel van hierdie studie is om na die narratiewe van pre-adolesse seuns oor manlikheid te luister.

Post-strukturalistiese en sosiale konstruktivistiese idees wat aandui dat bedoelings vloeibaar en veranderbaar is, afhangende van kultuur en die betekenis wat deur 'n individu daaraan geheg word, voorsien dus 'n teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie kwalitatiewe studie. Deur die gebruik van 'n narratiewe ondersoek-ontwerp, is die betekenis van die individuele ervarings van ses seuns in die konteks van 'n enkel-geslag voorbereidende skool geëvalueer. Die verhale van hierdie deelnemers, wat doelgerig geselekteer is, is verkry deur gebruik te maak van onderhoude, 'n fokusgroep en die konstruksie van 'n collage as data insamelingsmetodes. Die geanaliseerde data is beide in die vorm van verhale van die deelnemers sowel as 'n tematiese analise aangebied.

Die bevindinge dui daarop dat binne hierdie private, enkel-geslag voorbereidende skoolkonteks, verskeie konstruksies van manlikheid gevorm word en het telkens beblyk in verhouding tot hegemoniese idees oor manlikheid gebou te word. Daar is bevind dat vaders 'n belangrike rol speel in die wyse waarop seuns hul manlike identiteit konstrueer. Eweknieë en die skoolkonteks speel egter ook 'n belangrike rol in die konstruksie van geslag. Die bevindinge het verder aan die lig gebring dat, alhoewel hegemoniese idees oor manlikheid in hierdie konteks 'n kragtige uitwerking op hierdie deelnemers se konstruksie van manlikheid het, daar aanduidings is dat sommige van die deelnemers openlike uitdrukkings van hegemoniese manlikheid uitdaag en sodoende meer komplekse oorgang-konstrukte van manlike identiteit het.

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## CHAPTER 1

### CONTEXTUALIZATION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term “boys will be boys” is bandied about frequently – especially in families and schools where the behaviour and antics of boys it is felt need explanation. What is meant by this term? Are boys expected to behave in a specific way, or are certain behaviours acceptable precisely because they are carried out by boys? For the past nine years, I have worked as a school counsellor at a boy’s school and I have heard the term many times. Also, I have sat on many occasions with boys whose self-esteem has been eroded, and there are times when I have thought this is due to anguish and conflict brought about by an understanding of not quite measuring up to the expectations of what it means to be a boy. It is these ideas that have prompted this research, and in which I seek insight into boys’ understandings of what it means to be a man. My hope is that a better understanding of these ideas will enable me more constructively to help those who are struggling.

Much research has been carried out into the construction of masculine identity and the various influences involved in the construction of such in boys. Over the past 25 years, research has moved away from the sex-role theory of masculinity (Morrell, 1998) and now centres on post-structuralist ideas that identity is socially and relationally constructed (Morrell, 1998; Connell, 2000; Swain, 2002; Pattman, Frosh & Phoenix, 2005). The view is that masculinity is fluid, is not a fixed concept, and that different contexts enable different meanings and interpretations of what it is to be a man (Connell, 2000; Morrell, 1998). Thus, a boy can construct multiple identities which can, however, cause contradiction in his life (Pattman et al., 2005). Additionally, Giddens (1991, cited in Pringle & Hickey, 2010) notes that the construction of a clear (masculine) identity requires reciprocal interactions with others, while Foucault (1978) maintains that identities are constructed as a result of life experiences and the way in which power operates in the individual’s life. Further, issues such as hierarchy and status play a part in determining how boys construct acceptable masculine identities within their contexts. Therefore, knowing what

factors contribute to status and respect in different contexts can be helpful when investigating issues of identity (Swain, 2002).

No discussion about status and respect can take place without referring to the concept of a hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2000). Many researchers agree that in Western society, the hegemonic expression of masculinity embodies the characteristics of being tough and showing no pain, of physical prowess and athleticism, and of avoiding at all costs any behaviour associated with femininity such as warmth, empathy, caring, dependence (Pollack, 1999; Pattman et al., 2005) and homosexuality (Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004; Morrell, 1998). Morrell (1998) maintains that, in addition to preserving its own version of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity also prevents other forms of masculinity from being expressed. Maintaining this hegemonic masculinity is complicated, and understanding the mechanisms different contexts use to subordinate other masculinities has been the subject of many studies (Connell, 2000). Pollack (1999) believes that enforcing such hegemonic masculinity leads to many boys hiding their true masculinity to defend against the possible discovery they do not live up to expectation.

Research has shown the important role that schools and teachers play in influencing how boys construct and apply their masculinity (Skelton, 1999; Pollack, 1999). Connell (2000) concurs, and refers to the idea that a complex interplay exists between the agenda of the school and the social context of the pupils. This includes the way in which the school places emphasis on academic success rather than on endeavour, and whether or not concepts such as streaming and failure are used. Another factor influencing masculinity is the way in which a school and its teachers position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Danger arises when the culture of a school over-emphasises hegemonic masculinity, sometimes leading to the promotion of aggression and legitimised bullying (Connell, 2000). It can also lead to those who experience masculinity differently being marginalised (Mills, 1997). Pollack (1999) believes schools are not doing sufficient to understand the unique social, academic and emotional problems boys experience, caused partially by the contradictions and conflict that exist in society about masculinity. He believes boys have significant problems with self-esteem, and that most schools do not understand this. Concealing such low self-esteem and vulnerability is often expressed as bravado so as to hide shame and conform to society's or the school's ideal of

masculinity. However, debate as to whether or not these views accurately reflect the situation does exist, and a discussion on this will follow in Chapter Two.

There is no doubt sport plays a vital role in the lives of boys, and Morrell (1998) claims that even those who do not play sport have to determine their attitude towards it. That sport provides physical, social and health benefits is without doubt (Pollack, 1999). However, again, the influences of hegemonic masculinity can, as already mentioned, lead to aggression and to some boys being marginalised. Pringle and Hickey (2010) maintain that despite sport being an important arena in which masculinity could socially be constructed, it can engender complications in the development of identities that are coherent and fulfilling. These authors refer to tensions that arise as a result of the many different masculinities and femininities that can be formed around sport. This tension extends even to boys who do not play sport, in that their perception of self is compared to those who do, resulting in them having to deal with negative labels such as 'nerd' or 'geek' (Hickey, 2008). Such disparaging labels can provoke ideas of failure in relation to their masculine identity because "they don't measure up" to the media's portrayal of hegemonic masculinity (Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000:392). In addition, Messner et al. (2000:390) refer to the precarious position of those who have proven themselves because they are "only as good as their last game", leaving them constantly having to re-prove themselves.

### **1.1.1 Context and Purpose of Study**

I work as a school counsellor at a boys-only preparatory school in the Western Cape, educating boys from Reception to Grade Seven. From here, these boys then graduate to the college linked to the primary school, situated on a separate but nearby campus. The two schools share sports fields, but operate as separate entities.

In a study conducted on masculinity at the college, Bantjes (2011) found that the college reproduces the hegemonic masculinity of Western society. It is, however, the expressed policy of the school's management to distance itself from actively reinforcing any form of hegemonic masculinity. Towards this, various strategies are employed, such as attempting to ensure that the masculine influence of the teaching staff is balanced through the inclusion of women and gay men. As part of the staff development programme, speakers are invited to provide the staff with knowledge

that will hopefully bring about a new understanding of masculinity. This is a difficult path to follow as the school is steeped in a tradition influenced by the British school system. Many of the customs of such a system support hegemonic masculinity. In addition, the school has little influence over the attitudes of its parent body or its past pupil association, both of whom play a significant role in the life of the school. Although sport is an especially important aspect of the preparatory school culture, there is also a strong emphasis on both academic achievement and on cultural involvement. For example, 66% of the boys are involved in the music centre as either members of the choir, the wind band, marimba band, or in individual lessons that cover a wide range of musical instruments. In addition, approximately 40% of the academic staff is female – a larger percentage than at the college. It might be that this staff composition influences the ethos and atmosphere in the preparatory school differently.

In a pilot study I conducted as part of a class project, three teachers at the school were interviewed about their understandings of masculinity and their roles as coaches. The findings indicated these teachers were challenging the traditional constructs of hegemonic masculinity, and were embracing teaching and coaching differently. This attitude recognises the emotional lives of their pupils, and does not advocate a win-at-all-cost approach. However, two of the teachers believed that boys “who are not good at sport will always know that they aren’t” and that “those good at sport think they are superior”.

Such contextual understanding, plus the preliminary literature survey, has led me to believe a need exists to understand more fully the experiences of masculinity in primary school boys within the South African context. In my interaction with the boys I counsel, I am often aware of a sense of insecurity around issues of masculinity. This lack of confidence and matters of status can lead to shame and confusion. These observations are supported by Gard (2008:184) who states, “While I would reject the idea of a general ‘boys crisis’, it remains true that there are many boys who find school an alienating experience and many for whom schools are not suited to their aspirations.” My intention was to analyse the narratives of six Grade Seven primary school boys whom I purposively selected so as to gain an understanding of their meaning making about their masculinity and that of boys they interact with at school.

The value of this study lies in its potential to obtain an in-depth understanding of boys' experience of masculinity. The contribution it will make is that a greater understanding will be gained of how boys perceive their own masculinity and the shaping influences of that masculinity. Although it is not possible to generalise such knowledge, by using an open and collaborative approach, it will be easier to transfer the knowledge to other boys (Hardy, Gregory & Ramjeet, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to narrate six primary school boys' stories about masculinity. Researching their stories could advance an understanding of how boys in this context experience masculine identity – both their own and that of their peers. It could also lead to greater understanding of the pressures that exist in young boys whose identity is developing and related issues of self-esteem within the primary school context.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do boys understand their own masculinity?
- How do they understand the various influences that shape their ideas of masculinity?

## **1.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is positioned in both the post-structuralist and social constructivist paradigms which maintain there are no absolute truths about human behaviour. The idea is that reality is fluid; it is constructed differently depending on the time, culture and social circumstances governing society (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2008). This perspective considers the narratives of people's lives as "inventions that can be construed in an almost infinite number of ways." (KY Lai, 2010:78) An important post-structuralist understanding is that language, and the way in which it provides meaning, can be otherwise interpreted (Grbich, 2004). Thus, social constructionism specifically focuses on interpreting the social world by understanding the meanings and practices people use to develop their ideas of reality (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2008). Therefore, understanding the discourses used by individuals and society is an important aspect of research within this paradigm. Although discourse analysis is not part of this study, I was, nevertheless, alert to the various ways in which the boys communicated their views about masculinity. The aim was to gain insight into how boys understand their own masculinity, and how they make sense of

it within the school culture. In addition, I pursued discourses on power as I sought to understand the meaning making the participants gained from the context in which they find themselves.

### **1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

As I am guided by the social constructivist paradigm, the most suitable methodological paradigm to use was that of a qualitative study. It informed the way in which I have fulfilled the purpose of the study as it allows for research concerned with what particular people do in their daily lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As the research is about discovering and uncovering new knowledge, I define the process as inductive, idiographic and qualitative (Babbie & Mouton, 2011).

I chose to use the specific design-type of narrative inquiry as it embraces the concept of obtaining thick descriptions of the experiences and contexts of individuals. Narrative inquiry provided a means of 'meaning making' of the experiences of the boys I interviewed through the stories they told. Hendry (2010:76) maintains that narrative inquiry is not a method, but rather a process that "can expand understandings of the complex ways in which humans understand truth and reality, and give it meaning." Researchers who use narrative inquiry do so from the premise that there are many different realities and no single version of the truth (KY Lai, 2010). It follows a process of obtaining the stories of the participants by focusing on their experiences, with the understanding that these narratives are embedded within a clear and meaningful context. Such understanding is expanded upon by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007:43), who maintain that "Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing and interpreting texts."

Another important aspect of narrative inquiry is that the primary focus is on the co-construction of the teller's story through a process of interaction between the teller and the listener (the researcher) (KY Lai, 2010; Craig, 2010; Hardy et al., 2009). I, therefore, acknowledge and make it explicit that my role as researcher is that of co-creator. Further, reflexivity is required of the researcher. This involves recognising the influence his/her knowledge and social and cultural experiences have on the development of the narrative (Hardy et al., 2009; Clandinin & Connelly,



2000). My understanding was that as a researcher, I could not be value-free, and that there was a need for a continuous “re-negotiation of purpose and expectations as the research process progresses.” (Hardy et al., 2009:11)

I was further guided by the belief that whilst most stories traditionally have a beginning, middle and end, in narrative inquiry there is an understanding that people’s stories about their lives are often hesitant, circular and incoherent. The ambiguity of this needs to be embraced by the researcher (Savin-Badin & van Niekerk, 2007). Hendry (2010:76) maintains that narrative inquiry is “grounded in the doubt that is essential to creating and re-creating”, and that this ‘not knowing’ is important to the process.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

The methodology of this study was guided by my belief that participants need to speak for themselves, and thus the choice of a qualitative research design, and specifically, a narrative-inquiry approach was undertaken. Within this paradigm, the purpose of data collection is to facilitate the construction of stories through a collaborative process of determining the meaning people make of their experiences (Hardy et al., 2009). I obtained data using the methods of semi-structured interviews and a focus group, allowing for rich and detailed observations to be made (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). In addition, each participant was asked to construct a collage depicting their idea of what it means to be a boy.

From a qualitative research perspective, this should lead to an in-depth understanding of both the inner and outer perspectives of the participants (Patton, 1987). The purpose of these interviews was, through a process of co-construction, to gain an understanding of the meaning the participants make around their gendered experiences as boys or males. In conducting the interviews, I was guided by methodological issues of narrative inquiry. These included the need to focus on the detailed stories of participants, whilst paying attention to the plots and structures of the narratives (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I endeavoured to explore specific experiences and memories, and undertook this through open-ended questions. I used a general semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A). It provided me with a loose structure by which to abide, but to which I did not rigidly adhere (Patton, 1987). I found it beneficial to encourage the interviewee to thicken the description of his

story by referring to the actual phrases and words he used. Although my understanding was aligned with narrative-inquiry thinking being a process of co-construction, I nevertheless attempted to adopt a tentative and unknowing position (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk, 2007). I was further guided by the view of Silverman (2006) that open-ended, semi-structured interviews require flexibility and the ability to establish a rapport with participants while listening actively. Permission was obtained from all the participants to audiotape the interviews, and these were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

In addition to the data generated through the interviews, I obtained data through a focus group session. The intention with the focus group was twofold. Firstly, the use of a focus group was guided by the understanding that within the complex dynamics of the group process, new and powerful insights can emerge (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2007). My hope was that this process would enrich the meaning these boys brought to the concept of masculinity. Secondly, through using a focus group, I was able to address the issue of triangulation. In addition, at the commencement of the focus group, all the participants engaged in an individual activity in which they were asked to create a collage. The use of such visual material provided a further opportunity to obtain a more profound understanding of the phenomenon of masculinity as perceived by these individuals - more so because it was not based in language (Daniels, 2008). The purpose of the collage was to generate ideas about masculinity. These were then used to initiate and direct the flow of conversation within the focus group. As with the interviews, permission was obtained to audiotape the focus group, and specific permission was obtained to reproduce the collages that were created.

#### **1.4.1 Data Analysis**

The first step in the process of analysis in narrative inquiry was to construct a personal profile on each participant in the form of a personal narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The aim was to focus on the context of the individual so as to facilitate the interpretation of the data. In so doing, a narrative about what it means to be a boy was constructed for each participant. This phase involved a detailed and meticulous scrutinising of the transcriptions. As suggested by Hardy et al., (2009) this was done in collaboration with the participants. I initiated this by asking them to

read my summary of their story, and to provide feedback on the authenticity and veracity of my account. This was done so as to verify that my interpretation and understanding did not misrepresent their experiences.

While examining the transcriptions so as to write the personal narratives, I was also engaged in the process of determining the thematic content of the data (Boeije, 2010). I used a thematic analysis approach to identify, analyse and report on the themes and patterns within the data set, which consisted of the transcriptions and the collages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was undertaken by identifying and coding categories through seeking patterns and themes that emerged in the narratives. These patterns or categories were related to the original research question (Hardy et al., 2009). Categories are defined in Strauss and Corbin (1990) as groups of similar, usually abstract, concepts which relate to the phenomenon being studied. Using this process enabled me to reduce the data so as to present the information in a condensed form, allowing me to engage in a process of interpretation in order to clarify what had emerged from the process of data collection.

As already stated, narrative inquiry involves collaboration between the researcher and the participants, and part of this process requires that the interpretation and presentation of data is negotiated (Savin-Baden and van Niekerk, 2007). Therefore, I asked the participants to verify the accuracy of my categorisation into themes to ensure my interpretations accurately reflected their experiences.

## **1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical codes provide guidelines which ensure a minimum standard of behaviour is adhered to by psychologists and researchers in their practice, teaching and research. This is done not only to protect the public, but also to protect the reputation of the profession. These codes are guided by the ethical principles of justice, respect for the dignity and rights of all, autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, veracity, fidelity and responsibility (Allan, 2008). It is these principles which guided the ethical choices and considerations I made during the course of this research.

With all participants being minors, their parents were asked to consent to their sons' participation (Appendix B). The participants were similarly asked to assent (Appendix C). An explanation was provided by me to both parents and participants as to the

purpose and procedures of the study. In addition, I provided information concerning the process that would be followed in obtaining their stories. Permission was granted by all, both to audiotape the interviews and focus group, and to make use of the collages created.

As this research is part of the requirements for a master's degree, the information will, of necessity, be available to certain members of the academic community. I, therefore, discussed issues of confidentiality, as well as ways in which anonymity would be maintained through scrambling data in the final report. With collaboration being an integral aspect of narrative inquiry, the participants were afforded numerous opportunities to review what I had written, and I explained that they retained the right to change or withdraw anything already written.

Josselson (2007) emphasises the importance of being aware of potential harm arising if a participant reveals more than he committed to when providing participatory consent. For this reason, the participants were informed before they provided consent that they could withdraw from the process at any time. With my being available full-time as a counsellor at the school, the participants were also made aware they could obtain the necessary support and containment should the need arise.

Finally, as this research took place at an independent school, permission was not required from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). However, permission from the principal was obtained (Appendix D).

## **1.6 KEY TERMS**

### **1.6.1 Gender Identity**

In this study, gender identity is distinguished from the concept of sex. Sex, refers to male and female, and is dependent on biological characteristics which are then viewed as binary divisions. There are various theories about gender identity which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. However, for the purposes of this study, which is informed by a post-structuralist and constructivist paradigm, gender identity is considered a construct formed by individuals. As such the concept of gender identity, therefore, is perceived as a more fluid concept that is individually constructed, and where there could be an overlap between men and women

Consequently, there are no fixed gender identities of masculinity and femininity, but rather many different forms of these constructs, and where each possesses its own distinguishing shape.

### **1.6.2 Hegemony**

In this study, hegemony refers to the dominant view about masculinity, meaning there exists in any society a prevailing form of masculinity that influences the understanding of boys and men on how they should behave so as to acquire acceptability within society. The concept of hegemony includes the notion of power, in that it implies some forms of masculinity hold greater power than others. Hegemonic masculinity holds dominance over other subordinate masculinities, and, consequently, gives rise to an hierarchical structure.

### **1.6.3 Patriarchy**

This term refers to social systems in which the male acts as the primary authority figure, and, as such, is central to the organisation of that society. Examples of this would be the supreme authority that fathers hold in certain families, and the legal dependence of wives and children that exists in some societies.

## **1.7 STRUCTURING OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS**

The structure of this research thesis begins with this first chapter, within which I have provided an introduction to the study and a brief contextualisation relating to the research. In addition, I have presented an overview of the research process and design. Chapter Two provides an in-depth exploration of the relevant literature relating to masculinity. This is followed by a discussion on the development of gender identity, which includes some of the issues relevant to the masculinity of boys, such as hegemony, education, sport, the South African context and other prevailing issues around masculinity. Chapter Three presents a detailed discussion of the research process, which includes a discussion on the research paradigm, the research methodology and design, as well as the ethical considerations addressed in this study. Chapter Four presents the data and research findings. A discussion and interpretation of these findings is also provided. Chapter Five comprises a summary of and conclusions reached in this study. Further, this chapter considers the limitations of the study, and makes recommendations for additional avenues of research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the relevant literature relating to the subject of masculinity. Various theories on how gender is constructed abound. As such, the chapter will commence with a brief discussion on how the theoretical development of gender identity, with particular reference to masculinity, occurred. The central premise of this study is that gender construction is the result of dynamic social interaction, therefore, the post-structuralist paradigm is ascribed to. As such a review will occur of the relevant literature on how masculinity, and the concept of multiple masculinities, is positioned within post-structuralism. An in-depth discussion on the role that hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy potentially play in constructing ideas about masculinity will follow. Further, the review will focus on hegemonic masculinity's dominance over other constructs of masculinity, and particularly on its influence on adolescents and boys. Connected to this will follow a discussion on the crucial role sport plays in creating and maintaining ideas about masculinity, and the role it plays in the lives of boys and men. Following this will be an exploration of the literature on the various positions other masculinities hold in society.

The latter part of the chapter will examine the influences of particular contexts upon which masculine ideas are constructed. This section begins with a review of the literature on how the South African context has influenced masculinity. Secondly, because this study occurs in a school, the role of educational institutions in constructing masculinity is discussed. A critical discussion on the contentious issue that 'boys are in crisis' will follow. Finally, the review will close with reference to the evidence which indicates the development of a new masculinity, and how this transformation is occurring.

#### **2.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF MASCULINITY**

The concept of masculinity developed during the twentieth century, and is centred on clinical knowledge emerging initially from Freud's ideas (Freud, 1905). He proposed

that the Oedipal conflict in boys, along with a fear of castration, was the result of a crisis of rivalry with the father. This eventually shaped the adult masculine identity. Further, he hypothesised that the development of the super-ego, formed and developed by the boy's relationship with his father, serves to sustain the masculine identity (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, in Connell, 1995). As a consequence of these ideas, gender was viewed within a binary framework in which there is either masculinity or femininity - each with distinct attributes (Corbett, 1993). Within such a framework, it became significantly difficult to explain the existence of other expressions of gender identity such as homosexuality (Ibid). In addition, Connell (1995:10) maintains that these notions of masculinity led to the "patriarchal organisation of culture" that has subsequently been passed on between generations. He also argues that when further development of these ideas occurred, it resulted in mental health becoming associated with conventional heterosexuality and marriage. This meant that any other form of sexual identity was seen as being pathological, and was ascribed to dysfunctional parent-child relationships.

The concept of gender identity, as introduced in Erikson's theory of ego-identity, was initially expanded upon by Robert Stoller, and later by feminist psychoanalytic theory (Stoller, 1968). This theory maintains that a core gender identity is laid down early in a child's life, and is formed as a result of emotional interaction between parents and their children. The understanding is that this pattern is of central importance, and that it occurs throughout the individual's life regardless of the socialisation process (Messner, 1992). Chodorow (1978), a neo-analytic theorist, maintains that the mother, in being principally responsible for childcare, forms an intense emotional attachment to both sons and daughters. However, boys are compelled to break this initial intense maternal attachment and, consequently, masculinity becomes defined through independence, a process of individuation, and rejection of the feminine (Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Chodorow later maintained in subsequent psychoanalytic research, that men's gender-identities are not fixed; rather they are formed as a result of "psychological compromise" which is often tense and unstable (Chodorow, 1994, cited in Connell, 2000:7).

Another important theory of gender identity developed during the twentieth century was the sex-role theory. This theory maintains that a general set of expectations exists about the way in which men and women should behave. These expectations

become internalised and occur as a result of social learning, because children imitate the behaviour of same-gender adults. Thus, gender-role behaviour is transmitted across generations (Oliver & Hide, 1993). Although these role norms are considered fairly stable, they can be altered as a result of agencies of social change. Examples of such agencies are the family, the school, or the media, all of whom, in their unique ways, elicit new expectations about the role men and women should adopt (Connell, 1995). In today's society, despite substantial changes in the roles women play in the economy, certain assumptions about conventional sex roles - such as men are breadwinners and women homemakers - continue to persist (Davies & Eagle, 2007). There are those who maintain these ideas are so much a fabric of society, they seem to reflect the truth and "natural and inherent order of things." (Keddie, 2005:429)

Research conducted by Gilmore (1990, cited in Connell, 1995) sought to establish global and general archetypes of manhood through examining ethnographical studies from around the world. These attempts proved futile, and highlighted the inadequacy of the sex-role theory. Consequently, there has been a shift away from the sex-role theory (Morrell, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1998). Over the past two decades, post-structuralism has had a significant impact on understanding masculinity. Robert Connell (1995) was one of the researchers instrumental in developing a theory of masculinity that moved away from the sex-role theory to one firmly embedded within the post-structuralist paradigm. These ideas will be discussed in greater depth in the next section.

### **2.3 POST-STRUCTURALISM AND MASCULINITY**

From a post-structuralist perspective, masculinity is constructed as a result of a dynamic interaction of the individual with the social environment, and with the individual being an active agent (Keddie, 2005). Within this paradigm, gender identity<sup>1</sup> is no longer considered fixed, and the binary position of humanism and psychoanalytic thought is challenged. Masculinity,<sup>2</sup> therefore, is perceived as being fluid and multiple, and constructed by boys and men as a consequence of relations

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<sup>1</sup> In this study sex, as in male and female, is considered a biological category which has binary divisions, whereas gender refers to the sexual identity that is constructed by individuals and in which there could be an overlap between men and women (Oakley, 1981 cited in Riddell & Tett, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The concepts of gender identity and masculinity will be used interchangeably in this study.



with others and their environment. This is made possible through discourses people hold (Keddie, 2005; Corbett, 2009). In other words, masculinity is a function of an individual's upbringing, generation, culture, race and class (Davies & Eagle, 2007). Consequently, such identities are continually being reinvented, much as gender and sexuality are constructed and re-constructed (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

From a post-structuralist perspective, boys and men do not passively assume the way in which they practice gender. It is understood they are actively involved in "participating in gendered discourses that provide them with feelings of power and agency." (Keddie, 2005) According to Foucault, discourses are "a set of possible statements about a given area, (which) organizes and gives structure. They enable and constrain the production of knowledge." (McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010:509) Boys (and girls) develop their identities through being actively involved in the creation of their own understandings through observation, learning and experience (Lodge, 2005). Though the role of agency is important, one has to remember that agency is not the same for all individuals. In fact, criticism of this approach centres around the idea there exists insufficient emphasis on the influence that the wider social and cultural contexts have on the individual. Not everyone has the same access to "power, privilege, resources and social position." (Lodge, 2005:179)

In examining the manner in which the context of individuals affects their construction of gender identity, a number of influences need to be considered. Not only are there differences between the ways in which men and women construct their identities, but there are also commonalities and differences in the ways that boys and men construct their identities within various social classes and races. Morrell (1998) maintains that, in any particular society, factors such as class and race will influence the formation of the many masculinities, each having its own distinguishing shape and set of features. Further, Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007) argue that it is possible for an individual to occupy many, sometimes contradictory, constructs of masculine identity and these vary according to the social context.

Another important aspect of this social construction of masculinity, is that it cannot exist outside of its relation to the 'other', the 'other' being femininity (Morrell, 2007).

These constructs are connected to notions of patriarchy and will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter.

Although post-structuralism recognises the diversity in masculinity, it is essential to acknowledge relations of dominance, subordination and alliance between the different masculinities also exist. It is argued such relations occur particularly with respect to hegemonic masculinity, and involve practices that exclude, include, intimidate and exploit. This also involves domination in any form, be it economic, cultural or political (Macleod, 2007). Such practise of gender politics cannot be viewed as being static, and should rather be viewed as being the result of a dynamic interaction. Connell (2000) explains how, for example, in schools, masculinity can be viewed as oppositional if it develops in contradiction to the structures of school authorities. He argues further that, in addition to relations of power, an hierarchical relationship also exists between these different forms of masculinity, with hegemonic masculinity holding the pinnacle position – albeit tenuously.

Thus, it can be seen that from a post-structuralist perspective, the binary divisions often central to the concept of sex and gender have been questioned. The boundaries between masculinities and femininities have become blurred, making a wider range of behaviour available to both men and women (Riddell & Tett, 2010).

## **2.4 HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY**

Hegemonic masculinity refers to a dominant form of masculinity which provides men and boys with an understanding of how they need to behave if they wish to be seen as being ‘acceptable’ males in society (Frosh et al., 2002). As has already been argued, a power relationship exists between the various constructs of masculinity, with hegemonic masculinity holding a dominant position within a hierarchical structure. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the role this form of masculinity plays in relation to both women and to other subordinate masculinities.

Connell (1995) refers to four different categories of masculinity - dominant or hegemonic, subordinate or submissive, complicit, and marginalised or oppositional. All four in some way relate to the construct of hegemonic masculinity. This relationship may be in the form of compliance or resistance. Hegemonic masculinity is extremely powerful in that it shapes people’s perceptions of what makes a ‘real

boy' or 'real man' (Engebretson, 2006). However, the instability of this form of masculinity must also be acknowledged, especially where it continually needs to respond to challenges from other representations of masculinity (Morrell, 1998).

The form of masculinity embraced as being dominant is dependent on the context and culture within which it finds itself. For instance, Kimmel (1994) argues that in the United States of America (USA), the mainstream understanding of masculinity is dominated by white, ruling-class men. Further, it would seem that cultural consent as opposed to "forceful domination" is an important factor in how masculinities are influenced (Ratele, 2008:522). As with other masculinities, hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, and is open to being restructured through the class and gender relations of social dynamics (Connell, 1995).

In most Western societies, hegemonic masculinity is demonstrated by traditional notions of "macho" masculinity. These notions are governed by four codes which involve, "non-demonstration of feeling (except anger) or of behaviour associated with the feminine; working for status; dominance and power; never showing weakness or dependence; and embracing the masculine predisposition to the 'wild side of life', including risk taking and the enactment of violence." (Davies & Eagle, 2007:55) It should be noted that, with respect to emotions, it is not denied men feel emotion, merely that hegemonic masculinity requires they keep it hidden.

The reality is that most men do not fit these prescriptive codes, and if they do their position has to be continually defended and proved (Joseph & Lindegger, 2007). However, many who do not meet the requirements of hegemonic masculinity will, nonetheless, position themselves in relation to it, and either consciously or unconsciously will align to it. The consequence of this positioning results in the perpetuation and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity (Frosh et al., 2002). Connell (1995) also emphasises that despite many men not meeting the required standards of hegemonic masculinity, a large number benefit from it in relation to its patriarchal stance, and in relation to its subordination of women, and in these ways, therefore, become complicit with it.

### **2.4.1 Hegemonic Masculinity and Patriarchy**

Hegemonic masculinity is a crucial factor of patriarchy (Morrell, 1998), it being the practice of legitimising men's power over women because of their biological differences (Adams & Govender, 2008). These notions of patriarchy have contributed to the subordination and exploitation of women (Connell, 1995).

Macleod (2007:11) maintains it is important to distinguish between patriarchy and masculinity. She argues that patriarchy holds the dominant position, and that it is maintained by not only constructs of masculinity, but also by other constructs such as femininity and motherhood. The understanding is that the concept of masculinity only became significant when persistent forms of patriarchal power "were threatened by the rise of modernity and concomitant ideals of equality and universalism." (Chadwick & Foster, 2007:30)

It can be argued that women's approach to patriarchy has been ambivalent in that they both support and challenge its existence. This challenge, and all other forms of gender discrimination, arose as the result of the powerful voice of feminism (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001). Although feminism is not the focus of this study, it is important to acknowledge the significant role it has played in challenging not only patriarchy, but also hegemonic masculinity. Further, it should be remembered that other institutions, such as religious organisations and educational institutions, have also played a role in maintaining patriarchy (Davidson, 2009).

Patriarchy has resulted in men often being 'oppressors' as well as 'victims', in that although men and boys hold agency for their construction of masculinity, their actions are nevertheless "constrained by the discursive positions (of patriarchy) that are available to them." (Frosh et al., 2002:51) Amongst others, factors such as the feminist movement, increased unemployment amongst men, and the subsequent "erosion of traditional class-based identities" have resulted in the current questioning of masculine practices and challenges that threaten the legitimacy of patriarchy (Connell, 2000).

### **2.4.2 Non-Conformity with Hegemonic Masculinity**

Although Frosh et al., (2002) maintain it is possible to construct a masculine identity without having to comply with hegemonic forms, resistance or non-conformity can

result in pain and marginalisation. Many studies have revealed that marginalisation and discrimination occur in schools where boys do not conform, thus placing them in vulnerable positions (Frosh et al., 2002; Dalley-Trim, 2007; Renold, 2004; McCann, Plummer & Minichiello, 2010; Pollack, 2006; Davidson, 2009). In an extensive study carried out amongst boys in London, it was found that many twelve to fifteen year-olds who appeared confident and optimistic, privately expressed insecurity and anxiety about their masculine identity. This research supports that of Pollack (1999) who found that profound feelings of loneliness and alienation are common amongst boys. These feelings arise because boys experience contradictions between the traditional, tough ways in which they are expected to behave, against possessing feelings of sensitivity and emotion. This results in shame and guilt, followed by a need to prove and assert their masculinity (Ibid).

Finally, some research has shown that many boys inhabit what is referred to as a 'borderland' between hegemonic masculinity and that which is thought of as being effeminate. The social position of these boys is not as marginalised as that of others who do not conform, and while they do not provoke conflict with the dominant group, they nevertheless maintain a position (Newman, Woodcock & Dunham, 2006).

### **2.4.3 Policing of Masculinities and the 'Other'**

The political stance of masculinity and, in particular, hegemonic masculinity, has already been referred to. In order to maintain its dominant position, it is important that the behaviour of boys and men is monitored by other males, thereby ensuring there is conformity with heterosexual ideas of masculinity. This involves constructing any behaviour that does not fit into the prescribed notion of heterosexual, hegemonic behaviour as being 'other'. The implication is that such behaviour is either homosexual or feminine (Frosh et al., 2002; Messner, 1992; Epstein, 2001). In this regard, 'real' boys become separated from the 'woosies', 'wimps', 'nerds' or 'poofers', labels adopted to shame those who behave differently. It is accepted that all genders are affected by anxiety. However, there is a particularly vigilant process of regulation for those boys who demonstrate feminine characteristics (Corbett, 2009). The line between attraction to men and anything that is considered feminine, such as caring and emotionality, has become very blurred (Davies & Eagle, 2007; Frosh et al., 2002). The simple explanation that hegemonic masculinity attributes to

gay men is that they 'lack masculinity' (Connell, 2000). While others, such as Kimmel (1994), refer to the 'irrational fear' that hegemony has of homosexuality. Indeed, Davidson (2009) maintains that most cultures are unable to deal with homosexuality, possibly because it would appear to erode traditional male power. The problem lies principally in the manner men use to maintain their position of dominance, and the effect that it has on the 'other'. Epstein (2001:106) adds to the debate by arguing that "homophobia is constitutive of normative heterosexual masculinities in schools", thereby ensuring that the only expressions of masculinity that survive are those that are constructed as being "super-heterosexual". Concern arises for those whose masculine identity does not conform to such powerful messages.

One of the most severe enactments of gender power relations is in the use of violence towards women and girls, and against boys and men (Connell, 1995). Violence is about power, and it is used to maintain hegemonic masculinity as the dominant position in the hierarchical structure. The position of many boys in the hierarchy is often determined by male-on-male violence, and for many, aggression and authoritarianism is "celebrated as an ideal." (Mills, 2001:16) Women who challenge such notions of male authority can become victims of violence (Engebretson, 2006). The ways in which violence is used is varied; it ranges from the physical use of the body in actions such as rape and physical abuse, to a more subtle form of intimidation such as 'wolf whistling' and verbal abuse (Connell, 1995). Morrell (2007:18) argues that the reason for violence is not necessarily merely about domination over woman, but is also about "securing a position of status", and this is linked to society's expectations of masculine behaviour.

Another strategy used by boys to police the behaviour of their peers is through teasing (Lodge, 2005). This teasing can be about romantic relationships, but it is often teasing about homosexuality that 'is done in fun', because the boy is 'being like a girl'. In this way, 'acceptable' masculinity is enforced through humour, particularly through homophobic humour towards non-macho boys. Nayak and Kehily (2001) also refer to the use of jokes and humour, whereby men and boys regulate and police one another's masculine identities. They argue that techniques of humour, such as 'funny stories', 'wind-ups', spontaneous gags and mimicry, are employed by boys to construct their masculinities. Many discourses about masculinity exist, some holding more power than others. The controlling mechanisms of such discourses as

homophobic humour are great; not only do they succeed in humiliating and excluding those upon whom they are visited, but they also serve as a warning to bystanders. This form of censorship can only be negated if the individual/s for whom the humour is intended become more macho in their actions and responses.

Connected to the discourse of the 'other' is the complex relationship men and boys have with women. Femininity has come to be constructed as the 'other', and stands in direct opposition to 'real' masculinity. Pattman et al., (2005) found that boys spent much time constructing themselves in opposition to girls, ridiculing girls as being weak emotionally. Thus, boys who do not enjoy masculine pursuits, such as football, and who spend too much time with girls, will be classified as being 'cissies'. It was also found that boys were ambivalent in their attitude towards girls. At the same time as ridiculing girls, boys also idealised them for their characteristics of softness, tenderness, caring, and for being sympathetic and supportive. This also served as a mechanism of ensuring the boys themselves do not experience these characteristics. The aim, therefore, is to enforce these binaries around gender, in which femininity is passive and masculinity is active (Martino, Lingard & Mills, 2004; Corbett, 2009).

#### **2.4.4 The Effect of Hegemonic Masculinity on Adolescents and Boys**

Adolescents and other children are actively involved in the construction of their gender identity. This materialises through the complicated pattern of inter-relationships that occur through contact with many different people - at home, in the neighbourhood, at school and within other broader contexts. Further, Raewyn Connell (2008) maintains it is important to remember that adolescence is the phase in which boys may sample a variety of identities. In so doing, they elicit feedback on the effects of these differing identities on their bodies, on other people and on their understanding of self.

Through research conducted into how gender develops in children, the question of status is consistently present (Lodge, 2005; Frosh et al., 2002). This research found that the status of boys is always higher than that of girls, and that this is rigidly adhered to through practices of inclusion and exclusion. Boys with high status generally are popular; they have a sporting ability (particularly in football), a good sense of humour, and they engage appropriately with their peers. This high status

may, however, be associated with negative qualities such as alcohol consumption, disruptive behaviour and objectifying women. Lodge's study (2005) found it is possible for a boy with high academic ability, usually considered to be low status, to acquire high status if he exhibits other redeeming features such as those previously described. In addition, boys who do not show macho tendencies are often defined as being homosexual, despite clear evidence to the contrary. This form of bullying can have a devastating effect on boys' lives (Frosh et al., 2002).

Pollack (1998) refers to the socialisation system of the dominant Caucasian Euro-American culture that places emphasis on the development of autonomy, on separation and on individualistic coping styles in boys. This can involve separation from the nurturing figure from as early as three to five years, and is part of the 'boy code'. The consequence of this 'gender straitjacketing' is that a boy's need to express vulnerability and interdependence is silenced. He must act tough and abide by this strict boy-code of masculinity. The strategy of enforcing such behaviour could lead to much internal struggle and pain. As boys become older, the pressure to hide feelings of insecurity and vulnerability is increased, something Pollack (2006) refers to as the 'hardening of the mask'. This finding has been subsequently reinforced by the research of others such as Pringle (2008), who writes of the experiences of fear and insecurity some boys have around sport. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

A consequence of masculinity's move away from vulnerability and expression of emotion, is that this sense of disconnection leads to a lack of intimacy and an apparent decreased need for attachment (Adams & Govender, 2008). This in turn could influence young men's intimate and sexual relationships. Rather than being an expression of intimacy, sex could become regarded purely as being performance, the consequence of which is further alienation.

A further effect of the male message might lie in the embedded ideal of perfectionism. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the message that creates high expectations of "being the best you can in every aspect of your life", inculcated in them by parents, teachers and their peers (Adams & Govender, 2008:553). Obviously, few are able to attain such unrealistically high expectations. A possible consequence of this in some is in the development of defences against such



expectations, such as the self-handicapping strategies of alcohol abuse and procrastination (Ibid).

## **2.5 MASCULINITY AND SPORT**

No discussion about masculinity can take place without examining the role organised sport plays in the construction of masculine identities. Historically, sport has been used by groups in power to maintain control. Much research has been undertaken into how boys construct masculinity through sport in school settings (Skelton, 2002; Swain, 2002; Hickey, 2008; Mills, 1997; Connell, 2008; Messner, 1992). However, history also demonstrates that subordinate groups at times, too, have used sport to “contest that control” (Messner, 1992:10). This means sport has moved from being an institution for ‘developing character’, to a process of instilling “initiative and self-reliance, loyalty and obedience”. At the same time, those in less privileged and oppressed situations have used sport to attain status. According to Messner (1992), this occurred because of two factors. The first was in combating the major role women played in socialising children during the middle of the twentieth century, thereby requiring that the hegemonic qualities of aggression, dominance and physical strength be promoted. The second was in response to the emergence of feminism, where women were becoming increasingly educated and economically independent. Combat sports such as rugby and boxing were promoted as a rejoinder to this increased power being enjoyed by women. The result is that sport has become a symbol of power over women.

In considering the construction of masculinity from Foucault’s perspective, it becomes necessary to examine how individuals experience their own reality (in this case through sport) in “relation to the workings of discourse and power” (Pringle, 2008:217). The many examples of such discourses in sport are to be found in the attributes of winning, competitiveness, discipline, speed, strength, aggression and fitness. However, not all these are connected solely to discourses of masculinity. It is only within such sports as rugby and football that attributes like agility, speed, skill and being tough are prominent. Consequently, this has led to a hierarchy within sport where, in determining masculinity, some are more legitimate than others (Martino & Frank, 2006).

As such, the relationship between sport and gender identity is complex, and the many competing discourses produce multiple ideas about masculinity (and femininity) (Pringle & Hickey, 2010). Because a boy or man has constantly to negotiate his identity around discourses such as being strong and tough, and particularly around being 'a winner', tension results. In a patriarchal society, such challenge and tension is always present for the boy-child, and he has constantly to prove himself a man. This issue is complicated, and potentially a young sportsman might use his success on the field to gain his father's approval. Again, the emphasis on winning that is performance-based could encourage the development of a tendency of conditional self-worth. If "you are only as good as your last game", then a relentless concern about your next performance is bound to promote a sense of insecurity (Messner, 1992:46).

Indeed, Pringle (2008:232) maintains that "current evidence suggests that the discursive links between school sport, physical ability and masculinities are profoundly important for young males." The tension engendered by sport extends even to those boys who have elected not to participate in the hyper-masculine sports of rugby, football and boxing. Additionally, such sports distinguish between 'real' boys, consequently perceived as being tough, against those who do not wish to play football and who are then referred to as being 'woosies' (Frosh et al., 2002). Pringle and Hickey (2010) maintain that boys' stories of self are often surrounded by belittling labels such as 'nerd', 'geek' and 'girl'. Such labels could perpetuate stereotypical views of masculine failure, and could encourage disparaging attitudes towards women.

One of the roles of team sports is that it provides a sense of camaraderie, and a place where legitimate attachment with others can occur (Skelton, 2002; Messner, 1992; Davies & Eagle, 2007). The ambivalence boys have towards intimacy and attachment has already been discussed elsewhere in the paper. The aspect of friendship and intimacy that develops from a common sense of shared hardship also needs to be considered against the background of competition. Rivalry and competition for positions in teams, recognition, and 'star status' are permanently present, contributing to the tension that influences the sense of self (Messner, 1992).

In no other arena does the male body play such a pivotal role in determining masculinity. It is here that a man's performance is extremely dependant on his strength, endurance and toughness (Connell, 1998). This is also referred to as embodiment, and involves "body-reflexive practices such as characteristic postures, muscular tensions and specific skills." (Connell, 2008:133) Constructions of masculinity proposed by the mass media and the commercialisation of sport have ensured that masculinity is perceived as being hard and tough. The athlete is thus required to work intensely at developing an acceptable body, and is often expected to dissociate from his body and continue playing even when injured. The pressure to continue playing with injuries is the result of discourses such "giving up your body for the good of the team" at the behest of both peers and coaches (Messner, 1992:72). This often arises despite the real possibility of permanent damage, but such 'selflessness' enables men to wear their scars and injuries with pride. Not all react to this tough and often aggressive expectation with the same sense of bravado. Pringle (2008:216) refers to this in his research, in which he focuses on the experiences of men fearful of injury and pain, and which has led to them "negotiating understandings of self and masculinity".

Messner (1992) summarises the difficulty involved in trying to establish a single conceptualisation of the role of sport in masculinity. He maintains there are three factors influencing this: the 'costs' of athletic masculinity to men, the different experiences men have of athletic careers, and the challenges that are made to sport and heterosexual masculinity posed by the rise of women's athletics. Finally, there is no doubt that for all boys, sport has become an acceptable means of achieving 'public masculine status' (Messner, 1992:56). However, the consequence often results in insecurity and ambivalence, where instead of providing the intimacy that is sought, results in a diminished ability in intimate relationships.

## **2.6 NEW MASCULINITY**

In recent years, there has been an indication of a conscious shift away from hegemonic masculinity, referred to by some as the new masculinity or authentic masculinity (Frosh et al., 2002). This tendency to challenge the ideal of hegemonic masculinity involves actively adopting and embracing a more 'varied and fulfilling' masculinity (Engebretson, 2006). Men who assume this position have been referred

to as being associated with 'transitional' masculinities. The traditional idea of a 'macho' man is being challenged, and for these men it is the 'chauvinist pig' who is being set up as the 'other' (Chadwick & Foster, 2007:32). Research has demonstrated, however, that despite rejection of the notion of 'macho', many young men still need to embrace the idea of masculinity as that being distinct from femininity.

Men and boys who construct alternative masculinities, however, are still subject to the policing that involves subordination and pathologising, mentioned elsewhere in the chapter (Renold, 2004; Frosh et al., 2002; Davidson, 2009). In constructing these alternative masculinities, men and boys need to find ways of embracing aspects of the feminine in themselves to cope with the resulting "irrational homophobic fear" derived from the construct of hegemonic masculinity. Davidson (2009:617) maintains that most adopt a position of "gender neutrality or silence" so as to fend off possible attack. He refers to these boys as being "borderland dwellers".

Many studies have investigated the experiences of those whose construction of masculinity is different from that of hegemonic masculinity (Renold, 2004; Wedgewood, 2003; Pollack, 2007). Pollack (2007:195) found there are a growing number of "healthier" boys who value emotional connections, and who are beginning to reject what they perceive as being the "outdated rule of masculinity". Renold (2004), on the other hand, found that only white middle-class, high-achievers were able to maintain their alternative masculinities. A further study conducted by Wedgewood (2003) to investigate masculinities was constructed around nineteen men in a football team, and where it was found that nine had constructed either 'defensive masculinities' or 'contradictory masculinities', as opposed to the ten who exhibited clear hegemonic tendencies. The 'defensive' group were insecure and defensive about their fragile masculinities, and regarded the feminine as being inferior, including their own feminine tendencies. On the other hand, the 'contradictory' group were found to be acceptable to their peers, despite their avoidance of overt expressions of hegemonic masculinity, such as violence against other males and dominance of women. This group were seen to represent a small but growing number of men who are beginning to challenge hegemonic masculinity. Finally, Connell (2000:134) reminds us that this process of "remaking the masculine

self certainly requires a good deal of willpower in the face of derision from other men, half-shared homophobia and ambivalence of feminists.”

## **2.7 MASCULINITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This literature review chapter would be incomplete without an investigation into the cultural and historical context of masculinity, and, for this reason, a section on masculinity within the South African context is included. According to Adams and Govender (2008), the dominant position that white middle-class men have claimed since the advent of colonialism, is undeniable. So, too, Morrell (1998:607) writes that “under colonialism positions of domination and subordination were created along the lines of race, bequeathing to the region the language of white men and black ‘boys’.” It was during this period that indigenous populations lost their political and economic independence. However, Morrell argues that African masculinities were not destroyed, rather colonialism gave rise to the many masculinities present currently in South African society, those such as African masculinities, Afrikaner masculinity, oppositional masculinity, white hegemonic masculinity, violent masculinity, gay masculinity and other alternative masculinities. South African researchers have found that the racial marginalisation of black men can be linked to the way in which colonialism and apartheid sanctioned and legitimised violence in the construction of masculinity (Morrell, 2007).

Many have expressed concern about the elevated rates of gendered violence visited by men on women. In relation to this, Ratele (2008:522) claims that in studying African males, it is important to consider not only the positions they hold in society, but also to consider their “cognitions, emotions and bodily practices” so as to avoid perpetuating stereotypes. This proposition makes it easier to understand how males who hold a dominant position socially, but because of unemployment find themselves personally in a non-dominant position in relation to other males, therefore choose dominance over females as a preferred option. Further, it would appear society’s expectations that men should be providers has resulted in their responding poorly to the challenges of poverty by abandoning families and resorting to alcohol and mistresses, whereas, in contrast, women rise to the challenge (Silberschmidt, 2001 in Morrell, 2007). This understanding is supported by Bhana (2005:101), who further maintains that although there is a relationship between

poverty and violence, “not all boys enact violent masculinity”. Children who live in poverty, and with constant food insecurity, are more vulnerable to violence, and to using it as a means of gaining what they need. Breckenridge (cited in Morrell, 1998) adds to the argument by referring to the ‘allure of violence’ that provided African workers with a way of affirming their masculinity, and of taking a stand against the oppression of apartheid. Thus, a sense of powerlessness has had the effect of “emasculating masculinity” and leaving it “prone to violence” (Morrell, 2001). Finally, the role that increased rights and opportunities have afforded women, are seen by some as being complicit in the current level of gender-based violence in this country (Vincent, 2008).

Finally, connected to the notion of masculine domination in relation to sexual activity, are the problems both of refusal to use barrier-protection methods and of promiscuity, both of which have contributed to exacerbating the HIV epidemic (Davies & Eagle, 2007). This, along with an increased tendency towards substance abuse, has led to an increase in risk-taking behaviour and violence, to include male-on-male violence.

## **2.8 ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS IN SHAPING MASCULINITY IN SCHOOLS**

Schools play a vital role in constructing the formation of particular genders, and in determining ways in which the relations between them are negotiated (Connell, 2000; Drudy, 2008; Hayward & Mac an Ghaill, 2001). According to these authors, the complex interplay between the agenda of the school and its teachers, and the social interplay between the pupils, is influenced by a number of different factors. Although social power plays a large role in the organisation of masculinity, it nevertheless takes place within the confines of the institution’s goals and objectives. For example, the way in which discipline is meted out in a school could have a bearing on the construction of masculinity. Connell (2008:137) maintains that ‘conflictual’ discipline can produce hierarchies and exclusions within a school community. She refers to research carried out in the USA in which it was demonstrated how school discipline played a key role in the development of oppositional black masculinity in African-American males. Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007:28) refer to the strong link that exists within South African schools between the violence of both apartheid and the

liberation struggle and the practices of corporal punishment in schools and the “endorsement of violence against women and girls.”

It is expected that within any educational institution there will be teachers who embody different expressions of masculinity and femininity, and that not all will be afforded equal respect (Connell, 2008). So, too, some masculinities will integrate easily into a school’s academic priorities, while others might follow a more conflicted pathway (Connell, 2000). Consideration also needs to be given to the extent to which the school gives priority and honour to academic, sporting or other arenas of achievement, and the influence this has on the formation of the masculinities in young men. Those not successful within the academic hierarchy, for example, need to find social power in other arenas such as sport, physical aggression or ‘sexual conquest’. These factors are further complicated by the extent to which those who coach sport adhere to dominant ideas about masculinity, as this plays a vital role in influencing the way boys construct masculinity (Connell, 2008). It has been found that sometimes schools will only cater for certain kinds of boys and, thereby, “reinforce certain gendered-binaries, built around passive femininity and active masculinity.” (Martino et al., 2004:450) Further, research has shown that discourses of competitiveness, compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic practices are requisites of masculine identity within the tradition of single-sex boarding schools originally intended for white learners in South African schools (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2007:29). Thus, it can be seen that constructs of masculinity are specific to certain school environments (Martino & Frank, 2006).

The social class that boys are born into has been found by some researchers to influence what they value in being male. Frosh et al. (2002) have found that middle-class boys valued leadership, sociability and intelligence in their construction of masculinity, while working-class boys placed greater value on strength, ‘having a laugh’, attracting girls and looking ‘cool’. On the other hand, boys at private schools placed a high value on study and academic work, and they planned professional futures. The manner in which the curriculum is prescribed may also serve as a means of class and ethnic exclusion. By way of example, Connell (2008) refers to the historic way in which, during the nineteenth century, the classics were taught in ruling-class boys’ schools, and the way in which natural sciences and mathematics were taught in grammar schools attended by the professional middle class. Thus, in

the twentieth century, when these subjects became part of a mass school system, the vast majority of the working-class youth were totally unprepared for them.

Boys from lower-class backgrounds might be exposed to poor-quality schools and indifference from their teachers and coaches. For such boys, sport is often the only arena in which they are able to make themselves visible (Messner, 1992; Connell, 2008). Frosh et al. (2002:197) found that “hegemonic masculinity is pervasively constructed as being antithetical to being seen to work hard academically.” Therefore, growing up in a peer environment that is anti-education could result in what Connell (2008:139) refers to as “protest masculinity”. In addition, diligence and working hard are seen as being linked to the ‘feminine’ and ‘other’ (Keddie & Mills, 2007). Many boys, therefore, are faced with the problem of reconciling educational demands with remaining popular with their peers.

Dalley-Trim’s research (2007:203) found that boys will employ a number of “performance techniques” to demonstrate their dominant positions in the classroom. These include shouting, loud and disruptive behaviour, joking, acting ‘cool’, play-fighting and resisting a teacher’s authority. In addition, homophobic practices always serve to regulate the behaviour of all boys in the class.

Thus, power relations in a school environment are complex (Newman et al., 2006). It is essential teachers understand the role that schooling has on the process of social construction of gender (masculinity), and additionally understand other influences such as class, race, ethnicity and sexuality (Martino et al., 2004).

## **2.9 BOYS IN CRISIS**

Much has been said about the status of adolescent boys and their ability to cope with the current challenges of life, such as precarious economic climates, unemployment, and greater instability in families. In fact, the prevailing public discourse in many parts of the world is that boys are in crisis (Singleton, 2007; Davies & Eagle, 2007; Martino & Frank, 2006; Connell, 2008). This section examines the arguments that are forwarded in support of the ‘boys in crisis theory’, but also examines the growing body of literature that stands against such discourse.



### 2.9.1 The Argument For

Amongst others, there is concern about boys' "poorer" educational outcomes, their poorer mental health status, and increasing crime figures (Singleton, 2007). It is argued by some that the success girls are currently achieving in society constitutes a threat to boys' dominance in society, and this contributes to the debate (Connell, 2008). Frosh et al. (2002:1) maintain that the apparent crisis in current masculinity could be the result of there being "few clear models and that surrounding images of masculinity are complex and confused." Others argue it is the ideology of traditional masculinity that prevents boys from wanting to succeed, rather than a 'feminizing' experience of school (Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001:14). The findings of Pollack (1998) about the fragile self-esteem of boys also contribute to this crisis theory. He believes "increased school failure, depression, suicide, loneliness, isolation and extremes of violence" currently being seen in boys is a mask that is hiding their underlying pain and inner conflict because of their adherence to the 'boy code' (Pollack, 2007:190).

As a consequence of these fears, efforts have been made within education to counteract the growing negative trend in boys' lives. Some have focussed on 'boy-friendly' strategies such as re-evaluating curriculum content and ensuring it is more masculine friendly, on examining the teaching styles of all teachers, on increasing the number of male teachers, or on implementing single-sex classes (Keddie, 2006:101). Others have advocated the use of 'hard sports' that will channel their energies in 'safe and productive ways' (Pattman et al., 2005:561). Such policies are referred to as being 'recuperative masculinity politics', and the male teacher is seen as being a role model who will be able to rescue failing masculinities from the "feminization and emasculation" that boys are currently experiencing in schools (Martino & Frank, 2006:19). Also, implicit in these ideas is that female teachers lack the power to maintain the discipline that is necessary in the classroom (Ibid).

Some research describes the pedagogic practices male teachers employ so as to reach the young men they teach. One such example is that of an art teacher who attempted to "masculinize art" in an effort to counteract the threatening aspect of art as being a "deep expression of self" (Martino & Frank, 2006:23). Other male teachers have used sport and humour to establish good teaching relationships.

### **2.9.2 The Argument Against**

While some support the 'masculine crisis theory', a growing body of research does not. Indeed, there are many who maintain that this crisis theory has been set up by groups around the world to defend the interests of males, and to diminish the gains made by the feminist movement (Morrell, 2007; Singleton, 2007). Connell (2008:132) maintains that the discourse that boys are victims contributes to a "dichotomized and essentialist" view of gender, in which all boys are the same in terms of interests, personality traits and learning styles. Clearly, this is not the case.

Some argue that proponents of the 'masculinity in crisis' theory tend to look at gender as being the only reason for the crisis, and that, therefore, they fail to take into consideration other factors such as social class, geographic location and race (Singleton, 2007; Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2001). For example, there is much evidence that working-class and black boys have always done badly, while most boys from privileged backgrounds do well (Frosh et al., 2002). Another argument against the crisis theory is that the under-performance of boys in schools hardly ever translates into disadvantage beyond school (Keddie & Mills, 2007).

In order to answer the question, "what do males feel about this supposed state of crisis?" a large study was carried out by Singleton (2007). The results demonstrated there was a high degree of agreement between males and females on overall satisfaction with their lives – indicating that men do not feel they are in crisis. In addition, this research revealed there was insufficient evidence to show that large numbers are turning to alcohol and drugs. Singleton (2007:371) maintains that behaviours such as the use of anger as a means of self-expression, repression of emotion and engaging in risk-taking behaviour is the result of the socialisation process, rather than an indication of crisis.

### **2.9.3 Transformation of Masculinity - A Matter of Social Justice?**

Opponents of the gender-in-crisis theory maintain that instead of focussing on "affirmative politics that promote gender specificity", there should rather be an emphasis on "transformative politics". Thus, alternative ideas about gender that move away from gender binaries and understandings of hierarchical masculinity (Keddie & Mills, 2007:208) are encouraged. Many have provided ideas on how education can assist in this process, and these include curriculum changes (Connell,

2000; Keddie, 2006; Adams & Govender, 2008; Reichert, 2001), and changes in pedagogic strategies (Davison & Nelson, 2011; Martino & Frank, 2006).

Connell (2000) recommends that this transformation of masculinity becomes an issue of social justice. He maintains this will require ending the imposition of enforced heterosexuality, ensuring the acceptance of sexual difference. It is incumbent on all, particularly on those in a position of influence such as teachers, to examine their philosophies and understandings for practices that either perpetuate or transform “limited and essentialist versions of masculinity (and femininity).” (Keddie, 2006)

This process of transformation will require going about things differently, and should include ending the violence associated with hegemonic masculinity, but it also involves taking on new roles such as child care (Connell, 2008). It has been shown in places like Scandinavia, that practices of gender balance, such as the care of young children, can take place, but both the determination of public policy and the will of the general public are required. This is supported by Morrell (1998:609) who maintains that if any new kind of masculinity is to emerge which supports a “culture of peace and racial and gender equality”, then it needs the acceptance of civil society and the concerted effort of gender organisations. Connell (1998) cautions, however, that transformation does not mean all aspects of traditional masculinity must be shunned as there are many positive characteristics of hegemonic masculinity worth continuing. Examples would include the ‘ethics of sacrifice on behalf of others’ and ‘participatory pleasures’ such as the neighbourhood soccer game.

Finally, Renolds (2004) maintains that another issue that needs addressing so that transformation can take place is that of gender relations. Here, power relations that exist between masculinities and femininities would have to be renegotiated so that less disparaging and destructive attitudes emerge. In other words, oppositional and hierarchical constructs of gender need to be challenged at all levels of work and school, so that transformation results in all forms of gender having equal opportunities for expression.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

This review has provided the relevant background for understanding masculinity - particularly within a post-structuralist paradigm. The literature underlies the role of hegemonic masculinity and its relationship of dominance over femininity and other expressions of masculinity. It also provides a discussion on the way in which other masculinities find expression. Attention was paid to the crucial role sport plays in creating and maintaining ideas about masculinity. The review refers to the literature on how particular contexts such as educational institutions and the South African context influence masculinity. Finally, there is a discussion on the current debate about whether boys are in crisis. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the issue of the transformation of masculinity.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

The setting for this study is a single-sex school for boys in the Western Cape. The school consists of three sections; the pre-preparatory section, providing education to boys in Reception and Grades One and Two; the preparatory section which serves Grades Three to Seven; and the college which educates Grades Eight to Twelve and post-matriculants. At present, there are 110 teaching staff and 1,350 pupils. Participants in this study were selected from Grade Seven in the preparatory section, which consists of 360 boys. The school has a strong Christian tradition, and weekly chapel services are central to all three sections. In addition, all students attend weekly divinity lessons. The school's population, however, also includes pupils from other religious backgrounds, and it is the school's stated policy to promote diversity reflective of the demographics of this country. Thus, students come from different cultural backgrounds, the majority being from white, affluent families. The school has boarding facilities at both the preparatory section and the college. Most are weekly boarders, but there are those from distant parts of the country, or from other countries in Africa who board full time. Although the preparatory school has its own campus - distinct from that of the college - and its own headmaster, the two schools share some sporting facilities. Most of the administration is conducted from a central office. The preparatory school boys move freely between the two campuses. The Grade Seven participants in this study, because of their seniority, could be deemed 'leaders' in the school.

The rest of this chapter considers the research paradigm and theoretical framework that underlies this study. In addition, the research design and research methods used are discussed. Finally, the ethical considerations are debated.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2008:6), a paradigm is an "all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that defines for researchers the nature of their enquiry." This occurs within three dimensions:

ontology, which is the nature of reality; epistemology, which defines the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the unknown; and methodology, wherein the practicalities of the research are undertaken. This study is guided by the post-structuralist and social constructionist paradigms which are closely related. Both maintain there are no absolute truths about human behaviour because reality is seen as being fluid and is constructed differently due to individuals' varying social circumstances (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2008). The assumption is that to understand human behaviour, it must be viewed within context and according to the interconnectedness between the personal reality of the individual and the social world that is producing the phenomenon (Patton, 2007).

The underlying premise of post-structuralism is that there cannot be an absolute truth about social reality. Both knowledge and social reality are relative because of the many versions of social phenomena (Miller & Brewer, 2003); such that meaning is fluid and can change depending on the time, culture and the meaning maker of the text. Within post-structuralist understanding, 'text' refers to both the written and spoken word, and to visual materials used in communication (Grbich, 2004). The importance of language and meaning are the underlying concepts proposed by those proponents of post-structuralism like Michael Foucault (Besley, 2002). The understanding is that language is the principle means of communication, and that there are no fixed and stable meanings to entities. In addition, while structuralism focuses on hidden structures within reality, post-structuralism focuses on the nature of surface knowledge and meaning. This is achieved through the processes of discourse analysis and deconstruction.

The term 'discourse' refers to the way in which we use language within particular contexts, and refers both to spoken or written words, and to visual representations used to represent a topic or practice. Discourses determine the meaning that will be made of subjects and, consequently, determines the way knowledge is created and maintained within cultures and groups (Grbich, 2004). Language is the central focus of discourse, and Jacques Derrida, another proponent of post-structuralism, maintains that although the words used to describe objects or situations seldom change, the meaning attached to the words does. The significance that people attach to words changes according to their culture and context (Jupp, 2006). Power is an important aspect of discourse; Foucault maintains that certain discourses

become dominant and serve to control and limit thought and action (Grbich, 2004). This is often done through the use of binary opposites such as 'good' and 'evil'. Such notions of power also exist within the concept of knowledge, where knowledge becomes privileged within certain sectors of society. As a consequence of these ideas of power, it then becomes necessary to address issues of "repression and emancipation" within the post-structuralist framework (Besley, 2002:137). The concept of deconstruction, introduced by Jacques Derrida, refers to the strategy used to expose the 'supposed truth' in any particular 'text' by "undoing, reversing, and displacing taken-for-granted binary oppositions that structure text(s)." (Schwandt, 2007:4) The effect of these ideas on social research is that the onus is on the researcher to identify the many voices of reality, such that the researcher's own voice does not come to the fore (Miller & Brewer, 2003).

Consequently, because post-structuralism underpins the core assumptions of this study, it would suggest there are many different ways in which men and boys construct their experiences of masculinity. These constructions are shaped and influenced by powerful discourses about what it means to be a man. In this study, the participants will define themselves in relation to socially constructed experiences that occur within their own individual contexts of time, place and social interactions. In addition, with the understanding that language affects how we 'frame' our ideas about 'self' and 'identity', then analysing that language will assist in understanding the experiences of others (Besley, 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to enable the individual experiences of pre-adolescent boys to be heard. This will be achieved by listening to the meaning made of their masculine identity through their narratives.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design provides the framework that connects the research questions and the actual implementation of the research (Durrheim, 2008). The design results in planned, systematic research that ensures the research purpose is fulfilled. According to Durrheim (2008), designing research requires taking into consideration four dimensions: the purpose of the research, the theoretical paradigm informing the research, the context in which the research is carried out, and the techniques that are used to collect and analyse data. This section discusses the theoretical paradigm

used to fulfil the purpose of the research. It also provides a description of the role of the researcher in this study.

### **3.3.1 Methodological Paradigm**

As has already been stated, the purpose of this research is to understand the narratives about masculinity of primary school boys at one Western Cape school. Through these narratives, the researcher sought to develop a better understanding of how boys within this context experience and make meaning of masculine identity – both their own and that of their peers. Bearing this in mind, therefore, the qualitative research design is the most suitable methodological paradigm for this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research is undertaken so as to describe and understand what particular people do in their daily lives. This is done by using methods such as observation and semi-structured interviewing (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Natural settings are used so that the interpretation of phenomena can occur by understanding the meaning people bring to these phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Thus, such research will allow a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon of (masculine) identity (Silverman, 2000). The process that defines this type of research is known as an iterative process, in that it is “open, fluid and changeable.” (Durrheim, 2008) This paradigm also allows for the use of multiple methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observation.

Within this methodological paradigm, I chose the social constructionist paradigm. My understanding is that meaning around a phenomenon such as masculinity is constituted not only in the language of the individual, but also in the discourses of society (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2008). The social constructionist seeks to demonstrate how individual experiences are derived from larger discourses. Therefore, this research attempts to trace the ways in which ‘masculinity discourse’, within both the context of this school and the broader South African society, functions, so that boys are able to construct meaning around what it means to be a boy. Terre Blanche et al., (2008:279) maintain that “constructionism is concerned with broader patterns of social meaning encoded in language.” Therefore, constructionist research is about interpreting the social world as a “system of meanings and practices that construct reality.” (Ibid) As such, this research is about



understanding how participants interpret and make meaning within the contexts of the school, their family situations and their broader experience, and how this influences the way in which each individually makes meaning of masculinity.

The social constructionist principally uses language to understand the social world. However, other modes of communication, such as the actions of people, the way in which space is managed and establishes hierarchies also help people to make meaning of their world. In other words, reality is represented in many different ways (Terre Blanche et al., 2008). Thus, the social constructionist assumption on the nature of reality (ontology) is that the thoughts, feelings and experiences of individuals occur because of a wider system of meaning garnered from broader society. Although this study will not use discourse analysis, the use of language will, nevertheless, be the predominant method of understanding meaning. Further, visual images will be created by the participants to understand the meaning they make of masculinity. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

### **3.3.2 Narrative Inquiry**

This study was a narrative inquiry. As a research design, it involved gathering data that reports on the lives and experiences of individuals, and describes the meaning of those experiences (Miller & Salkind, 2002; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative inquiry is a way of shaping and organising events, experience and actions so that meaning is made of the “consequence of actions and events over time.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:421) In listening to the participant narrating his story, it is not simply about content, but about paying attention to how the story was assembled and to the cultural discourses it draws upon (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). There are different types of narrative research, all interested in studying the stories or narratives in the belief that the story is an essential aspect of human experience. The practice of living and telling stories has always been with us. However, Clandinin and Roziak (2007:36) maintain that what is new is the manner in which social science research employs these stories. They define narrative and narrative inquiry as “schemes of classification that respectfully acknowledge the diversity of lived and told stories.”

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the defining feature of narrative inquiry lies in the study of experience, and is a process of collaboration between researcher and participants. In terms of ontology, i.e. the nature of reality, the belief is that

reality is determined as a result of the individual's interaction with their "personal social and material world." (Clandinin & Roziak, 2007:41) The epistemological implications of these ideas is that the purpose of narrative inquiry is to develop new understandings of these interactions, rather than in generating exact representations of reality independent of the knower (Ibid). The inquiry itself is perceived as a new experience, which then becomes part of a continuous process of experience that includes past, present and future.

An important characteristic of narrative inquiry is sociality, which acknowledges that both personal and social conditions are simultaneously important (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The term 'personal condition' refers to aspects such as the hopes and feelings of individuals, while 'social condition' refers to the individual's context, both the social and the physical environment (Clandinin & Roziak 2007:48). This aspect of sociality also highlights the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participant.

Finally, narrative inquiry provides a means to explore the many complex ways in which individuals make meaning of their world. Research undertaken in this regard understands there will be no definitive meaning about what is being investigated (Hendry, 2010), and requires of us to question knowledge assumed true, and to acknowledge there are other ways of knowing.

### **3.3.2.1 The 'Turns' towards Narrative Research in this Study**

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe four 'turns' in narrative research that reflect moves away from positivist research. These 'turns' served to guide the methodological approach employed here on the narratives of boys about masculinity. The first 'turn' recognises that a relationship exists between the researcher and the 'researched'. This researcher's role is that of co-constructor and, as such, I needed to acknowledge the influence my knowledge and cultural and social experiences had on the development of the narrative (Hardy, Gregory & Ramjeet, 2009). Thus, I engaged in a reflexive process of re-negotiating the purposes of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hardy et al., 2009). Such process involved my being aware of the external and internal factors that have influenced my own understanding of masculinity. As already stated, a relationship had already been established between me and the participants. However, in the telling of their

narratives, the nature of this relationship changed; I felt privileged to hear their stories. Despite acknowledging this relationship, it nevertheless became important to maintain objectivity, particularly during the analysis phase of the research. This was achieved through employing strategies like transcribing reflections, through triangulation and through checking with participants to ensure accuracy, consistency, and trustworthiness. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) also emphasise the importance of acknowledging that people are influenced by time, and by the people, cultures and experiences within their individual contexts. Consequently, these aspects were acknowledged and described.

Another 'turn' that guided this research was to find meaning and understanding in what the participants were saying, rather than in simply gaining knowledge of their lives. This was undertaken through obtaining rich descriptions of their experiences, thereby allowing their words to be representative of their experiences. According to Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), this practice helps establish authenticity and trustworthiness. Connected to this idea is the narrative understanding that there are many ways of knowing about the world and human experience, as distinct from one way of knowing. This 'turn' required I approach the data I obtained tentatively, and that I accepted the presence of alternative views. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007:32) refer to this as 'blurred knowing'.

Finally, it should be noted that the specific location in which the research takes place is important. This sense of place is significant, and descriptions of specific physical and topographical boundaries should be noted and included as they are considered to have an impact on the lived and spoken experiences of individuals (Terre Blanche et al., 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The physical location of this study has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

### **3.3.3 The Role of the Researcher**

Within a qualitative research study, the researcher plays a pivotal part in gathering and analysing data, and is, therefore, in a position to ensure that the opportunity for gathering meaningful data is maximised (Merriam, 1998). In addition, it is essential the researcher avoids making mistakes, missing opportunities and allowing personal biases to interfere with the research (Ibid). Merriam (1998) maintains there are various personality characteristics a successful qualitative researcher importantly

possesses. These are tolerance around ambiguity, sensitivity to the context and its variables, as well as sensitivity to biases that might be inherent in the research, an ability to communicate well - to include empathy - and an ability to easily establish a rapport with participants.

Within the narrative-inquiry framework, the researcher is perceived as having a more equitable relationship with the participants. As already stated, this is also seen as being a collaborative process between the researcher and participant. I am known to all the participants as I serve a dual role within the school – that of Life Orientation teacher to some of the grades, as well school counsellor. Although this might be seen as inhibiting the equitable relationship preferable between participant and researcher, it is also an advantage because of relationships already established prior to the data collection phase of interviews. In an effort to remain cognisant of the power I have as an adult and teacher at the school, I recorded my reflections and experiences of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **3.3.4 Data Verification**

In considering what criteria are appropriate for evaluating credibility within constructivist and narrative research, consideration of the influential work of Guba and Lincoln (Schwandt, 2007) is important. Lincoln and Guba (1986) maintain it is not possible to meet the requirements of internal and external validity carrying out social research. These authors argue that such traditional ideas of reliability and validity need to be replaced by issues of trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

#### **3.3.4.1 Traditional Ideas on Reliability and Validity**

Clandinin and Roziak (2007) maintain that narrative inquiry challenges the assumption there is a need for reliability. This is because knowledge and ideas are considered to be socially constructed and fluid, and that, therefore, there can be no independent and intrinsic meaning of a phenomenon.

In the same way, validity in research, either the truth value or internal validity, or its applicability or external validity, need to be challenged. Lincoln & Guba (1986:17) argue that in acknowledging there are “multiple and constructed realities”, social constructivism cannot focus on obtaining a single reality. In addition, the

understanding that truth is not enduring, but rather is bound by time and context, means that the possibility of generalisation becomes questionable (Ibid). The truth of a person's response to a particular concern is not the issue within constructivism, instead, these responses are seen as "displays of perspectives and moral forms which draw upon available cultural resources." (Silverman, 2007:144) From a narrative-inquiry perspective, validity, which is based on statistical, numerical knowledge, is an assumption that needs to be challenged (Clandinin & Roziak, 2007). Narrative inquirers maintain that this denies there are other types of knowledge. The emphasis on narrative inquiry and, thus, in this study, is in understanding human experience, rather than in controlling and predicting. It is this understanding which has guided my research.

### **3.3.4.2 Trustworthiness**

Lincoln & Guba (1986:18) refer to their earlier work in which they developed criteria that could be used to "apply rigor in the naturalistic paradigm". As such, they developed the criterion of trustworthiness as opposed to the term "rigor". Within the concept of trustworthiness, various aspects, each with their own techniques, are used to address issues of such. Following is a discussion on the manner in which these issues have been addressed in this research.

Lincoln & Guba (1986) proposed the notion of credibility so as to deal with issues aligned with internal validity. These ideas are supported by Van der Riet & Durrheim (2007:90), who maintain that because social constructivism does not hinge on the idea of a single reality, the emphasis within qualitative research should rather be on credibility so that findings are "convincing and believable". Riessman (in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) remind us that it is sometimes the stories that are different from what was previously thought of as the truth which may highlight a reality hitherto "silenced or subjugated". Therefore, to ensure credibility in this research, triangulation was used. Here, both interviews and focus groups were employed as methods of obtaining data in order to cross-check data. In addition, a process of member-checking was used as a way of informally testing information by referring back to the participants about the accuracy of understanding of their statements. Through this method, the researcher can be alert to evidence of discrepancies that would discredit obtaining a rich and credible narrative (Christians, 2011).

Although the concept of generalisation or external validity is challenged within a constructivist paradigm (Tredoux & Smith, 2008), Lincoln & Guba (1986) refer to the idea of transferability. This was developed through understanding that by obtaining thick descriptions within particular contexts, certain judgements could be made that could be applied in part or in total in other situations. This idea is supported by Clandinin and Riessman (2007) who maintain that understandings of particular experiences can lead to understandings within a broader context. The hope in this study is that in understanding the particular experiences of the boys who participated in the research, I would have a better understanding of others with whom I come into contact in my role as a school counsellor.

### **3.3.4.3 Authenticity**

Authenticity is the criterion that Guba and Lincoln developed to deal with the positivist ideas of reliability. Within this broad criterion, is positioned the criterion of fairness, defined as being “a balanced view that presents all constructions and the values that undergird them.” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986:20) This involves exploring the meaning of values when conflict is present during the data-gathering and data-analysis process. Another means in which these authors maintain authenticity can be achieved is through negotiation and collaboration, in which, as far as is possible, both participants and researchers “come from equal positions of power”. Polkinghorne (1988:484) adds to this by maintaining that researchers need to “cogently argue that theirs is a viable interpretation grounded on the assembled text.” Josselson (2007:8), on the other hand, urges that great care be taken by narrative researchers to “present careful evidence for their claims of narrators’ accounts.” A further manner in which fairness can be ensured is by obtaining fully informed consent both prior to and during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Finally, I followed the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1986) by using member-checking, as mentioned above, as an opportunity to be fair.

## **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

In this section, I describe the research methods which refer to the techniques used for collecting the information needed by the researcher to respond to the research question (Merriam, 1998). It is important to bear in mind that the main purpose of data collection within qualitative research in general, and narrative inquiry in

particular, is to facilitate the construction of stories through a collaborative process of determining the meaning people make of their experiences (Hardy et al., 2009). In qualitative research, the method of data collection often used is that of observation (Durrheim, 2008). According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), the methodological techniques of interviews and focus groups allow for rich and detailed observations, methods considered as suitable data-collection methods for use in this study. The observational data collected then need to be analysed for and categorised into themes so as to gain a coherent picture of the phenomenon being studied (Durrheim, 2006). Firstly, this section contains a description of the process of sampling employed in the study. This will be followed by a discussion of the way in which the data was collected through interviews, focus groups and through construction of a collage. Finally, a description of the analysis and presentation of the data will be provided.

### **3.4.1 Sampling and Participant Selection**

According to Durrheim (2008:49), in qualitative studies in which greater attention to detail and in-depth analysis is paid, the researcher may choose to select a few “information-rich” cases. Such choices are based on the nature of the research, and on the knowledge the researcher possesses through being a member of his/her particular population group (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). This is known as purposive sampling. The cases are selected because, for theoretical reasons, they are sound examples of what is being studied (Durrheim, 2008). In addition, this sampling strategy provides for specific information, so that research questions are addressed (Patton, 1987).

The population consisted of Grade Seven learners at a boys-only school in the Western Cape. Within this seemingly homogeneous group of boys, some heterogeneity was sought so that the selection encompassed a more diverse cultural and racial background. Through purposive sampling, only information-rich subjects were selected. Their selection was based on the following criteria:

- being able to express themselves clearly
- being comfortable and confident in discussing who they are as boys
- being possessed of differing abilities to play sport

### 3.4.2 Interviews

The use of in-depth interviews is an important means of obtaining data in qualitative research, and involves a process in which a “holistic understanding of the inner and outer perspectives of the participant’s world” is obtained (Patton, 1987:108). Kvale (1996:88) maintains that the interview enables researchers to understand the meanings people make of their “lived world” through both the process of describing their experiences, and in the practice of elaborating and clarifying their own perspectives. Interviews provide for openness, in which on-the-spot decisions can be made about which responses should be investigated (Ibid). In addition, they provide an opportunity to reach otherwise inaccessible areas of people’s reality, such as, for example, their subjective experiences (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011). Another aspect of the constructionist interview is that it is seen as a process of co-construction of meaning which occurs between the interviewer and the participant (Kelly, 2008; Silverman, 2006). The idea is that participants are guided to tell stories about their ‘lived world’ (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:289). Since this study is a narrative inquiry, the in-depth interview was an ideal method of collecting data in order to understand the meanings boys make of being a boy or man.

In terms of narrative inquiry, there are certain methodological issues which have to be pursued when carrying out in-depth interviews. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) refer to the narrative interview as being one where the focus is on the stories people tell, as well as on the plots and structures. In such interviews, the researcher endeavours to transform the interviewee-interviewer relationship to that of narrator and listener<sup>3</sup> (Chase, 2011). It is a conversation in which the narrator is asked to talk about specific experiences, rather than on generalising experience as would be normal in other qualitative research (Kvale, 1996). Further, it is an intense process that requires of the interviewer to invite the narrator to examine more deeply their memories and experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988). Phoenix (2009:66) describes the narrative research interview as a “relational space” in which both the researcher and the narrator are involved in co-constructing the interview. I used this understanding to guide the way in which I carried out the interviews.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that the following terms have been used inter-changeably in this study:

1. ‘Researcher’, ‘interviewer’ and ‘listener’ for the person undertaking the research.
2. ‘Participant’, ‘interviewee’ and ‘narrator’ for those whose views are being investigated.



In the qualitative interview, the interview is guided by a 'general plan of inquiry' rather than by a specific set of questions. Bearing this in mind, use was made of an open-ended, semi-structured, general interview guide constructed while researching the relevant literature (Patton, 1987). Because these interviews had a general exploratory purpose, they were open and had little pre-planned structure (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interview guide was employed to direct the general areas of conversation. However, this was not adhered to rigidly. The aim was for the participants to lead the conversation, whilst I listened for stories that would provide me with a rich understanding of how the participants made meaning of masculinity in their own lives and in the lives of others. As recommended by Babbie and Mouton (2011), the 'why' question was employed in order to gain deeper understanding. In addition, I was attentive to possible contradictions and ambiguities in the telling (Kvale, 1996).

In alignment with the narrative approach, every attempt was made to being sensitive, but curious, while being vigilantly aware of my own presuppositions during the interviews (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1987; Chase, 2011). This included adopting a tentative, unknowing position. Connected to these ideas, was the awareness of a need to acknowledge this was a process of co-construction of a narrative in which both researcher and participant have a role in telling the story (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk, 2007). Finally, the stance of 'not knowing' allowed participants to be experts in their own lives. The aim was, thus, to obtain a thick, rather than a thin description of their masculine identities (White, 2007).

As recommended by Kvale (1996), each interview was preceded by briefing the participant so as to place the interviewee at ease, to re-clarify the process and to provide the interviewee an opportunity to ask questions. The aim was to establish rapport and to develop trust. Each interview was followed by a debriefing session in which I summarised the main points of the interview and allowed the participants to comment on how they felt about the process. As the researcher, time was then spent on recording my own reflections on the interview, as well as on how I felt about the interpersonal interaction. This phase was also used to ensure that the audio recordings of the interview were successful. The failure of audio recordings would have required immediate transcription of all that could be remembered (Patton, 1987). A verbatim transcript of each interview was subsequently made, in which

great care was taken to capture as far as possible the intended meaning/s of each participant.

### **3.4.3 Focus Groups**

The focus group is an interview in which between six and eight people are interviewed together on a specific topic. The understanding is that people often make decisions that grow out of discussions within a social group (Patton, 1987). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2007) maintain the focus group has the capacity to produce important knowledge and insight through group dynamics, providing participants the opportunity to consider their own views whilst listening to the views of others. In so doing, the group participants create meaning amongst themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). The emphasis is not on reaching consensus, nor is it on problem-solving, rather it is concerned with obtaining rich data in relation to the social context of the individual's language, knowledge and experience (Fern, 2001). Barbour (2008) concurs and adds that the focus group acts as an excellent tool in providing insight into process as opposed to outcome. It was for two reasons that the focus group and in-depth interviews were chosen. First, it was a considered possibility that the group process of meaning making might provide additional information. Second, the possibility arose of being able to cross-validate the knowledge gained during the in-depth interviews, thereby ensuring triangulation (Fern, 2001).

Prior to engaging the participants in a focus-group interview, they were asked to create a collage that depicted their view of what it means to be a man or a boy. The creation of visual images such as a collage is seen by narrative researchers as being socially situated narrative texts, a manner in which people are able to express their experience (Chase, 2007). The use of visual material in research provides a deeper understanding of the issue being investigated because it is not dependent on language (Daniels, 2008). For this activity, each participant was provided with a selection of magazines, pencils and other necessary stationary, and they were asked to produce an image that would represent what masculinity means to them. The purpose was to generate ideas about masculinity which would subsequently be used to initiate and direct the flow of conversation in the focus group. On completion, each person was provided an opportunity to present their collage to the group. The

themes that emerged from these presentations were used to guide the focus-group session. The types of knowledge a focus group will produce is dependent on the research purpose (Fern, 2001). In addition to exploring the themes that occupied the collages, the purpose of this focus group was to verify and explore in greater depth some of the information and themes that emerged from preliminary analysis of the one-on-one interviews.

Kelly (2008) recognises that the focus-group interview has four components: procedure, interaction, content, and recording. At the start of the focus-group discussion, procedure was observed through establishing certain guidelines, such as respect for the views of others, confidentiality and allowing others an opportunity to speak. The opportunity was used to provide an explanation for the necessity of audiotaping, and for assuring the members of the group that, despite the topic being personal, the issue of confidentiality remained paramount. Integration is about ensuring that the personal and interpersonal dynamics are monitored, and that all members can participate on an equal footing (Fern, 2001; Barbour, 2008). As facilitator, this required careful management in order to avoid particular topics and to avoid the marginalisation of some members of the group who might have felt inhibited towards expressing their views. The facilitator is further required to manage any conflict or power struggle that might arise during the course of the interview (Patton, 1987).

The content refers to what is discussed, and the themes that emerged from the collage activity governed this phase. As facilitator, I was continually alert to similarities and differences in what was expressed, and I used these to encourage the individuals in the group to reflect and to compare their own ideas to those of others in the group (Kelly, 2008). Further, the technique of summarising so as to clarify and deepen the reflection process was used. The role of facilitator is a decentred one, thereby allowing participants to own the process (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2007). With this Silverman (2007) concurs, and adds that the facilitator's role requires skills that include flexibility and the ability to remove oneself from the discussion so as to allow the group dynamics to emerge.

The final component of focus groups is in audio-recording, a complicated issue. While Patton (1987) maintains that the interactive nature of interviews compromises

note-taking, Kelly (2008) alludes to difficulties arising because of background noise that interferes with clarity when using audio recordings. As with the one-on-one interviews, a detailed transcript of the interview with the focus group was made from the audio recording.

#### **3.4.4 Data Analysis**

According to Kvale (1996:190), analysis of data involves “developing the meanings of the interviews, bringing the subjects’ own understandings into light, as well as providing new perspectives for the researcher on the phenomenon.” From the vast body of data collected, this is a complex process, and involves discerning what is meaningful and what constitutes “noise and digression”, and which, therefore, has to be ignored. Further, Patton (1987) separates the process of analysis into the manner in which order is brought to data, from the practice of interpretation, which involves the assigning of meaning and significance to the data. As already mentioned, in qualitative analysis the process of interpretation is to obtain a ‘thick description’ of all aspects of the phenomenon being studied. This further involves providing an account of the role played by the researcher in assembling this description (Terre Blanche et al., 2008). In carrying out the analysis of this study, it was important to bear in mind the cautionary word of Kvale (1996) in which he urges researchers to be wary of transcripts. He maintains it is important to keep uppermost at all times that transcripts are merely a step in the process of the co-authoring of the story between the participant and the researcher.

The process of analysis from a narrative perspective is slightly different to other qualitative analyses, in that it focusses on understanding the unique, individual narratives of people’s lives (Chase, 2007). Savin-Baden and van Niekerk (2007) maintain that the focus of analysis is not on the stories that people tell, but on the people themselves. They argue that stories help us understand the participants in a more meaningful way. If Chase’s (2007:430) definition of narrative is borne in mind - “that meaning is made through the shaping or ordering of experience” - then the process of analysis is to shape and order the experience of the participants. This involves attentive listening to the manner in which the narrator has spoken during the interview, so as to “hear the influence of the narrative environment” (Chase, 2007:424). It also requires seeking to understand the details of the plotline, character

and complexities of the context (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). In order to analyse and present the findings obtained from the field data, I chose two methods. The first involved the writing of personal narratives; the second was a thematic analysis of the data.

#### **3.4.4.1 Personal Narratives**

The process of narrative analysis usually begins with writing a summary of the participant's personal story so that the individual's data can then be interpreted within their context (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk, 2007). This is referred to by Polkinghorne (1988) as the descriptive analytic process, and involves a detailed and meticulous scrutinising of the transcriptions by re-reading them many times. What follows is the construction of a short personal narrative for each participant. To achieve this, the guidelines suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000:132) were followed, with the "patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes either within or across an individual's experience, and in the social setting" being sought. These narratives, based on the experiences told in the stories of people's lives, form the theoretical methodological framework for narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:128). The telling of stories also involves interweaving the researcher's experience of the phenomenon being studied, with the focus of the narrative inquiry on a three-dimensional inquiry space. This requires the researcher to "at once look backwards and forward, look inward and outward, and situate the experience within place." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:140) These authors also write of the need to position the research text (in this case the personal narratives and the thematic analysis) within a social and theoretical context. This study is, therefore, positioned within the post-structuralist understanding of masculinity. In so doing, the personal narrative that was written provides what Phoenix (2009) refers to as the 'small story', in which is embedded the individual's experiences and emotions.

These ideas are supported by Kvale (1996:199) who refers to the process of "meaning structuring through narrative". He maintains that a new story is developed by condensing and reconstructing a richer and more coherent story than was originally told by the participants. The aim of this phase, therefore, was to construct a narrative of the experiences of each of the participants about what it means to be a

boy. This was achieved in both the personal narratives as well as in the broader narrative that was developed during the interpretive phase.

It should be noted that having written the personal narratives, each participant was provided an opportunity to read their personal story and the interpretive text. They were asked to comment on what was written and to make any adjustments, including the removal of parts of the texts.

#### **3.4.4.2 Analysis and Interpretation**

When examining the transcriptions for the purposes of writing the personal narratives, I was also engaged in a process of determining the thematic content of the entire data set (Boeije, 2010). Here, I was guided by a thematic-analysis approach, which according to Braun and Clark (2006) is a useful framework for analysis within qualitative, constructionist research. This method of identifying, analysing and reporting themes and patterns within the data set was simple and worthwhile following. The first step involved a thorough scrutiny of the data through repeatedly reading the content of the transcriptions of both the interviews and focus group, as well as in considering the collages. While doing this, codes were generated by identifying interesting features of the data. (Appendix E)

The second step involved identifying themes. This was undertaken through collating all the codes that were connected and relevant to a particular theme, and which, in turn, were related to the research question. Hardy and Bryman (2004) suggest reading and re-reading various sections of the text until common themes and sub-themes emerge. Braun and Clark (2006) maintain that in order to identify the themes on a latent level, the focus should be on the underlying ideas and assumptions of what was said. In the case of narrative research, the key themes are obtained through identifying repeated subject matter in the life story told. I was guided by Phoenix (2009), and was alert to key themes in both the stories of events as well as in the habitual stories people employ to explain and justify their actions and decisions. Phoenix (2009) maintains these themes can originate from two sources, and that these sources simultaneously interact with one another. The first is the canonical narratives, in which the wider, social and cultural context influences understanding. The second is the personal narrative already referred to above. These are also referred to by Phoenix (2009) as 'big' and 'small' stories.

By coding and categorising into themes, the data is condensed and is able to be arranged in manageable form (Boeije, 2010). The themes and sub-themes identified can be found in the form of a table (see Table 1 and Appendix F). In addition, use was made both of significant extracts from the transcriptions as well as of photographs of the collage.

The final stage involves reporting on the content and meaning of the themes that emerged. This process is supported by Patton (1990) who refers to the analytic process in which there is a progression from the descriptive stage, in which the data is organised into patterns, to the interpretive phase, during which the patterns and their broader meanings and implications are identified. Boeije (2010:118) maintains this phase is a means of “exploring” the data and “constantly interrogating” it in order to make meaning. Hardy & Bryman (2004:22) argue that meaning making is the process of interpretation in which a new text or narrative is produced that attempts to find out what the text is saying and why it is said. This interpretation involves a process which requires negotiation between the “intention of the reader and the intention of the text.” Babbie and Mouton (2011) explain further by stating that the function of the interpretation is to clarify what has emerged from the field text without denying the validity of the original version. At all times, the researcher is reminded to establish a ‘reasonable interpretation’ and to avoid over-interpreting the text. This becomes complex, as the act of reading intentions into texts happens each time a reader examines a text (Hardy & Bryman, 2004).

What needs to be understood is that any meaning making or interpretation made as a result of the researcher’s assumptions needs to be verified by the narrator. This was done when the participants returned to read their personal narratives. These ideas also apply to the interpretation of visual material. However, in this study clarification of the collage took place during the focus group (Daniels, 2008).

Finally, it is important to be sensitive to the broader context in which the text is operating. It is only in understanding the context of a text that we are able to determine what actions are taking place.

## **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As regards ethical considerations, two aspects needed to be addressed. The first involved the ethical ways in which the research was undertaken; the second involved ethical ways of behaving as a research psychologist during the process.

### **3.5.1 Ethical Approaches Prior to this Study**

At the outset, the first step in this process involved obtaining permission from the school to carry out the research within this particular context. Consent was applied for and granted by the principal of school. Because the school is a private institution, permission was not required from the Western Cape Education Department. The second step was to obtain ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee for Human Research (Humanities) at the university. This was obtained and a copy of this approval can be found in Appendix G. The next step involved identifying possible participants and approaching them in order to interest them in participating in this study. To do this, I met with both the participants and their parents, who were provided with a detailed description of the study and what would be required of the participants should they consent. This included a discussion on what would happen to them during the study, what provisions would be made if anything went wrong, issues around confidentiality, as well as on the focus of the research. As this research is part of the requirements for a master's degree, the participants were told that the information will, of necessity, be available to certain members of the academic community. Issues around confidentiality as well as ways in which anonymity would be maintained by scrambling data in the final report were reviewed. The participants were asked to enter into discussion about this with their parents and, if willing, to then sign an assent form. With the participants being minors, the parents were also approached for consent.

### **3.5.2 Ethical Behaviour during the Study**

In my training as a student psychologist, I have been guided by the ethical codes used by psychologists in their practice, teaching, and particularly in this research. As already stated, this is done not only to protect the public, but also the reputation of the profession, so that certain standards of conduct of a profession such as psychology are adhered to (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). These codes are guided by the ethical principles of justice, respect for the dignity and rights of all, autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, veracity, fidelity and responsibility (Allan, 2008). All these



principles are important when carrying out research. Nonetheless, individual autonomy, respect for humans, maleficence and beneficence need particularly to be addressed. Certain safeguards must be in place to ensure they are abided by in the research process. In addition, merely to following a set of guidelines, the researcher is required to be of a “critical and reflective morality that guides decisions and actions”, and of one that is accountable to people (Daniels, 2008:1).

### **3.5.2.1 Individual Autonomy and Respect for Humans**

There are a number of different ways of safeguarding this principle when conducting research. The first is that of informed consent; ensuring that the participants are adequately informed of the nature and consequences of the research (Christians, 2011). This requires that the participants agree voluntarily to participate, and that this agreement is based on complete and open information (Babbie, 2011). It should be noted such informed consent also extends to the use of visual methods in research (Daniels, 2008). It is further required that, as far as possible, the research is designed in such a way that it is free of active deception (Christians, 2011). To this end, in enlisting the participants, and in a manner appropriate to their age, it was clearly explained to them what the research would entail, and further that they were under no obligation to participate. This included a discussion on the creation of a collage, and how it would be used in the final dissemination of the research, followed by a request for explicit permission to release a reproduction of the collage into the public domain on completion of the research (Daniels, 2008). In addition, as recommended by Silverman (2010), it was made known to the participants they could withdraw from the research process at any time.

A further manner in which an individual's autonomy is safeguarded, is through insisting that people's identities and the location of research is protected through the practice of anonymity and confidentiality. This protects people from embarrassment of revealing private information (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). In terms of anonymity, I of course was aware of what each participant had said. However, it was important the data be scrambled and that pseudonyms were used to ensure no-one else would be able to determine their identity. Confidentiality required of this researcher assurances she would not reveal the identity of any given person's response (Ibid). In addition, all my personal data was adequately secured, and arrangements were made to

ensure no-one else had access to the original transcripts of the data (Christians, 2011).

### **3.5.2.2 Non-Maleficence**

This principle requires the researcher does everything possible to ensure no harm befalls the participants (Wassenaar, 2007). Research of this kind harbours the possibility that in the bringing to mind and revealing of certain stories in a person's life, psychological harm can occur. Babbie and Mouton (2011) claim it is for this reason a researcher needs to remain alert to the subtlest signs of danger, and to guard against them. In line with this principle, this researcher remained vigilant to signs of psychological distress, and arrangements were made for participants to visit one of the school psychologists were it necessary.

Related to non-maleficence is the issue of accuracy, which guarantees a participant's views are represented correctly. By ensuring the data is presented accurately, Christians (2011) maintains that data can be valid both internally and externally. I was further responsible for warning the participants about the potential for harm when they read the final report and might recognise themselves characterised in ways they may have deemed undesirable (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). However, I attempted to guard against potential harm by following the narrative-inquiry practice of providing the participants with an opportunity to verify the accuracy of what had been written about their narrative prior to the final report.

### **3.5.2.3 Beneficence**

In employing this principle, the researcher attempts to maximise the benefits the participants achieve from participating (Wassenaar, 2007). Again, the welfare of the participants remained uppermost, and interviews and focus-group sessions were scheduled at their convenience. These were conducted in the safe, comfortable, and confidential space of this researcher's office.

Another aspect of beneficence that needs to be focussed upon is the process of addressing and discussing the issue of possible consequences to the participants should they occur as a result of the research (Kvale, 1996). Such consequences could lie in the fact that the interview was either a negative or positive experience for the participant. In this study, the participants benefited from reflection on their ideas

of masculinity and from having the opportunity to tell their stories. They further benefited from the knowledge that their understandings could possibly be of help to other boys.

#### **3.5.2.4 Specific Ethical Issues for Narrative Inquiry**

In narrative inquiry, it is usual that longer excerpts of the narrator's stories are published. This opens the participant to being more vulnerable or exposed, as the participant does not know in advance what they will say and, therefore, what they are giving consent to (Chase, 2011). For this reason, in keeping with the narrative stance of this research, I returned to the participants with the content of what would be made public and again requested their consent. Josselson (2007) maintains that it becomes necessary to explain the particular process of narrative research to participants, and to encourage narrative researchers to develop an encompassing "ethical attitude" at all times.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has described the research process utilised to conduct this study. It commenced with a discussion of the research paradigm and theoretical framework used to guide the research, that of post-structuralism. This was followed by a detailed discussion on the research design adopted, and includes the methodological paradigm, the design type and the context of the research. In the discussion of the research methods employed in this study, the methods of collecting and analysing data were considered. To conclude this chapter, the ethical considerations that were used to guide the research process were explained.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data is presented in two ways. Firstly, the participants are introduced through a short excerpt from their personal narrative which provides what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as a descriptive analysis. I justify my decision to present some of the data in narrative format to allow for a rich description of each boy within his specific context, and for the individual experiences of each of the participants to be presented in a more meaningful way. The narratives serve both as an introduction to the participants and they provide a context for each boy's experiences. This personal narrative is then replaced by a homogenised narrative based on all the data that was subjected to an interpretive thematic analysis process. I move the focus from the participant's unique stories to a narrative of a more general understanding of the meaning boys of this age have of masculinity.

#### 4.2 PERSONAL NARRATIVES

In writing these stories, I was guided by the narrative-inquiry perspective of remaining focussed on the "experiences as lived and told in (the) stories" of each of the boys whose lives are lived in "storied landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:128, 145). This was guided by the notion of a three-dimensional inquiry space in which attention was paid to creating a text that is "located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:144). The notion of time in these narratives was based on the understanding that, in addition to the story of the present, each boy has a history and a future towards which he is moving. The personal refers to the inward reflection of each participant, while the social provides us understanding of his outward focus. The context relevant for this study includes both the school and family, and each is considered relevant to their stories. The challenge in writing these narratives lay in presenting their stories in a way that does not misrepresent them, given the multiple plotlines in each story. My voice as the researcher is heard in my interpretation of their stories. This is part of the researcher's dilemma that Clandinin and Connelly

(2000:147) refer to when they speak of the struggle to “express one’s own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants’ storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to and reflect upon, the audience’s voices.”

#### **4.2.1 Introducing the Participants**

##### **4.2.1.1 Introducing Henry**

Henry is 13 years old, and has been at Greystoke Preparatory School since Grade R. He describes it as being a “fantastic school”. He lives with his parents not far from the school, and tells me he has a close relationship with both parents. His father works from home, and his mother is the one who gets home “quite late”, because of which he feels he has developed a really close bond with his father. He has an older sister who is often away, and although his relationship with her is good, Henry enjoys not having to share his parent’s attention. The family spend time together over the weekend on walks or picnics, or simply on lying in front of the fire watching TV. They also enjoy holidays together and, at the time of this interview, Henry was looking forward to an adventure in Madagascar.

During the interview and focus group, Henry revealed a reflective side to his personality. An example of this was demonstrated in his belief it is important to give of your best in whatever you do. He told me he was struck by the saying, “hard work beats talent until talent works hard”, and he endeavours to live by this.

##### **4.2.1.2 Introducing PJ**

PJ is 13 years old and is a boarder at Greystoke Preparatory. He has only been at the school for 18 months and, in that short time, he has quietly made his presence felt. It seems his character and leadership potential quickly became evident, to the extent that at the beginning of the year he was elected to a leadership position. Although PJ loved his previous co-educational school, it didn’t take him too long to adjust, and he soon found himself to be very happy in his new environment, despite the sudden restrictions to his “freedom” in the boarding house.

PJ’s family circumstances are different to those of the other participants, in that he is raised by his father with whom he has a close bond. It seems the most significant aspect of their relationship is a shared sense of fun. They also share an interest in

music, although both are drawn to different genres. PJ told me his dad has taught him to be independent, and he knows “that I can do everything by myself”. This sense of independence is important to PJ’s identity as he has a clear sense that “I know what is right or wrong”. While his dad has a more laid-back approach to life, PJ reports that his grandfather, another significant influence in his life, has provided an anchor for this small family and tends to be stricter. It is his grandfather who, as a past pupil of the school, encouraged PJ to attend Greystoke Preparatory.

There have not been many consistent female influences in PJ’s life, although when his grandmother was alive, she provided a sense of nurturing and care, despite the fact she was strict. His mother stepped out of their lives when PJ was two years old, and although he maintains he doesn’t think this has affected him, he does acknowledge it has led to him having more independence and responsibility than most other boys. These themes of independence and responsibility are reflected in PJ’s ideas about masculinity; he firmly believes men should “take control or responsibility”.

#### **4.2.1.3 Introducing Nate**

Nate is 13 years old and the dominant background theme to his story is that he comes from a close-knit family. His relationships with his brother and parents appear to be characterised by warmth, ease and fun. They spend time together as a family playing board games, cards and “fooze ball”, and Nate particularly enjoys family holidays with other family members at their beach house. He tells me he has a close relationship with his mother who is always available to help with homework. He especially enjoys the time they spend together watching the TV series ‘Friends’, and they are currently watching the 8th season. His father is his “mentor and role model”, and he admires the fact that he is a successful man who works very hard. He is also impressed by his father’s dedication to keeping fit, and the fact that his father has a good relationship with God.

The school was neither Nate’s nor his family’s first choice. However, he told me that he is really happy at the school. He works very hard at school and is proud of his academic achievements. Nate has had one very good friend since Grade 2, but he talks about another circle of boys who he also describes as being good friends.

#### **4.2.1.4 Introducing Jacob**

Jacob is 13 years old, and moved to Greystoke Preparatory from an Afrikaans farm school when he was in Grade 1. He found his new school was a lot busier than the previous one, though he did not have any difficulty making friends. Generally, he is content at school, and told me that “most days end up happy”.

Jacob is very proud of his heritage which involves having a Greek father and an Afrikaans mother. His family also includes a sister who is fourteen months older than he, and a half-brother and half-sister from his father’s previous marriage. Jacob shares a love of soccer with his father; they support the same soccer team and often watch soccer together on television. Jacob explains that because his dad is European, dressing well is important, and he enjoys going shopping for clothes with his father. His father is an important role model, and Jacob admires his charismatic personality as well as his business acumen. Jacob told me that his relationship with his father really developed when he was in Grade 3 when they started doing more things together. His father is the person from whom he will seek advice on school issues. On the other hand, he was closer to his mother when he was younger, and maintains that “most of my influences come from my mom because of her way of thinking”, and he finds certain things (such as sex) a lot easier to talk to with his mother.

#### **4.2.1.5 Introducing Rajesh**

Rajesh, who is thirteen, came to this school in Grade R because his parents told him "they want me to get a good education so that I can go far in life. So they said before you get expensive shoes and clothing, you're going to get a good education." Rajesh loves attending school, as there are "a million things to do here - I never get bored." He particularly loves playing sport, but knows he is also there to work hard.

When meeting with Rajesh, I gained a sense of the pride and joy he experienced in belonging to his large diverse family. This diversity is religious; his father is from a Hindu Indian family, while his mother is Muslim. Further diversity in his family occurs because there are many who live in other parts of the world, including in the USA, Ireland and India. His nuclear family consists of his mother who is a teacher, his father who is in IT, and his sister and grandmother. His sister is exactly three years older than him, and Rajesh's claim "that I was like a little birthday present for her"

provides an indication as to their relationship. Rajesh told me she is very academic and doesn't like sports. Their relationship is good, and Rajesh spoke of how the two of them, together with an uncle, enjoyed constructing a large Lego ship. His voice fills with warmth when he speaks of his grandmother who helps with the cooking in addition to helping him with his work. He told me they have lots of fun together, and he considers her to be one of the most important people in his life.

Generally Rajesh finds the boys at Greystoke Preparatory friendly, and he has one particular friend who he likes to spend time with during the holidays. He told me about the last holiday when he went with this friend to work at his parents' factory, and how they helped with loading vans and counting sweets for packaging. Rajesh doesn't normally see school friends over the weekends as Saturdays are days for "catching up work" and Sundays "we usually go out as a family ... we tend to go to shopping malls." However, Rajesh does spend time playing with friends who live in the neighbourhood. He reflectively acknowledged that when he began at his present school, the neighbourhood children thought he was "too fancy" for them. However, now he believes that because he is less materialistic, it has led to a more equal friendship.

#### **4.2.1.6 Introducing Lulus**

Lulus, who is fourteen, came to Greystoke Preparatory as a boarder when he was in Grade 3. His story begins in humble surroundings where he was the youngest of four boys with Xhosa parents. When he was four, his father abandoned the family leaving them in poverty. Soon after, his mother obtained employment with a family in Somerset, and this job required she live in along with her youngest child. Lulus developed a close bond with these people, who eventually became his guardians and are now totally responsible for him financially. He told me he knows them well enough to call them mom and dad, and that when he goes home over the weekends, he sleeps in their home. Lulus has a good relationship with his birth mother, and she phones him every night when he is at school, and he feels she is very grateful for their present situation. He told me that often when the two of them are sitting watching TV together, she will tell him how lucky he is they are no longer living in poverty. Some weekends Lulus will go to his mother's home in the township, and he was uncomfortable about telling me he doesn't always enjoy these visits. If his



brothers or cousins are there, then it is fine, but a lot of the time he feels isolated and thinks it is probably due to the fact he is not able to speak his home language properly. He told me a story about how he had been into a township spaza shop and the owner had called him a “coconut” (which means black on the outside, but white on the inside) because he was speaking English. He does not have a relationship with his birth father, and on the one occasion his father attempted to meet with Lulus and his brothers, Lulus remembers looking at him and thinking, “this is the guy that left us.”

Lulus came to Greystoke Preparatory because his guardians felt the school he had previously been at was “too white”. Lulus told me he hated being at the school at first, but then in the second term he made friends with three other boys, and they have been best friends ever since. He is friends with boys of all races, and he claims there is no difference in the way he is treated.

#### **4.3 MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA**

The process of interpretive data analysis required me to use a broad lens, and to become involved in identifying the key themes and patterns that repeat themselves in the stories told to me in the interviews. This data was analysed together with the data obtained from the focus group and the individual collages that were constructed by the participants at the beginning of the focus group. Through this process, another, broader narrative was written. The initial phase of the analysis involved scrutinising the transcripts of both the interviews and focus group by coding interesting aspects of the data in a systematic manner. The codes were then organised into potential categories, or themes and sub-themes, by looking for patterns of meaning that were interesting from the perspective of understanding the meaning the participants make of masculinity. This process required many stages of refining (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then proceeded to condense the data into tables by arranging sub-themes that were related into themes. This can be seen in Appendix F. The six themes and their underlying sub-themes have been laid out in Table 1 below. This is followed by a report on both the content and the meaning of the themes obtained from the data.

Table 1: The Themes and Sub-Themes of Thematic Analysis

SPORT	LABELS	CONTROLLING MASCULINE IDENTITY	IN RELATION TO THE 'OTHER'	SUPERHEROES AND JAMES BOND	ALTERNATIVE MASCULINITIES
Role of Sport	Sporty Guys and Geeks	Bullying	Are they men?	Superheroes	
Role of Rugby	Popular Guys	Dissing	It was just a joke	James Bond - 'Manly Man'	
Role of Teachers	Cool Guys and Show-Offs	Fighting and Aggression	In relation to girls	They both get the girls	
	Nice Guys			Fathers	

#### 4.3.1 School Culture

This section, therefore, provides a description of the school context within which the six participants of this study find themselves. Although most boys attending the school are from white, relatively affluent backgrounds, there is some cultural diversity with a growing number of boys from other cultural backgrounds choosing to attend the school. The school offers further opportunity for diversity; boarding house allows boys from other African countries to attend the school. However, not all boarders live far away, some live locally and attend the school as weekly boarders. An attempt was made to reflect this religious and cultural diversity in the selection of participants for this study.

I began by exploring the sense of wellbeing of the participants at Greystoke Preparatory school. From the data, all six participants expressed how happy they were about being at the school, something my observations support. There is also an awareness of the privilege they feel at being pupils of this private school. Henry describes it as “a fantastic school and will pretty much set me up to do anything I want to do in life.” The reasons why Rajesh’s parents placed him at the school are explained in the following quotation:

My parents they wanted me to get a very good education so I can go far in life ... before you get shoes and clothing ... that’s why they sent me here.

These comments not only refer to the academic focus of the school, but also to the wide range of other opportunities that are offered; an intensive extra-mural

programme with sport being an important component. The wide variety of sport codes include rugby, hockey, cricket, water polo, swimming, tennis, cross-country, athletics, fencing and judo. There are extensive facilities to accommodate these sports and many of them are shared between the preparatory and college schools. PJ, when comparing Greystoke Preparatory to his previous school, was of the opinion “this is way more of a sporting school ... here it is much more competitive.” Although the majority of boys participate in these active sports, some prefer to choose chess and art club as alternative activities.

The strong emphasis on cultural pursuits has been discussed elsewhere in this study and is worth making note of again. The music school offers individual lessons in a variety of musical instruments and there are also opportunities to play in ensembles such as the jazz band, the orchestra and the marimba band. The weekly music assemblies provide an opportunity for the musicians to perform before an audience. However, these assemblies also enable those who are not musically inclined to develop an appreciation for music. The music tradition includes a musical which is produced every second year and provides opportunities for even more boys from Grades 6 and 7 to participate in musical activities.

#### **4.3.2 Sport**

All six participants play sport at various levels of proficiency, and all made reference to the role that sport plays in their lives in a way that suggests it is an issue that must be negotiated. The following table shows their level of involvement in sport as well as their reasons for playing sport.

Table 2 Reasons for Playing Particular Sports

PARTICIPANT	AGE	SPORTS PLAYED	REASONS FOR PLAYING
Rajesh	13	Hockey 1st team; rugby C team; cricket.	"I mainly come here for the sport".
Lulus	14	Rugby – assistant coach; Hockey C team; cricket.	"The part about school I enjoy is the sports. I like getting muddy and having fun."
Nate	13	Rugby C team, cricket.	"You will always do sports because it is what you do you know."
Jacob	13	Hockey C team; water polo.	"When you do sport you make friends, especially when you do team sports."
PJ	13	Rugby C team; Hockey C team; Swimming A team.	"I enjoy it, but I am not serious about it."
Henry	13	Rugby C team; cricket.	"I focus less on teams and more on enjoyment..."

What is clear from these excerpts is that all six boys have a relationship with sport. However, they differ in the relative importance sport plays in their lives. Henry, Lulus and Rajesh all expressed the enjoyment they experience in playing and watching sport. Of all the participants, only Rajesh considered sport to be a vital aspect of being a boy:

Most of us like to be active on the field, kicking a ball, running around ... boys should naturally prefer running around ... it's something that they should prefer.

Rajesh was so committed to this idea that love of sport is intrinsic to a boy, that when he was asked about boys who don't like sport, his response was, "... ummmm they've just got a different gene." However, this commitment to being active in sport was not shared by Lulus and Henry, who both admitted that, although they enjoyed sport, neither felt it was central to their lives. The following excerpts support this:

Lulus: Sport is not that important in my life .... (it is) really important for those boys in the A and B teams, but not so important for those in C and D teams.

Henry: I focus less on teams and more on enjoyment ... a lot of other boys would focus more on what team you are in, rather than whether you are enjoying it or not ... the sporty circle.

These comments also imply that, depending on what team you are in, will determine how important sport is to you. On the other hand, three of the boys had a more conflicted response to sport. PJ maintained that although he “enjoys” sport, he is of the opinion he was “forced” to do it. This is despite the fact that although there is a policy that encourages all boys to participate in sports at the school, it is not rigidly adhered to. PJ’s attitude to sport is summarised by his comment: “I don’t actually care ... like this is not the most important thing in my life ... not like those A team guys.” The data in this study supports these suppositions as Rajesh, the only participant playing for a 1st team, was also the only boy who claimed sport was central to his life.

Jacob, who regularly watches soccer with his father, was more philosophical in his approach to his involvement in sport, and spoke of the social benefits of playing team sport. This response correlates with other research that indicates that for some, sport provides an opportunity for camaraderie and legitimate attachment (Skelton, 2002; Messner, 1992; Davies & Eagle, 2007). Jacob is also realistic about his sporting ability, and says he is “okay in sports”. However, he hopes that when he gets to the college, “things will be different.” He states:

They’ve got rowing, and I’ll do basketball definitely, and they’ve got so many sports that you will find a sport for you ...

This response indicates the hope that ultimately he will find a sport he is able to connect with and perform well in. Nate also acknowledged he was not that good at sports and said:

I sometimes wish I was better at sports, not to be part of the popular group, just to be I guess sort of respected.

These views are supported by Pringle’s study (2010) that shows the link between a boys’ sporting ability and his masculine identity is profoundly important. Nate’s attitude also seemed to indicate that playing sport was something he needed to do, in that he stated, “you will always do sports because it’s what you do, you know, you don’t think of anything else.” It would seem sport is something boys do, regardless of whether they are good at it or enjoy it.

However, Jacob's internal conflict between his own ability in sport and the connection between this and being masculine is evident in the statement, "you don't have to be good at sport to be masculine." It would appear he is conscious of the discourse that sport is a defining characteristic of boys.

From the data, therefore, it may be concluded that all the participants were aware of the important role sport plays in this school context. Furthermore, they are in the process of forming their own relationships with this significant aspect in the lives of many boys in the school. It would seem that ability in sport is an important factor in determining not only commitment and enjoyment in sport, but also in obtaining the respect of peers. These findings are consistent with the findings of a large research study carried out in London by Frosh et al., (2002) in which they found that even boys who were not good at sport would introduce themselves as not being good at sport. Finally, it should be noted this data also supports the research of Messner (1992:56), who maintains that "sport is a socially acceptable means of achieving public masculine status."

#### **4.3.2.1 The Role of Rugby**

Rugby appears to be a significant sport in the lives of boys at Greystoke Preparatory. Lulus provided an anecdote that illustrates how important he believes the school's general perception is of rugby:

For me it (rugby) is not that important, but for the school it is fully important ... ummmm ... like at rugby festivals ... if we lose the rugby festival everyone's head goes down like for a week. Everything goes quiet ... it's funny. Then if you win everyone goes crazy ... you talk about it for the whole week, how we did the moves and stuff.

In the collage activity, when they chose images to represent their ideas of masculinity, all participants made some reference to the game of rugby. See Figure 1 below for an example. So, for example Jacob described it as "the manly thing to do", and Rajesh identified it as "a manly sport". When referring to the symbols on his collage, Henry defended his selection of the rugby ball as follows:

I also chose a rugby ball, which is a man's sport, and where guys will put themselves on the line for other players.



Figure 1: Henry's Collage

Although Henry maintains that “in rugby I actually focus less on teams and more on enjoyment”, he is also of the opinion many boys “would rather be cannon fodder for the A team than actually play for the Cs”. This comment is consistent with my own observations and contact with boys outside of this study, of the importance that playing first-team rugby has for many boys in the school.

In the participants' data, there seemed to be conflicted attitudes towards rugby. Jacob, who does not play rugby, gave his reason for not playing as being, “I never really thought I was built for rugby because I'm not too stocky.” Though he does not play, Jacob was quick to add, “but I go and medic there, because I went to the medic course.” Although he didn't say, a comment later in the conversation indicated this was a way in which he could still be part of the rugby culture. He said:

You know, when you play rugby, when you're in that crowd, when you make friends you know the other team's people, and then maybe you make friends with them and then they become your friend.

Rugby is not just about physicality; it also seem to represent characteristics that these boys admire as PJ pointed out when he spoke about his selection of a rugby image on his collage: “... and here (a man playing rugby) that's like part of being brave and strong.” The implication being that physical courage is required in order to play the game.

The findings from this data support other research, like that of Skelton (2002) who found that “participating in sports such as football is a masculinizing practice.” These findings also indicate that rugby plays a very important role in the life of Greystoke

Preparatory, with it possibly being seen as the most important sport. This is consistent with the research of Martino and Frank (2006: 27) who found in their study in Australia that there was a “hierarchy of sports which suggests that the institutionalization of compulsory sport is implicated in the legitimation of a pecking order of masculinities at single sex boys’ schools.”

#### **4.3.2.2 The Role of the Teacher in Advancing Sport**

Teachers and their opinions on sport seem to influence the value the participants attach to sporting codes, especially to rugby. This is evident in the following statement made by Jacob:

A lot of the teachers refer to rugby a lot, and they ... I mean everybody likes the sport ... I mean if somebody got a scholarship for rugby, they would talk about it more than if somebody got a scholarship for English.

When asked about the value of sport in the general discourse, Rajesh shared the following anecdote about how teachers use sport in the classroom.

Mr P, I didn't really know, but he turned out to be a good teacher. He is funny; he involves the academics and the sport. If you are not behaving in class then he gives penalties away to the other team. It's quite funny.

It would appear from these few comments that male teachers use examples of sport, or make reference to such in class, thus showcasing the importance of sport's influence on the lives of school boys. These observations are consistent with those of Martino and Frank (2006:19), who maintain that “the male teacher as role model is invested with a particular masculinizing capacity.” These authors went on to add that male teachers often use sport and humour to manage their relationships with boys – as was evident in this context.

#### **4.3.3 Labels**

During the interviews with the participants, I became aware of certain labels they used to describe either themselves or others in terms of who they are as boys. As has already been discussed, sport is an important aspect in the lives of the participants. It is, therefore, not surprising that sport is an important thread used in defining how boys are labelled by others, and how it is internalised by some. These sport-related labels will constitute the first sub-theme.



#### 4.3.3.1 Sporty Guys and Geeks

The first group of labels I shall discuss are labels that refer to those who are good at sport. They are used in opposition to labels which describe boys who focus on their academic work. When asked to name some, the participants provided the following labels: 'sporty guys', 'jocks', 'geeks' and 'nerds' (Appendix H). Pringle and Hickey (2010) have reported on how boys will often use belittling labels such as 'nerd' and 'geek' in order to maintain their own sense of self. When talking about his academic ability Nate told me that he was one of the boys who focused a lot on academics and referred to the terms 'geek' and 'nerds'. He distinguished between the two labels by saying that:

I am on the smarty side, I guess ... more of a geek than a nerd ... geeks are just smart ... nerds are smart and weird, I guess ... socially awkward.

As Nate has a good circle of friends it appeared to be important for him to acknowledge this social ability by making the distinction between geek and nerd. PJ had a slightly different understanding of the term 'nerd', and provided further clarity when he stated:

Other boys will call boys who work hard are nerds ... but they don't call me that even if I get A's for everything ... because some of the other boys ... I guess some just seem weaker.

As with Nate, the implication is that a nerd is someone who is socially less able. When I asked the boys about what the perception was towards those boys who are good at academic subjects, the response was varied. Jacob told me he works hard at school and believes that:

Those who work hard are not looked down on because a lot of the clever boys are in the first team and are very sporty, so ... because of this ... there is a balance between sport and academics.

This response seems to indicate that because some of the talented sportsmen are also strong academically, it provides those who are just as academically strong with some kind of protection from being teased or ridiculed. Rajesh had another view on the difference between the "sporty boys" and the "clever boys". He maintains that:

The boys who do like academics are not loud about it, but boys who are good at sport they tend to be all big about it.

Rajesh's views were that the sporty boys know that their ability in sport has greater value in the school, and is, therefore, something to be boasted about. Not only do they boast about it, but a comment from Henry indicated there is "a sprinkling of boys" whose attitude can be one of derision towards those who are less able on the sports field. Comments such as, "oh you suck; you are in the C team", are attempts by these sporty boys to lay claim to their status through deriding others. It would appear not all are intimidated by such attempts at dominance and power, and Henry's response to this is indicative of some boys' ability to withstand such pressure and efforts to dominate.

Well you are saying, you are saying just because I am in the C team I suck. Well, what if you were doing your best and you were in the D team? Would I have the right to do that? It comes back to that same thing. If you are doing your best you can't do anything more.

From the above data, it would seem that at Greystoke Preparatory School, the masculine attributes of being good at sport provide high status. However, along with sport, academic acumen is also highly regarded. According to Henry, some boys are implicitly attempting to construct academics and working hard as being worthy of derision, thereby enhancing the hegemonic understanding of masculinity. However, the views of boys such as Henry and Lulus indicate this understanding is being challenged within the context of this private school. This data supports that of Frosh et al. (2002), whose study in London schools found that social class influenced what boys valued. They found that boys who went to private schools placed a high value on study and academic work.

#### **4.3.3.2 The Popular Guys**

A second group of labels used by the participants are 'popular guys', 'cool guys' or 'show-offs'. These labels appear to be connected to status. I begin this section by discussing what is meant by the term 'popular guys'.

Although the participants were not in total agreement as to what this phrase describes, there was a common thread through all the discussions. It appears that being good at sports is a necessary pre-requisite for being a popular guy, and this supports research such as that carried out by Lodge (2005:183) in a study on primary school children in Ireland. She maintains that, "in order to be of high status, boys must display characteristics and aptitudes deemed appropriately masculine

such as ability in football.” The following excerpts from the participants in this study support this perception of popular guys:

Henry: A group of sporty boys who are considered cool because they are in the first team rugby.

Nate: They are all-rounders, they are like good at academics and they're good at sports.

Rajesh: Lots of the popular guys they're, umm, they're not just sport, some of them are also very clever, so they're well-rounded.

PJ agrees with the idea that the popular guys are good at sport. However, he, like Henry, clarified it was only ability in certain sports that gave this popular group status. He is in the A swimming team, and it would seem that ability in certain sports such as swimming, does not qualify for popular status.

PJ, however, went on to explain he thought being popular was more about recognition in general, rather than only through recognition in sport. When asked to elaborate he stated:

There are some guys who are popular for other things, like playing really well in music assembly ... not academics though.

Although Nate agreed sporting acumen led to popular group status, he also appeared anxious to portray this group as being likeable people.

I like them (the popular group). They're all-rounders, they are like good at academics and they're good at sport ... they've all got leadership skills you know. In Grade 4 I was definitely not in the popular group ... because I probably wasn't good at sports.

Nate was referring to a group of popular boys good at sport as well as at school work, pupils who are well-rounded, pleasant people, and who are recognised as being leaders. According to Rajesh:

They're popular because they have good personalities ... lots of very nice people ... I used to be part of the popular group in Grade 3 ... but now I still talk to them like any other boy could, I am a friend, they invite me to parties ...

I shall refer later to the reasons why Rajesh moved out of the popular group. However, it appears that for him acceptance by this group is nevertheless important.

The discourse concerning the important role that excellence in rugby plays in being considered part of the popular group was illustrated by a story related by Nate about

another boy in his grade. Apparently this boy, considered a good rugby player, was concussed halfway through his Grade 4 year resulting in him no longer playing rugby. The consequence of this was that he was not considered part of the popular group until this year when he began playing rugby again. Conversations I have had with other boys not included in this study, support these ideas, and some have stated that even being in the Hockey 1st team is not sufficient to bring about popularity status. However, the data from this study would suggest the issue is more complicated than simply revolving around membership of the Rugby 1st team. It would seem that having a good personality and being a 'nice person' are also characteristics considered necessary for popularity group status. Again, this is consistent with the study by Lodge (2005:184) in which she states, "children's popularity depended on their ability to engage appropriately and pleasantly with peers."

Swain (2004: 171) argues that "one of the most urgent dimensions of school life for boys, is the need to gain popularity and, in particular, status." The data obtained in this research supports this idea. It would seem that although this research appears to support that carried out by researchers such as Frosh et al., (2002) and Messner (1992), which indicates that labels are used to shame those who behave differently, the situation within this context is somewhat different. It would appear there are some who are attempting to resist attempts by a dominant group of boys to regulate the behaviour of those who are different.

#### **4.3.3.3 Cool Guys and Show-Offs**

A third group made reference to in the data are the 'cool guys'. This group consists of boys good at sport, but who are not well-liked. Rajesh refers to this group as 'show-offs', while for Lulus they are 'cool guys'. The following story told to me by Rajesh provides an indication of the effect these show-offs have on the others:

... then there are the boys who are very popular, that are show-offs ... the popular boys don't even like them ... showing off and boasting ... these show-offs, they're good at sport ... all they think about is sport ... (they) mess around in class, and then get into trouble, and the teacher blames the class ... I think they are trying to impress the (nice) popular boys ... the show-offs don't really focus on their work ... they look at other boys and say, 'ahhh, keep quiet you know nothing about this'.

There are a number of dynamics that emerge from this statement, and the first is that this group of boys is not well liked. However, because of their sporting ability, it appears they command a certain amount of respect. The issue of power and the need to maintain superiority through impressing others will be addressed next.

According to Lulus, it is important the cool group impress the other popular boys while simultaneously deriding others. This highlights the power this group exercises through dominating some lessons. It would appear the practice of 'messing around' and other disruptive behaviours are exercised to claim positions of dominance in the classroom. Such behaviours, according to other researchers, are common features of hegemonic masculinity (Dalley-Trim, 2007; Martino & Frank, 2005).

Furthermore, it would appear that the power held by the cool boys must not be challenged by boys belonging to subordinate groups. Lulus provided an example by referring to an incident in which a non-cool boy was overheard making a comment about a First team rugby player dropping the ball during an important match. The non-cool boy was then severely chastised by the cool boy's friends.

Providing further insight into the methods used to maintain power and gain entry into the cool group, Lulus said, "I think trying to be cool is like trying to impress your friends and diss other people." Here, Lulus spoke from experience, relating as he did on how he had become involved with the cool group for a while and, subsequently, had decided they were not for him. The following excerpt illustrates this:

I was starting to be like swak (bad) to my friends. I don't know why I was trying to impress the other guys ... then I saw how much I hurt them (my other, non-cool friends) ... not like they showed it, but I just saw how much I was being (hurtful) to them...so I said, 'no, I dunno how this is fun ...'

Drawing on this, it can be seen the cool group maintains power through 'dissing', and this will be analysed in the next theme.

Lulus added several dimensions to understanding the influence the cool group have. The following statement indicates this:

Popular boys are the ones who have the courage to talk to girls that's my idea ... the cool guys are the athletic guys ... and jocks ... and I think it's because they're rich ... going out with the girls definitely puts you in the cool group.

According to him all three characteristics of wealth, ability in sport and 'courage to talk to girls' are necessary to acquiring cool group status. This perception of social ability as being a requirement enjoyed support from the other participants. According to Rajesh, the cool boys are popular "because they interact with girls a lot more", and he spoke of how they show off because of their perceived popularity with the girls. Jacob spoke of how they attempt to impress the girls by "talking themselves up and other people down ... like saying maybe if they're good at sports." What is evident from their comments is that boys can use their sporting ability to impress the girls. Finally, statements such as that made by Nate imply that boys who are "socially weird" are considered to have the lowest status in this school. This aspect will be discussed later in another theme.

Another aspect to being cool appears to be connected to the clothes boys wear. Rajesh and Lulus expressed this in the following statements:

Rajesh: Clothes do make a difference ... if you buy colourful expensive gel tackies and try to look cool ... I mean if the boy who suddenly wants to start dressing fancy, then he will probably get bullied ... (the message is) you're not better than us ... if you have nice things at school then you are going to be cool.

Lulus: Clothes are everything ... if you want to be cool ... buy stuff ... skinny jeans ... you will get dissed if you wear clothes that don't suit you, like if you're too fat for skinnies.

It appears both boys acknowledge that cool-group status is associated with the clothes you wear. In addition, it would seem there is a cautionary message in these statements that implies boys should not attempt to enter into the cool group by wearing certain clothes. Not all the participants felt that clothes and other accessories were important to being cool. Henry said, "Honestly ... if people think you are being cool because you've got a particular watch, then you've got the wrong friends."

In summary, according to these participants, it would appear there are two groups of popular boys. The first are those regarded by their peers as being kind and agreeable; the second, the cool guys, are mean and use various strategies such as hurtful and dismissive behaviour towards other boys to maintain their power. It would seem that for both groups, certain characteristics are required in order to achieve their high status. The first is aptitude in sport, particularly ability in rugby. The second

is that of social maturity, partly demonstrated through their ability to socialise with girls and be considered attractive to them. The data in this section supports that of Connell (2000) in which he found that in addition to relations of power there is also a hierarchical relationship between the different forms of masculinity. It would seem in this study that the popular guys and cool guys represent hegemonic masculinity in this context and hold the pinnacle position.

#### **4.3.3.4 Nice Guys**

This theme has predominantly been about labels boys assign one another. However, it also speaks of the relationships that exist between boys and their peers. During this study, it became clear that not all the relationships these participants have are conflicted and difficult. Indeed, some spoke of relationships that were supportive and encouraging. An example would be in Rajesh's story about his friends. He told me he has great difficulty with public speaking and, consequently, orals are very difficult for him. When he does this, his friends are supportive, and in his words, "they don't tease, they just try and push you up so that you can be a bit better." He continued by explaining why he is no longer part of the popular group: "I feel better with the other boys that I've met ... they're nice people ... it's their personality that pulls."

Both Jacob and Nate provided data that supports the idea that common interest and personality are important factors in friendship. Nate told me that friendship "is more based on personality you know - who you get on with." Henry added a slightly different dimension to the discussion by describing the type of qualities he looks for in his friends as well as what to do with people that you don't like.

My friends are guys who are friendly, open, warm and generous ... and obviously fun to be with ... if you don't like a guy, then you don't want to spend time with him, so you just stay clear of him, and you hang around people who you want to be around.

It would appear from this data that, in addition to their knowledge of the pressures to conform to peer groups, some of these participants have developed the ability to make friendships based on different rules. This would support recent research by Pollack (2006) that indicates there is an increasing tendency of boys to acknowledge the importance of developing meaningful friendships with other boys. This is in contrast to older, traditional ideas that boys and men are disconnected.

#### 4.3.4 Violence as a Means of Control

One of the themes identified in the data was that of violence and the way in which it was used by boys to control the actions of others. Three strategies of violence were identified in this study, that of bullying, teasing or dissing, and fighting and aggression.

##### 4.3.4.1 Bullying

The topic of bullying surfaced during most of the interviews, and three of the participants made statements that would indicate that in their opinion bullying is not a major problem. However, Rajesh and Lulus had had personal experience of being bullied. Lulus was bullied in Grade 4 by an older boy in the boarding house, something that continued until the bully left to go to the college. Rajesh recounted his experience of being bullied, and told of an experience with an interesting outcome.

I was bullied (some boys started to hit me and push me around) ... I didn't talk to a teacher, but decided to deal with it myself ... I actually hit him back. I felt all happy that he was no longer bullying me ... after that I thought I started to become a bully as well. And then I was told by my friends who I was bullying that 'you're changing you're not being a good person any more', and that got me changing back.

It appears that for Rajesh retaliating to end the bullying had resulted in a double-sided response. First, there was relief when the bullying stopped. But then, having experienced the effect of using physical power, it seemed as if it resulted in him resorting to the use of physical power in other situations.

There was one incidence of bullying in the school to which they all referred. Jacob and Rajesh both attempted to explain this bullying that had been on-going over a period of many years, despite many attempts to stop the bully and empower the victim. He told me:

Jacob: There was one person who was treated badly for being different ... he was just a little bit strange socially.

Rajesh: I think he acted a bit different, umm, he tried to be too different. I mean if he had acted normal, just ... he tried to be a bit too popular, and started to wear fancy clothing ... it wasn't him.

They seem to want to justify what happened as being his fault for being different. The implication in both these comments is clearly that you pay dearly for behaving in



ways deemed 'different', or above the status assigned you by the popular boys. It would appear that power is being used to ensure the victim remains in a lower social position. In addition, an attempt is made to explain the bullying by placing the blame on the victim. This data concurs with research carried out by Newman, Woodcock and Dunham (2006:295) on bullying in a school in Britain. These authors state: "the culture of blaming the victim because he does not conform to a comfortable normative role permeated attitudes towards bullying." Lulus also attempted to provide a reason for the bullying; he felt it was "because he cried a lot". All these factors could demonstrate emotional difficulties, which concurs with the results of Lodges' (2005:188) study, in which she states that "boys with emotional difficulties are also given lower status."

It would seem the use of violence in the form of bullying is being used by some to maintain their dominant position in the hierarchy. This strategy ensures that those who do not conform to acceptable ways of being a boy are punished (Connell, 1995).

#### **4.3.4.2 Dissing**

Whilst some appeared reluctant to talk about bullying, all six participants spoke of their experiences, either directly or indirectly, of name-calling, or what they refer to as "dissing". Nate, Jacob and Lulus believed that in most cases name-calling was said in jest, and was not intended to be hurtful. Nate said that for the most part dissing was part of "good fun ... I don't think they ever mean for it to go deep", while Jacob felt he didn't think people were hurt by the comments as "they smile" afterwards. Lulus acknowledged that "we felt it more when we were younger." However, he felt this had changed now they are older. On the other hand, Henry's response was:

The bullying I hate is when people diss your mom ... they think of it as a joke ... that sort of thing makes me want to explode.

On the surface, it appears Henry's feelings on dissing differ from those of Nate, Jacob and Lulus in that he makes it clear he finds nothing amusing about dissing – especially dissing aimed at a boys' mother. Further, he was the only participant willing to state he perceives dissing to be a form of bullying. It would seem the other three participants consider dissing to be humorous. However, there was some

contradiction in what they were saying. Lulus' ambivalence has already been stated, while Nate told me clearly:

I think when you're younger, you can't really take the hits as hard, you know you can't really roll with the punches ... I think you grow into it ... you get a thicker skin ... you can't just cry over everything.

The implication here is that dissing comments can be hurtful, and the only way to protect yourself from the hurt is to develop a thick skin. Towards the end of my interview with Nate, he told me he believes one of the important characteristics of a boy is that he should have a "thick skin". The implication here is that being a boy in this context, requires the ability to dull emotional responses. This supports Pollack (2006) when he refers to the idea that there is pressure on boys to hide their feelings by 'hardening the mask'. I suspect it is possible that the victim of bullying mentioned in the previous section had not developed a 'thick skin', and had not learnt to 'roll with the punches'.

#### **4.3.4.3 Fighting and Aggression**

It would seem there are times when what might appear to be bullying is actually a fight, and all the participants referred to the fighting that they have observed in the playground. It appears their understanding is that a fight occurs when both boys are involved in either a physical or verbal altercation. They also referred to the encouragement such incidents elicit from other boys, and the role this plays in maintaining the argument longer than what should be its normal course. It is not clear why these fights occur, but Henry provided a tentative answer to why some fights happen. He told me about a boy who seems often to be involved in fights and said:

That boy has been involved in so many fights ... umm ... maybe he has problems because his parents are divorced. I can't understand why he would do that.

It would appear Henry is attempting to make the connection between the boy's possible inner anger due to his parent's divorce, and the manifestation on the playground in the form of fighting. Rajesh commented on the aggression he sees in boys and men in the following statement:

Boys can be quite aggressive. If they're upset they can become extremely aggressive and angry. When a man gets very angry, bad things can happen.

Rajesh appears to connect this anger to masculinity in that he said, “boys tend to have more of a short temper than girls ... there is a gene that makes them angry.” The implication is that anger is intrinsic to boys. Nate adds to the idea that being a boy implies a greater expectation of fighting, in that while describing the qualities of boys, he said, “boys get into fights, like proper punching fights.” It would appear, therefore, that violence is used to dominate others in this context. This data concurs with that of Mills (2001:16), who maintains that the position of many boys in the hierarchy is often determined by male-on-male violence, and for many, aggression and authoritarianism is ‘celebrated as an ideal’.

It became clear during the discussion and the focus group that, although fighting is a fairly common occurrence in the playground at Greystoke Preparatory, not all the participants accept the idea that aggression is a defining characteristic of being a man. Henry said:

It depends on the circumstances ... not all are aggressive ... all people (boys and girls) can be aggressive or caring ... it's not part of a masculine male either.

Lulus added to this by saying:

A guy who abuses others, like starts hitting his girlfriend and swearing at her and doing it in front of the child ... that would make him just stupid.

It appears from this comment that extreme violence as abuse is totally unacceptable. PJ confirmed this by stating that someone who behaved in the way Lulus was suggesting would be “a jerk who doesn’t take care of people”. This data supports that of Engebretson (2006), who maintains that contradictory masculinity is characterised by an avoidance of overt expressions of hegemonic masculinity, such as through extreme enactments of violence against other men or women.

#### **4.3.5 In Relation to the ‘Other’ - Homosexuality and Femininity**

During both the personal interviews and the focus group, there were occasions when the participants’ constructions of themselves as boys were in opposition to the ‘other’, usually girls, or homosexual boys and men. All of the six participants struggled to define what masculinity is, but appeared to find it easier to describe it in terms of what they believe it not to be. What the data shows is that the participants construct their ideas around masculinity in relation to gay men and girls.

#### 4.3.5.1 Are they Men?

The participants all seemed to grapple with the question about the essence of being a man. Homosexuality, and where it stands within the masculine discourse, appears to be part of their struggle. All six boys, at some point in the interview or the focus-group discussion, tried to convey an accepting attitude to homosexual people. This is demonstrated in the responses found in Table 3, which contains data on their stance regarding homosexuality.

Table 3: Participants' Views on Homosexuality

PARTICIPANT	VIEW ON HOMOSEXUALITY
<b>Henry</b>	"I don't think there is anything wrong with homosexuality."
<b>PJ</b>	"I'm like, 'so what' – as long as he doesn't try anything then that is fine ... I would say so what, (he is) still a person, (you) still can talk to them."
<b>Nate</b>	"You shouldn't be discriminated for what your sexuality is ... sort of like apartheid against gay people."
<b>Rajesh</b>	"I view it that you do whatever you want ... no-one can say that you cannot like another man ... (it's) just not fair."
<b>Lulus</b>	"What I think of gay is chilled."
<b>Jacob</b>	"I don't think it is their fault ... umm ... they didn't really choose to be that way..."

In some of these responses, homosexual boys were 'othered' by them; PJ, for example, distanced himself from "them". Jacob was more direct in his positioning of homosexual men as the other, in that he states:

A homosexual man would not be classified as masculine ... not really ... more of a woman ... you know they do more of a woman type of thing ... they act differently to a normal person. They walk differently, they move their hands differently, and how they talk and what they talk about ... I think there is nothing wrong with homosexual people, but they're not men.

Jacob maintained this stance in the focus group discussion that took place on a different occasion, and was not deterred from his position, despite others such as

Henry not agreeing with him. Jacob clearly has a stereotypical idea of a gay person, and one of the reasons could be that he did not know anyone who is gay, while Henry, PJ and Lulus all said they know gay men. Jacob is constructing gay men as being 'other', clearly connecting them with another 'other', namely women. He does this by describing stereotypical gestures as being associated with that of women.

When I asked the participants how they thought other boys in the grade would react to someone in their midst 'coming out', I received some interesting responses. Henry, Rajesh and PJ felt that while some boys would be accepting, others would "be more immature" and use various strategies to attempt to regulate their behaviour. These included "making jokes and dissing", and "picking on them and saying, 'oh gross get away'". Nate thought that "there would be more shock." Jacob, on the other hand, was of the opinion people would be more accepting of lesbian women than gay men, "because men should be usually manly ... but a woman isn't really manly, you know." Lulus was very clear about what he thought would happen. He said: "If others were to know that you were gay you would get niked." It would appear from these comments that the participants' perception is that most other boys at Greystoke Preparatory would not be accepting of homosexuality in their midst.

Lulus told me a story about what had happened to a friend of his, who while experimenting with the idea of homosexuality, decided to see how his friends would react when he told them he thought he was gay. This story provides a clear illustration of the homophobic strategies that are used within this school context to regulate other masculinities and, thereby, promote and maintain hegemonic masculinity. Firstly, it appears that announcing you are gay will definitely result in hurtful teasing. It would appear this teasing served to regulate this boy's behaviour, to the extent that he did not pursue the possibility he is gay. This concurs with research by Dalley-Trim (2007). One of the responses to the announcement was a Facebook comment, "Dude, when are you going to get fixed?" This reflects a certain discourse on homosexuality where it represents a flaw in need of "getting fixed." This is consistent with what Davidson (2009) describes as the pathologising of men who choose to express their masculinity in a different way. I am also struck by Lulus' plaintive cry that 'they' - meaning the others in his grade - should have been able to just accept his friend for who he is.

#### 4.3.5.2 'It Was just a Joke'

According to the participants, calling other boys 'gay' is common at Greystoke Preparatory, and the participants had different ideas on this practice. Henry maintains that when boys use the term gay to describe something or somebody, they do not really mean that the person is homosexual, but rather mean that something is "soooo lame". PJ's understanding is similar in that he says it means, "It is just I don't like them (the person or what they are wearing) I guess." Both boys imply that the term is used for people and objects that do not measure up to acceptable standards. By using the term 'gay', it would suggest that anyone who does not meet the norm, or who is deemed unacceptable, will be associated with being gay. Thus, the word is used to refer to difference rather than sexual orientation in this all-male school. So, for example, Rajesh and Nate spoke about the idea that calling someone gay refers to the belief they are different. Nate explains:

I think it's more like saying you're weird ... something you would say to someone if you're angry with them ... it doesn't really cut deep with most people ... you get a thicker skin.

It would seem that being called gay is meant to hurt, and once again Nate refers to the need for boys to develop a way of protecting themselves from the wounds of being called gay, and from being associated with anything other than hegemonic masculinity.

Jacob and Lulus said that using the term is meant as a joke. However, for both it becomes clear in their explanations that the jokes are intended as mechanisms to police the behaviour of their peers. Jacob says:

It's more of a joke ... it's usually between two friends ... it's more like if you did something silly ... like the type of gay as in a girlie type of thing to do or say ... like saying a strange sound, or screaming if you saw a spider.

Lulus told me that "that's just a funny thing for Grade 7s." However, he went on to tell me a story of how a teacher had said to the class "hurry up ladies", with Lulus responding to this in a squeaky (girl-like) voice. The class had then counter-responded in teasing Lulus by calling him gay. Both Jacob's comment and Lulus' story indicate the association made between homosexuality and 'girlie' behaviour, and the unacceptability of such behaviour in this context. Even though the teacher's comment was accepted as a joke, and was understood as such, it appears that the

underlying message is that unacceptable behaviour is associated with behaving like a girl and should not be tolerated.

It would appear that teasing 'done in fun' in this context, is consistent with the findings of other research. Many studies have shown that this teasing in the form of homophobic humour, is employed as a means of making fun of anything not acceptable (Frosh et al., 2002; Davidson, 2009; Lodge, 2005; Dalley-Trim, 2007).

#### **4.3.5.3 Defining Masculinity in Relation to Girls**

A sub-theme that could be identified in the story that Lulus tells above, is that behaviour which is allied to behaving like a girl is also not acceptable. Again, this concurs with research that suggests any behaviour of boys considered feminine, behaviour such as caring and emotionality, is associated with liking men (Davies & Eagle, 2007; Frosh et al., 2002; Macleod, 2007; Corbett, 2009).

Although not all the comments about girls were disparaging, some were distinctly so. The following comment from Jacob attempts to explain the difference between what is expected of men as opposed to what is expected of women:

I don't know, but they've got ... I think women do what men shouldn't do, like things like gossip or be bitchy, or something like that.

This comment arose when he was explaining his thoughts on homosexuality. Further, the connection between homosexuality and being a woman was made, in that he said a gay person is "more of a woman ... you know they do more of a woman type of thing." Jacob was not the only participant to make this sort of distinction. Nate also alluded to the behaviour of girls in a negative way. His ideas on girls are that "you see more women in shopping centres, and girls tend to get into word fights." These disparaging ways of referring to girls appear connected to the way in which power relations are used to construct their masculine identity, and this is consistent with other findings (Renold, 2004).

Henry commented on how he thinks boys tend to view women. He said:

Our society is too materialised, that's why when we see a girl we think, ahh ... she's pretty, let me go and speak to her ... whereas a girl who is not so pretty we don't even want to speak to them.

From this statement, it appears he believes boys observe girls as being objects or trophies, in that only those who are pretty are worth seeking out.

Two of the participants referred to girls in a more idealised way. PJ stated that “women should get it easy”, while Nate, in adding to the remarks he had already made about girls, said wistfully that “girls are sort of softer”. This ambivalence towards girls is also consistent with the literature, with boys simultaneously idealising girls, while ridiculing them for some of their characteristics (Martino et al., 2004; Corbett, 2009).

### 4.3.6 Superheroes and James Bond

#### 4.3.6.1 Superheroes

The idea of boys connecting with superheroes was first introduced by Rajesh in the focus group, and who had a picture of Spiderman in his collage (see Figure 2 below).



Figure 2: Rajesh's Collage

This collage elicited much response from the other participants about masculinity. In the discussion that followed, a number of ideas on masculinity were developed around this metaphor. Jacob felt superheroes appeal to boys because they provide “somebody a boy can look up to ... somebody he wants to be like.” PJ, however, differed. For him, the superhero appeals to boys because “they’ve got people’s



backs, he can take care of you.” The implication is that a man is someone who is protective of others. The image of the male as someone who cares was evident in some of the other participants’ collages, too. One of the pictures PJ used (see Figure 3 below) was that of an older man and woman holding hands, and his explanation for the inclusion of this image was that “a big part of being a man is to care for others.” Lulus, included a picture of two sportsmen hugging to demonstrate the view “you have to be caring ... you have to be a gentleman to get a girl. You can’t just be a jerk.” (See Figure 5 below) Caring and caregiver seem to be identified as positive male character traits. This idea of men as being protectors was echoed by Rajesh, who said:

Men tend to be the ones that protect their family, women protect their child ... men have the responsibility to safeguard.

This caring identity of masculinity, however, did not extend to encompassing the idea of a father nurturing a child. In the selection boys could choose from for their collages, I had included a magazine with a front-cover photograph of a man (father) holding a baby in a nurturing embrace. Nobody chose this image. During the focus group, I referred to the cover photograph, and, apart from Henry who said he thought that the man looked “happy”, four participants were unable to identify with it. Rajesh commented it did not seem normal to him as he does not usually see a father with a child. He felt the scene was staged, and that the male in the picture was “faking it”. It would seem from this comment that although being caring and protective is seen as part of the masculine identity of these participants, caring as in ‘nurturing’ is not part of that superhero identity.

Another characteristic of the superhero metaphor was that of being physically strong. Henry, Lulus and Jacob had images that demonstrated the physical strength of boys and men. Jacob placed a picture of a little boy standing with his arms up in a stereotypical stance, “showing off his muscles”. Henry and Lulus, on the other hand, displayed pictures of strong muscles. Lulus expressed his thoughts by saying:

It’s every man’s dream to have muscles ... pecs - to be a muscle kind of a guy ... once you have muscles you can have a beautiful girlfriend....men should be very strong ... dak ... buff.

It would seem that a strong, muscular body is perceived as being representative of hegemonic masculinity, and is necessary in attracting beautiful women. These ideas

concur with Connell (2008), where she maintains that the ideal of masculinity as being hard and tough is a construction of the mass media. PJ's picture of a man hanging in mid-air from a rock whilst climbing (see Figure 3 below) supports this:

You (a boy) should be brave, and you should not necessarily do anything stupid. You should just be brave in a way that you can face any challenge and not be stupid about it.

Although he did not make a direct reference to superheroes, this quality of bravery and courage he maintains is part of being a boy, is also characteristic of superheroes. These references to being tough and invulnerable concur with research carried out by Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007:35) in South African schools. These authors maintain that such displays are necessary requirements to prove "acceptable masculinity" within the peer-group.

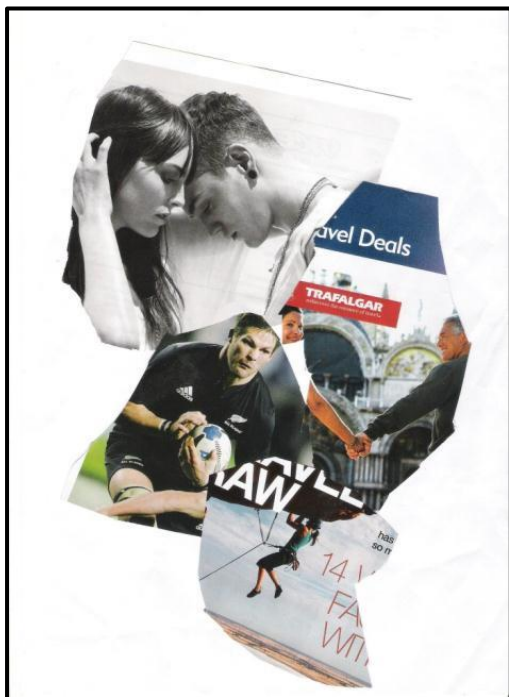


Figure 3: PJ's Collage

In explaining the picture of Spiderman, Rajesh provided an entirely different understanding of how he views masculinity:

... and then men, the male gender likes to destroy things. They like to break stuff ... destructive. That's me ... there is something about being able to break stuff ... see explosions ... it's just fun to watch things blow up.

This idea elicited further thought from the other participants, and the consensus reached was that this concept was linked to power and control. This led to discussion about the fascination boys have for guns and other weapons, such as

paint balls and even elastic bands they use to shoot one another. Lulus summed it up by saying, “I think it is the feeling of power.” PJ told a story of when he was a little boy, which serves to illustrate his thinking then. He said:

You know, when I was seven, I always used to play with little toy guns, and my friends and I would pretend we were beating each other up and stuff. And one day we were walking past somebody and my friend pointed it (toy gun) at him and said, “freeze”, and the guy went really mad because obviously he was offended by it. And like I don’t know ... and now I realise if that had been a real gun that guy could have been dead. That scares me a little. But still there is that feeling of power...

It would appear from this anecdote that although (some) boys realise the danger guns pose, there is, nevertheless, an underlying appeal towards the power such weapons provide.

Lulu provides the final comment on the superhero metaphor. What appealed to him about Spiderman was that “it’s like wearing a mask and being able to do stuff you don’t normally do.” The mask, thus, also affords them the power, but behind which they can hide, concealing all the inadequacies associated with negotiating manhood (Pollack, 2006). It further allows boys to imagine it is possible to attain the seemingly impossible goal of hegemonic masculinity.

#### 4.3.6.2 James Bond and the “Manly Man”

Jacob introduced the concept of the “manly man”, using James Bond as an example (see Figure 4 below). He stated he chose James Bond as “he is a manly man, he gets lots of girls.”



Figure 4: Jacob's collage

Henry agreed, referring to such a man as being a “masculine male”. When asked to explain ‘masculine male’, Henry described him as a man like James Bond, someone who wears a Rolex watch, drives fast cars, and goes on holiday with beautiful women. According to Lulus, a masculine man gets a lot of girls because he is “pretty-looking and into classic cars”.

From the visual data, it would seem these participants define hegemonic masculinity according to a man’s public image. In addition, it would appear this image is dependent on the accessories that accompany a man. Three of the participants, Jacob, Henry and Lulus, all had pictures of expensive watches in their collages, while Jacob and Rajesh both had images of different types of motor cars. Rajesh and Henry supported Jacob in his claim that certain types of cars are “quite manly cars”, and had the following to say:

Rajesh: The type of car that you drive can make you bigger ... can change you completely and ... say you don’t have fast cars and things like that and then you get them, it will change you completely.

Henry: A masculine man will generally drive a sports car, whereas a less masculine man will choose to drive a less masculine car like a Prius or a Smart car or ... something less manly.

This data implies the participants think the acquisition of material possessions, in particular cars, can make a big difference to the (masculine) image a man presents. In addition, it would appear the type of car driven says something about what kind of man he is. Jacob maintains that “a classy sports car like a Porsche, represents a single rich guy”, while Henry added that a 4X4-type car is representative of the “rugged outdoor type of man”.

The use of alcohol seems to complete the James Bond image of a masculine man. Jacob added a bottle of alcohol to his collage because “this is quite a stereotypical thing you know. Men usually drink whiskey”, and, according to Rajesh, “most men tend to like alcohol”.

Both Jacob and PJ voiced some concern about the generalisation of this image. Jacob was the first to voice concern:

I don’t necessarily think ... say somebody was poor ... say especially in Africa they could be supporting their family, they could not even have a car ... and those men are still masculine.

PJ's opinion was "well, it's like I said earlier. It is about taking care of people, that is what makes you manly." When I attempted to clarify this by asking whether working hard and looking after your family would be masculine, Jacob's immediate response was, "not masculine ... manly". From this exchange it, therefore, appears that, from the perspective of these boys, there is a distinction between the "masculine man" and other men. In this way, they are attempting to express their knowledge of hegemonic masculinity around the discourses of masculinity familiar to them. Again this was clarified by Jacob:

Like we said how it's fast cars and things like that ... umm ... in that society and that community that would be masculine, but then in a poorer society something else would be considered masculine.

It would appear he is acknowledging there are other forms of masculinity other than the 'masculine' or hegemonic masculinity.

#### **4.3.6.3 Spiderman and James Bond – "They Both Get the Girls"**

In this theme, during both the discussion on Superheroes and James Bond, all the participants referred to the idea that a masculine man is able to attract "lots of girls". What this theme exposes, is how boys of this age want to display the sexual knowledge they have. Lulus referred to the superhero figure as "the guy who gets all the girls", while PJ expressed his thoughts about the James Bond character by saying:

I think that the guy who gets all the girls ... it makes him popular, which then makes him appear more masculine or manly to others ... women are attracted to guys with fast cars.

Once again the concept arises that the popular man is the one who is popular with the girls and this contributes to the appearance of being more masculine.

Lulus, in his collage made a clear link between sex and masculinity during the focus-group discussion. His collage included two visuals that depicted women's bare breasts. His understanding was that:

It's a man's dream to have sex, I'm guessing ... and, yup, beautiful girls ... umm ... I've put boobs there.



Figure 5: Lulus' Collage

There appeared to be some confusion around objectifying women as sexual beings, and this was demonstrated by PJ who initially remarked that if he had a daughter, “I would be so protective over her like around boys and stuff.” His explanation of this was it was a masculine characteristic for “boys to try and get into her pants, or something like that.” Henry added he had read somewhere that “boys think about sex 300 times a day, or something.” However, both these boys also held ideas that did not quite fit into what they were saying. Henry said that “sex isn’t the be-all and end-all of masculinity”, while PJ stated “the guys you know that ... you’re not always like after sex or something like that.” Despite this ambivalence, it would appear boys this age associate sex with masculinity. This concurs with Forrest (2010:228) when he says, “Boys see the acquisition and display of sexual knowledge and experience as lending them status.” Further, it would seem this conversation provides an indication of how these participants see and engage with women. Women are seen either as sexual beings with men as the predators, or as beings who need to be protected by men who serve then as their saviours and superheroes.

The inclusion of images in the collages, such as fashion items, motorcars and pictures of women, are what Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007:39) refer to as “trophyism”, and maintain that these are indicators of “non-relational heterosexuality”. This trophyism, combined with an emphasis on heterosexuality, are vital aspects of hegemonic masculinity.

#### 4.3.6.4 Fathers

James Bond and Spiderman are not the only masculine role models the participants named. All six participants spoke of the importance of their relationships with their fathers. Nate, Henry and Lulus described very close relationships with their fathers.

Nate says, “me and my dad are really close ... he’s like sort of a mentor.” Henry referred to the encouragement he receives from his father, saying, “he encourages me, but he doesn’t push me to do anything I don’t want.” Jacob also appreciates the fact that his father supports his sport:

He is proud of me when I do well in my sport, but he is not one of those parents who come and sit by the side-line to come and make sure their son wins and they’re quite competitive.

Both Henry and Jacob appear to appreciate the encouragement they are given, but are quick to add it doesn’t feel like they are being pushed. However, Rajesh, who was not one of the boys who spoke about having a ‘close relationship’, refers to his father’s encouragement and adds a qualifying statement:

My dad encourages us to do well at academics before anything else ... but he is very hard on us for school work.

All six participants mentioned doing things with their fathers by way of explaining the good relationships they had with them. The following three extracts illustrate this:

Henry: I go for a cycle with my dad ... my dad and I like to fish ... we also go go-karting together

Rajesh: My dad, he’s the one who usually takes me out for sport ... my dad loves the garden, and I started loving the garden.

Jacob: I usually watch soccer most weeks with my dad ... We support the same team ... I also go clothes-shopping with my dad.

In addition to participating in sporting activities with their fathers, they referred to the admiration they held for their fathers with regard to their fathers’ sporting ability. Lulus sums this up by saying, “I admire him (my guardian) as he is an all-rounder, and he is good at sports.”

Connected to the idea of sharing time together, is the appreciation two of the participants have in being able to share humour with their fathers. Henry said, “we enjoy making each other laugh”, and PJ said, “we have a whole lot of laughs together”. It would appear, therefore, that the relationship these participants have with their fathers is based on shared sporting activities and humour – both aspects which support the construction of ideas about masculinity that have already been mentioned. The findings of this study support those of Adams and Govender

(2008:560) who maintain that “the main channel of communication is established predominantly through the shared experience of sport.”

This gendered interaction with fathers is illustrated by the type of advice the participants receive from their fathers. Nate said his father “gives me advice about rugby”, while Henry thought that “I generally think your dad will teach you most of the stuff as a boy.” Lulus also said he goes to his guardian (father figure) for advice, and added he feels his father understands his relationships with girls, and says, “if I like a girl, my mom would go crazy, my dad would act cool.”

Finally, the influence fathers have on their sons’ understandings of fatherhood is illustrated by Henry’s mentioning, on several occasions, the desire to one day “do that (spend time) with my kids.” Thus, it appears that identifying with fathers has played an important role in the way in which these boys construct their views on masculinity. This concurs with Corbett (2009:275), who further states that there needs to be a “robust and competitive” identification with the father.

The influence that gendered relationships have on the construction of masculine identity is further illustrated in the relationships the participants have with their mothers. Lulus told me that his birth mother phones him every night when he is at the boarding house, while Jacob and Nate also report they have close relationships with their mothers. The following extracts illustrate this:

Jacob: Most of my influences come from my mom because of her way of thinking. When I was younger and I used to talk a lot to my mom ... I find it a lot easier to talk with my mom.

Nate: I have a close relationship with my mother ... she helps me a lot with my work, and we often watch TV together.

It would appear from these examples that the relationships these three participants have with their mothers is gentler, and is not connected to the ‘hard’ world of sport. In addition, their relationships with their mothers appear more serious, and they are perceived as being more approachable when the need to talk arises.

Other participants differed. Rajesh did not talk much about his mother during the interview, and stated very clearly that “my mom just puts too much work on me.” PJ, on the other hand, has not seen his mother since he was two, and has a more complex relationship with her that includes indifference and an underlying anger. In



response to my question on whether he harbours some anger towards his mother, he replied, “kind of ... I know my dad feels that way.” He further stated:

Well ... well I wouldn't think what being a boy is today if I did have a mom, because now I think that you (the man) should be the one to take responsibility.

This appears to acknowledge that even the lack of such an important relationship, has contributed towards influencing who he is today.

#### **4.3.7 Alternative Masculinities**

Through the discussions with the participants, both during the interviews and in the focus group, it was clear some are grappling with the issue of how to reconcile the popular hegemonic discourses about masculinity, while at the same time being able to acknowledge there are many who have very different ways of expressing their masculinity. Henry showed the clearest understanding of this concept:

There is no recipe to being a boy, it is no different ... there is no difference, if you say what it is like to be a boy ... obviously you are going to get different answers from everyone, but the point is that there is no correct make-up for a boy. You'll get arty boys, you'll get computer boys, you'll get outdoor boys you will get sporty boys, you will get academic boys ... a boy is a boy is a boy... there is no right or wrong thing to being a boy.

In realising that not all men are the same, Jacob struggled to describe masculinity. He said it is “like trying to describe the taste of water ... masculinity is different everywhere.” However, his comments, as has already been seen elsewhere in this chapter, also would indicate that the ‘masculine man’ is the man who holds power and who is significant.

The ‘irrational fear’ that hegemonic masculinity has of homosexuality has already been discussed, with homosexual men not considered to be ‘real men’. However, this is viewed differently within the ‘new man’ discourse, and homosexuality is seen as another construction of many masculinities. Two of the participants expressed these ideas very clearly. Henry states:

It (being gay) doesn't make them less of a man ... the only way for a man not to be a man is if he is a female person with female genitals.

Henry contributed further on the difficulties in assigning particular characteristics to either masculinity or femininity by saying:

Anger is a masculine characteristic that is also found in woman because sometimes they can be very, very angry ... and nurturing and caring are feminine characteristics but sometimes men can be caring.

Other boys showed greater ambivalence in confronting this realisation, and Nate's response serves to illustrate:

Those boys who are not rough ... who play non-contact sport like hockey ... where you don't tackle ... this is their way of being a boy. You know, I think everyone is different and that's good. Those boys who are touchy-feely hang out together, and it's good, you know, because then they have friends. I think that's how they are and they don't want to change who they are.

From this, he appears to acknowledge others are different, and that he should be accepting of this difference. He does, nevertheless, distinguish them as being the 'other'. He also describes them as being 'touchy-feely', effectively associating them with the feminine "other", since these are seen to be attributes of girls.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to find out how boys' understandings of masculinity are shaped. In this chapter, collected data was presented through semi-structured interviews, a focus-group discussion and the construction of a collage on "what it means to be a man". The coded data generated themes I then presented for scrutiny. The chapter started with excerpts from each participant's personal narrative which served to introduce and then provide a context within which they could relate to their experience. The second part involved engaging with the data in response to the research problem. Through thematic analysis, general themes and patterns were identified, presented and discussed.

In the final chapter, the findings of the study are discussed, and I conclude with suggestions for further research on the topic.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I presented an in-depth account of the way in which six primary school boys at a private Western Cape school construct masculinity. The central premise of this study is that gender is constructed through dynamic social interaction (Connell, 2000). Post-structural and social constructionist thought provided the conceptual framework for this narrative inquiry. The research questions explored both how the boys understand their own masculinity as well as the various influences that serve to shape these ideas of masculine identity. The data-collecting methods of semi-structured interviews, a focus-group discussion and their construction of collages, provided data on the knowledges about, and experiences of masculinity of each participant. These rich descriptions facilitated the construction of a narrative shaped by each participant's own unique perspective of what it means to be a boy within the context of this particular school.

#### 5.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I attended to the manner in which masculine identity was socially constructed in the lives of six boys within the context of a boys-only private school. Considerable insight was gained into how these boys construct their own masculinity as well as the masculinity of others. The findings of this study and their implications will be discussed under the following broad headings: the role of hegemonic masculinity; masculinity and sport; policing of other masculinities; and evidence of new masculinity.

##### 5.2.1 The Role of Hegemonic Masculinity

It would appear from the findings of this research that fathers, and to some degree mothers, play an important role in influencing the way in which the six participants construct their masculine identity. It would seem that this relationship is gender specific in that the participants report on shared sporting activities and humour as being essential elements in their relationships with their fathers. In addition, they referred to seeking specific advice from their fathers, and that also appears to be

gender specific: this includes advice on sport, work and girls. On the other hand, their conversations with their mothers were to seek support and understanding. For those who had good relationships, they seemed to be gentler and less connected to the 'hard' world of hegemonic sport.

For these participants, the school context has a significant impact on their construction of masculine identity. Each of the participants understands there is a dominant form of masculinity within the context of Greystoke Preparatory. James Bond and Superheroes were chosen to illustrate their idea of a dominant masculinity. During the discussion that ensued, a picture of a 'masculine man' was constructed. He is physically strong, is tasked with the role of protector, and is popular with the female sex. Further, for the participants, the 'masculine man' was associated with alcohol and the use of weapons. Within the affluent context of their school, the participants also associated wealth and the acquisition of certain material possessions such as watches, clothes, and motor cars with their construction of what it is to be a 'manly man'.

This metaphor provides information on what informs their ideas of masculinity. However, the descriptions of their experiences at school provided another indication of how masculinities are constructed within this context. All six participants referred to the 'cool guys', a group of boys whose dominance was ascribed to their sporting ability, in particular that of rugby. It would appear these cool guys principally invest in displaying their dominance through teasing, dissing, labelling and the rejection of any behaviour that might be associated with being "girlie". The impression created, therefore, is that this group of boys tend to demonstrate traditional notions of 'macho' masculinity. Another group identified as having status, the 'popular boys', appeared less invested in enforcing their positions of superiority. In addition to possessing a sporting aptitude and being socially mature, they are also academically strong and were recognised by the participants as having "good personalities". It is not clear which group is the dominant one at Greystoke Preparatory, but I suspect that whichever it is, their position of power is fragile.

Connell (1995) refers to the multiple constructions of masculinity within any given context, and the findings of this study indicate there are many ways of being a boy at Greystoke Preparatory. Besides the two forms already mentioned above, other more

marginalised constructions of masculinity surfaced. Because good sporting ability leads to elevated status, the implication is that boys with less sporting ability are credited lower status. Finally, this study finds that boys with a poor social ability appear to have the lowest status.

Through the six participants relating their stories, it became evident all had found some way of positioning themselves in relation to the dominant group. Some spoke in ways that demonstrated a desire for acceptance from this popular group, indicating a compliance with hegemonic masculinity; others appeared more comfortable with their position in the hierarchy. This stance might reflect that the combined effect of their academic abilities and their personalities provide them an alliance of sorts with the popular group. Such descriptions of allegiance to hegemonic masculinity were described by Connell (1995) who maintains there are different categories of masculinity, and all form some kind of relationship with hegemonic masculinity either through compliance, resistance, subordination or through an alliance. None of the boys expressed outright resistance to hegemonic masculinity.

### **5.2.2 Policing of Other Masculinities**

Reference has already been made to the controlling mechanisms used by the 'cool group' to impose their positions of superiority on the boys who do not measure up to their standards. These comprised a range of behaviours. Outright bullying of boys whose behaviour was deemed 'different' or 'socially weird' was acknowledged as occurring. Violence is also evident in the fighting that periodically surfaces during break periods, and it appears both bullying and violence are mechanisms used by the boys to determine their position in the hierarchy. The findings of this study further demonstrate that the participants strongly rejected blatant and extreme uses of violence.

What was more problematic, was the use of hurtful 'dissing', that of being disrespectful towards those inhabiting a different position. It would appear such attitudes and comments, though expressed in jest, belittle so as to assert superiority. Dissing at Greystoke Preparatory is not solely practised by dominant groups. It is a mechanism employed by many boys to preserve or determine a position in the hierarchy. Nate's declaration that it was necessary to develop a thick skin implies

these comments are hurtful, a thick skin being necessary perhaps to protect oneself from emotional wounding. Such comments indicate that at Greystoke Preparatory pressure is placed on boys to hide their feelings.

Many researchers have referred to the vigilant process of regulation employed by hegemonic masculinity to shame anyone who demonstrates behaviour that could be associated with the feminine (Connell, 2000; Frosh et al., 2002; Messner, 1995; Corbett, 2009). This study's findings suggest the participants associate homosexual men with the feminine and, as such, as belonging to the 'other'. Although most participants professed to accept homosexuality, they were all of the opinion that a large number of their peers would not tolerate anyone in their midst 'coming out' as a gay person. The impression created is that homophobic practices are employed to shame those who behave differently into conforming to heterosexual hegemonic behaviour. Homophobic humour and dubbing people 'gay' are examples of the methods used to humiliate and shame boys who dare adhere to a different construct of masculinity. A range of attitudes was expressed towards girls. These included assigning them negative attributes such as gossiping and being bitchy, idealising them as being soft, and viewing them as objects.

### **5.2.3 The Role of Sport**

Sport was a central focus of all the conversations with the participants, and all have determined a position in relation to it. Seemingly, sport played a role in the way in which all the participants perceived their masculine identity. The First team participant viewed sport as being intrinsic to boys, and his explanation for those who obviously do not enjoy sport was that "they've just got a different gene". Other participants confirmed that those who play in the top teams place a much greater emphasis on the role of sport in their lives.

The other participants, all of whom played sport at a C-team level, appeared to have negotiated their masculine identity around the discourses that proclaim the need to be good at sport. They all claimed to enjoy sport, but afforded different reasons for their participation in it. While one participant felt he was forced to participate, another claimed boys take part because, simply, it is what boys do, and another referred to the camaraderie that is acquired from being involved in team sport. All were realistic about their ability, although two did express a desire to become better sportsmen. It

does appear, however, that sporting ability commands respect. It would seem that for some, dilemmas around sport could be affecting their acquiring coherent and fulfilling identities. Further, seemingly these six boys are constructing their identities around discourses that only the best are worthy of respect.

### **5.2.3.1 The Role of Rugby**

It is not possible to discuss sport at Greystoke Preparatory without discussing the specific role rugby plays in the life of the boys. All six participants made references to rugby, confirming its importance not only in their own lives, but also in their perception of how it relates to the rest of the school. This study suggests that at Greystoke Preparatory, rugby plays a far more important role than other sports, and hence, because of its hierarchy within the sporting arena it holds a more legitimate position than others in determining masculinity. This is supported by the data arising from the collages. The findings indicate a link between the physicality of rugby and the participants' ideas of masculinity, in that it is part of "being brave and strong". Added to this, was the status gained through playing the game, and it was evident those in the A team were afforded the greatest respect.

### **5.2.3.2 Labels and Sport**

One of the themes that emerged from this study was that of the labels boys use to describe themselves and others. Some relate to sport, the use of which promotes the superiority of those good at sport while belittling those focussing on being academically strong. The labels boys internalise, affect the construction of their masculine identities. Examples of labels associated with sport or lack of it are 'jocks' 'nerds' and 'geeks'. It would appear that one of the protective factors against the use of derisive labels is the tendency for academic acumen to be highly regarded at Greystoke Preparatory. Further, it seems derision is more afforded those less socially mature, rather than those who study hard.

### **5.2.4 New Masculinity**

The findings of this study suggest the six participants do not challenge the concept of hegemonic masculinity. However, there are indications they grapple with its restrictive norms while positioning themselves in relation to hegemony in this context; the cool boys and the popular boys. Evidence suggests some of the

participants are choosing, rather than being forced into taking up positions that are distinct from hegemonic notions of masculinity. An example is Henry's declaration that his choice of friends is based on qualities such as friendliness, openness, and on being warm and generous. Rajesh, too, spoke of his deliberate move to change his friendship circle, from that of the popular boys to boys who are encouraging, and to whose personalities he can relate. Such moves towards developing meaningful friendships are in stark contrast to the supposed disconnection of hegemonic masculinity.

Lulus provides an example of how boys in this context are moving away from the traditional hegemonic idea that speaks of an 'irrational fear' of homosexuality. This is revealed in his understanding his friend who thought he was gay, and his disappointment that others in the grade were not able to accept the friend for whom he is. Two other participants supported this acceptance of homosexuality, and both stated homosexuality as being a perfectly acceptable expression of masculinity.

It would seem, therefore, that none of the participants have constructed their masculine identity as being hegemonic, although it appears all have constructed their identities in relation to it. This finds support in the research of Wedgewood (2003:180-188) who maintains there were men that held both defensive and contradictory masculinities. I would suggest that Nate and Jacob are possibly constructing defensive masculinities; their narratives suggest they are more defensive and insecure about their masculine identities. Further supporting this, are their attitudes towards homosexuality and the feminine as being inferior. It would appear their identities are more fragile. On the other hand, PJ and Henry, and possibly Lulus and Rajesh, appear to be constructing a more complex contradictory masculinity, demonstrated in their avoidance of overt expressions of hegemonic masculinity. These boys appear to be rejecting traditional rules of masculinity, and have expressed the importance that emotional connections play in their relationships with their friends and family.

### **5.2.5 Implications**

These findings have provided valuable understandings about how participants in this particular context construct masculinity. Further, they have provided understanding of some of the dynamics that occur between the different constructs of masculinity at



Greystoke Preparatory. The inherent implications are that there are some whose voices are being marginalised as a result of dominance by the cool group. To have to develop a “thick skin” would indicate wounding resulting from the controlling mechanisms used by those in the dominant group to maintain superiority. It became evident that those whose actions, clothes or social interactions are seen as being different are labelled, as Nate says, “weird”. These findings concur with my observations as a counsellor that often untold hurt needs to be silenced by those who find themselves in more marginalised constructs of masculinity. Further, it seems specific expressions of homosexuality as being a part of a masculine identity, are virtually impossible in this context, and the implication of this for such boys is heart-breaking. It is important that space is made within the school context in which acceptance and respect is afforded to all. These are also important to the understandings of school counsellors, and need to be considered when assisting boys in constructing healthy and fulfilling masculinities.

Sport, and particularly rugby, is central to the manner in which boys in this context construct masculinity. Only a small group are able to participate in the top two teams at each level. What happens to those who don't? I would suggest that the view that being good at sport is the only acceptable way of participating in sport, needs to be challenged more rigorously. Being “big and strong” and good at sport should not be seen as the only defining characteristics of masculinity. In order to afford boys of differing sporting ability the opportunity to construct acceptable masculine identities, it is important teachers and coaches do not ascribe to one limiting construction of masculinity, and that they examine ways to support those with less sporting ability.

However, the participants report there are some boys able to protect themselves against being hurt, and are able, through various strategies, to withstand efforts by the cool group to dominate. Within this context, academic acumen, to some extent protects both against efforts to humiliate and shame and against being hurt. Again, schools can play an important role in supporting such boys, and can encourage them to use their voices to help others more marginalised. There are indications that some adhere to ideas of a ‘new’ masculinity, but these are tentative.

### 5.3 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Reflection is an important element of the narrative-inquiry approach, requiring me to be aware of the external and internal factors that have influenced my own understanding of masculinity while carrying out this study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is essential I acknowledge that the experiences and knowledge I already possess from counselling other boys influenced, not only the stories I chose to dwell on, but also the way in which I developed the narratives of the participants. In conducting this study, I have at various intervals recorded my reflections on the process. What follows is a summary of these.

I was already known to the participants, and enjoyed an established relationship of trust with them. Consequently, this contributed to the ease with which certain subjects, for example, sex, were discussed. In addition, I consciously attempted not to use my position of power as the adult to influence what was said.

One of the threads that transpired from my reflections was the enormous privilege it has been to undertake this journey with these six boys. Each willingly shared stories about a part of their lives, and I hold the knowledge they imparted with utmost respect. Their stories were, at once, funny and interesting and filled with pathos, and although each boy claimed to be very happy, there was evidence of a journey through boyhood that was filled with pitfalls. I was particularly aware of the depth of the experiences and stories PJ and Lulus shared with me. As such, I felt it necessary to follow-up with both boys after their interviews to ensure no negative emotional effect had resulted from their having shared their personal stories. On the contrary, both felt it had been a valuable experience.

As each boy struggled to access the experiences I required, I became aware that this reflective process was not easy for them. It was gratifying to know that, ultimately, each participant felt the process had been worthwhile. This was seen on their faces as they sat and read their narratives, followed by a reading with me of the thematic analysis. Most showed an interest in going through the thematic analysis, and were amazed at the meaning that had been made of their narratives. I found this process of member-checking particularly useful in that it helped me feel more confident about the meaning I had made of their narratives (Christians, 2011).

As I worked through the collected data, my focus remained on making meaning of what the participants had to say. In this, I was guided by Pinnegar and Daynes' work (2007) where they argue such a process leads to greater authenticity in the findings. During this study, not only did I gain knowledge of the structures and lives of particular boys at Greystoke Preparatory, I also discovered an understanding of the meaning they make of masculinity particularly as it relates to this context. Although I now have greater insight into the lives of these six participants in particular, my hope is that this understanding can be transferred to other boys with whom I come into contact in the same setting.

I have come to understand how each individual constructs their identity through the influences, within their own context, of people, cultures, and through their experiences (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2000). Consequently, I respect that each participant is constructing his concept of masculinity from within his own set of influences. However, there were times during the interviews and the focus group when I found myself reacting strongly to some of the ideas being expressed. Specifically, I struggled to accept the ideas of Jacob towards homosexuality as these are not my own. I would have liked to have engaged with him further, but did not do so because, as the researcher, I had to respect his views. Further, it was important I respected all other alternative views and did not allow my personal biases to influence their opinions.

Having personally to grapple with the demands and rigours of writing an academic thesis, has been another element in the process. All the academic aspects encountered in writing this thesis were challenging. However, I particularly enjoyed engaging with the participants and listening to their stories. Working through the literature on masculinity was also valuable. It increased my understanding of masculinity in general, and in working with boys and men all the time this will prove invaluable.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH**

It is important to begin this discussion by acknowledging that it is not the concept of hegemonic masculinity that is under investigation in this study. Furthermore, the many positive characteristics of hegemonic masculinity have been acknowledged and need to be encouraged (Connell, 1995). However, what should be questioned

are the often destructive strategies used by those who adhere to hegemonic masculinity to police other masculinities so as to maintain their position of superiority in the hierarchy of masculinities. Morrell (2007) reminds us that if there is going to be a reduction in violence by men towards both other men and women, it is important men take responsibility for the reconstruction of masculinities.

The findings of this study indicate that destructive and hurtful strategies are used by boys to maintain superiority within the context of Greystoke Preparatory School. I argue that the term “boys will be boys” is expressed to defend the right for privileged hegemonic masculinity to continue along its hurtful path. This needs to be challenged. Education can, and should play an instrumental role in the transformation of masculinity, so that other forms of masculinity may freely be expressed without fear of retribution from the dominance of hegemonic masculinity.

The findings of this study confirm that teachers are strategic role players in shaping the way in which boys construct their identities. As such, they should be made aware of the actions and interactions in the classroom and on the sports field that potentially have a destructive effect on the construction of masculinities. Providing teachers with an opportunity to examine their philosophies and understandings of the practices they use to promote certain “essentialist versions of masculinity” can assist in this (Keddie, 2006:101). Further, the various ways in which changes can be made to the curriculum can help promote the inclusion of multiple constructions of masculinity (Connell, 2008). The first involves encouraging teachers to be gender inclusive, and, in their teaching, to use the experiences of both women and a variety of different men. The idea that hegemonic men are the only people regarded as being good role models for boys needs to be challenged. The second recommendation requires being more explicit, and of purposefully providing content on gender and gender relations, thereby providing boys the opportunity to learn and reflect on their own and others’ experience. The third recommendation involves a change in the curriculum to ensure that the issue of gender is included when values such as democracy and justice are taught. As such, this would provide a platform that ensures that undemocratic expressions of gender relations, such as power imbalances, exploitation, violence and oppression, can be focussed upon. Finally, teachers need to be equipped to enable such discussions on gender issues to take place in the classroom.

The limited understanding that has been gained from this study of the dynamics that exist between the different masculinities can be used by teachers, counsellors and coaches to guide boys towards greater acceptance and respect for difference.

Further, it would be helpful for parents to understand the way in which their sons are constructing masculinity. Fathers, in particular, need to be made aware of the extremely important role they play, and should be encouraged to be sensitive to the strategies they employ either to promote or denigrate their sons' masculine identity. The purpose of providing such opportunities to teachers and parents is not so that they change or convert those who construct their masculine identity within hegemonic understanding. Rather, it would be to focus on assisting those boys whose constructions of masculinity are different, and allowing them to express themselves openly and freely. This would promote greater understanding.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendations for Further Research**

During this study, several aspects arose that could benefit from further research, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the concept of masculinity within this context. First is the question of how race and culture might influence the construction of masculinity in this context. Such research would not only provide a greater understanding of the experiences of pupils from different racial and cultural backgrounds, but it would also provide the school with information on how better to meet the needs of this particular group of boys.

Second, further research is needed into the different constructs of masculinity, and the systems and dynamics that exist between them within the school context. The findings of such research could provide teachers and coaches the means to facilitate discussions, thereby enabling the process of strengthening and empowering marginalised masculinities within the school.

The findings of this research imply there is 'wounding' to some whose constructions of masculinity are different to other dominant expressions of masculine identity. Therefore, a longitudinal study that explores the experiences of marginalised boys in high school might be useful in understanding if there are long-term consequences resulting from such 'wounding'.

Finally, the scope of this study did not allow for a thorough investigation into the relationship between a father's constructions of masculinity, and the influence this brings to bear on his son's masculine identity. This is, therefore, an area that could provide some interesting and valuable understandings of parental influence on masculinity.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS**

The study was limited to one boys' school. As such, it cannot claim to be a true reflection of all boys' experience. Generalising and external validation are not concepts sought after within a constructivist and narrative-inquiry approach (Tredoux & Smith, 2008). However, my hope was that having been able to understand the meaning of the particular experiences of a few boys within the school context, I would be able to transfer this understanding to other boys in the same setting (Clandinin and Roziak, 2007). In narrating their own experiences, the participants also provided me with some understanding of the systems and dynamics within the school that would help in understanding others. However, this understanding was only gained through the perceptions of these six participants. Therefore, one of the limitations of a qualitative study is in its small sampling, thus allowing for the uniqueness of the findings.

Another limitation could be found in the argument that this study does not truly reflect the wider South African context. Even though the sample included participants who were not white, it more closely reflected the racial composition of the school rather than that of South Africa in general. These black participants are also not representative of the lower socio-economic groups.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

This inquiry set out to explore the meanings boys make of masculinity within the context of a private boys-only school in the Western Cape. The study was conducted within a post-structuralist and social constructivist framework, using a narrative-inquiry approach. To comprehend the meanings the six participants made of masculinity, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted. In addition, a focus group was instituted, and this used collage construction to stimulate discussion

on the various permutations of masculinity. The data from these three data-collection methods were triangulated to enhance its validity.

The issue of masculinity is extremely complex. The findings indicate there are multiple constructions of masculinity at Greystoke Preparatory, and they all appear to be constructed in relation to hegemonic notions of masculinity. The data showcased the various influences on the ways in which boys construct their masculine identity, and points to their fathers, their peers and the school culture as the significant role players in gender formation. Though hegemonic notions of masculinity in the school had a powerful impact on the participants' thinking around their own masculinity, there are indications some are more comfortable in holding the more complex position of a contradictory or transitional masculinity that challenges the overt expressions of hegemonic masculinity.

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## APPENDIX A

### General Interview Guide

#### PRIMARY SCHOOL BOYS' NARRATIVES ABOUT MASCULINITY

##### Watch out for:

- Discourses of power
- Binary opposites
- What is his real voice of reality?
- How do they define themselves?
- Listen to the meaning made through the narratives of their own masculinity and that of others.
- What are the larger discourses that guide what is being said?
- Are there any other ways in which their reality is being represented?
- How is the story assembled?
- What cultural discourse is being drawn upon?
- Use 'why' questions to understand more.
- Look for contradictions.
- Use probing questions.

The following are possible areas to be followed – they were not questions that were rigidly adhered to

##### A Demographic information

Family background [Tell me a little about your family]

- family make-up
- position in family
- relationships with various family members
- relaxation on own and with family?
- description of family structure (roles of individuals?)

##### B School Information

- a) History at school
  - how long?

- other family members?
- b) Experiences at school
  - in playground
  - teachers
  - aspects of school that you do not enjoy
- c) Attitudes to academic commitment

### C Social interactions

- a) - activities with friends
- b) - Ideas about the 'popular boys'
  - How do they get to be popular?
  - What kinds of things make boys popular at this school?
  - what happens to those who are not popular?
  - ideas about those who do things differently
- c) - What role do the clothes that boys wear play
  - are they important?
- d) Ideas about bullying and violence
  - your own experience
  - what do you know about others' experience
  - names used to hurt/demean boys.
  - ideas about violence
- e) Thoughts about homosexuality
- f) Relationships with girls
  - what are your ideas about girls?
  - what kind of relationships do you have with girls?
  - on what occasions do you interact with girls?
  - perceptions of how other boys interact with girls.
  - what do you talk about when and if you spend time with girls?
- g) Role of humour

### C Role of sport

- a) Role of sport in your life?
- b) The role of your father in your sport?
- c) Role of sport in the school?
  - compared to other aspects of school life?

D Important male figures

- who do you admire?
- who do you want to be like?
- what kind of influence has he had on your life?
- what aspects of being a man do you admire in him?
- are there boys/men whom you do not want to be like?

E Understandings of masculinity

- your understanding of what it means to be a boy (man).
- describe some males in the public eye who represent manhood for you.
- do you think most boys have similar ideas to you – explain.
- ideas about body (of self and others).
- what are your hopes and dreams, are they influenced by being a boy?

## APPENDIX B

### Parent Consent Form



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#### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

---

#### TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

#### **Primary school boys' narratives about masculinity**

Dear Parent,

Your son has been identified as a potential participant in a research study that is being conducted by Anne McDonald as part of her Master's thesis in Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The study seeks to expand on the understanding about masculinity in general and of grade seven boys in particular.

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to deepen my understanding of how boys construct their masculine identity. The underlying premise is that there is more than one understanding or construction of masculinity. My intention is to gain an understanding of how boys experience masculinity – both their own and that of their peers in this particular school setting. Awareness of these ideas could lead me to have a greater understanding of the influences on boys' perceptions of self.

#### **2. PROCEDURES**

If your consent is given for your son to participate in this study, I would ask him to do the following:

1. Be prepared to be interviewed by me on his experiences of being a boy. I will be interested in the stories that he can tell me about his experiences and what he considers to be important influences on his masculinity. I shall ask for permission to audiotape the interview. In addition, as I want to reflect his experience accurately I will refer back to him in order to verify the accuracy of my interpretation of his story. The initial interview will take an hour and the follow-up session should not take longer than half an hour.
2. Participate in a focus group in which aspects of masculinity will be discussed. A focus group entails a group discussion in an informal atmosphere in which meaning about masculinity is made amongst the group rather than

individually. In addition to the discussion your son will be asked to complete a short reflective activity. The focus group will last about an hour.

3. Both interviews will take place out of school hours.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Should any unacknowledged feelings about identity be brought to the fore due to the interviews, the researcher will make sure that it is handled with the sensitivity it deserves. I am a school counsellor and am also the researcher. I have in place a support structure should this be necessary. As you know, the school has a full-time counsellor and I will be available to provide the necessary support and containment. In addition, Mr P.F., the clinical psychologist will be available should it be needed, to see your son. He can be contacted at XXX-XXXX

### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The following potential benefits could occur:

- The process of telling his story and having it listened to can be a valuable experience in itself.
- Another benefit is having the knowledge that he has contributed towards an understanding that could potentially benefit other boys in the school.

### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There will be no payment provided for participation in the research process.

### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your son will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of:

1. All documents and audiotapes will be kept locked in my office or remain in my study at home. Access to both my computer at work and at home is guarded by a password that only I know.
2. In the writing up of the final documents your son's details will be scrambled in such a way that it will not be possible to identify him. A discussion will take place with your son with regards to acceptable ways of carrying this out.
3. My supervisor, Professor Doria Daniels will have access to my study during the entire process for supervisory purposes. She is bound by the same rules of confidentiality.
4. The results from this research will not be given to anyone else without your prior consent as to how the information can be handled.

### **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your son can choose whether to be in this study or not. If he decides to volunteer to be in this study, he may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. He may also refuse to answer any questions he does not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw him from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Mrs Anne McDonald

021-659 7239

Or 072 421 8007

OR

Prof Doria Daniels, (research supervisor)

021 808 2324.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your son's participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your son's participation in this research study.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

The information above was described to me by **Anne McDonald** in English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby provide my consent for my son to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

---

**Name of Subject/Participant**

---

**Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)**

—

---

**Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative****Date****SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**



I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_ [*name of the participant*] and/or [his/her] representative \_\_\_\_\_ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## APPENDIX C

### Child Assent Form



### INFORMATION AND PERMISSION FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS



#### TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Primary school boys' stories about what it means to be a boy.

**RESEARCHER:** Anne McDonald

**ADDRESS:** 14 A Thomson Road, Claremont, Cape Town. 7708

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 021 659 7239 (w) or 072 421 8007 (cell)

#### What is research?

Through research we learn more about how people and things work. We use research projects and studies to help us understand more about people. This understanding of people then enables us to help other children better.

#### What is this research study about?

I want to find out more about how boys see themselves. In other words, their understanding of what it means to be a boy. Through your participation in my study I am hoping that I will learn more about what it means to be a boy.

#### Why are you asking me to take part in this research study?

I am interviewing Grade 7 boys between the ages of 12-13 years for this study. You have been selected because you fall into that category.

#### Who is doing the research?

You know me as the school counsellor at this school. However, I am also presently studying for my Masters degree in Educational Psychology and it will be in that

capacity that I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for the degree.

### **What will happen to me in this study?**

If you agree to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

4. Be prepared to be interviewed by me on the topic of what it means to be a man. With your permission I will audiotape the interview. As I want to reflect your words accurately, after I have written your story, I will ask you to read it through with me and help me to adjust it if necessary. The initial interview will take an hour and the follow-up session should not take longer than half an hour. This will take place outside of school hours.
5. Participate in a group discussion in which ideas about what it means to be a man will be the central focus. You will also be asked to be involved in a short reflective activity. This informal group discussion will also take about an hour and will take place at a mutually suitable time for all members of the group.

### **Can anything go wrong?**

1. I do not anticipate any harm to you due to your participation in this study. However, in the process of telling your story you might experience emotions that are difficult for you and you might need some help to work through your experience. In this case you can be provided with help from the prep school counsellor (Mrs Anne McDonald) or from Mr P.F.
2. If you find it difficult to ask for help, then you should ask your parents to make contact with either myself or Mr P.F.

### **What good things could happen to me in this study?**

1. Sometimes people feel that the process of telling their story can be a valuable experience.
2. By telling your story you will have contributed towards an understanding that could potentially benefit other boys in the school.

### **Will anyone know that I am taking part?**

It is important for you to know that everything you say will remain confidential and will be told to others only with your permission or as required by law. I will do this in the following ways:

1. All of my notes and copies of the tapes will be kept locked in my office or on my computer to which I am the only one who knows the codes.
2. When I write up the results of the interviews I will scramble your details in such a way that it will be impossible for others to recognise you. I will discuss suitable ways of doing this with you after the interview.
3. My supervisor, Prof Daniels will have access to the study, but she has to keep to the same rules of confidentiality.

**Who can I talk to about this study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you, or your parents can either contact:

Mrs Anne McDonald at  
021-659 7239 or 072 421 8007

OR

Prof Doria Daniels

Telephone number: 021 808 2324

**What will happen if I don't want to take part anymore?**

You have the right to refuse to participate in this research. This will not be held against you. Even when you agree to participate, under no circumstances are you obliged to continue in this research if you decide that you no longer

wish to take part. You may also refuse to answer certain questions that I might ask and still remain in the study.

Do you understand this research study and would you like to take part in it?

 YES No

Did the researcher answer all your questions?

 YESS NO

Do you understand that you can stop whenever you choose?

 YES No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

### Letter of Permission from Institution

LETTER EDITED FOR PURPOSES OF ANONYMITY

16<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Anne McDonald

Dear Anne,

**Thesis for Masters Degree in Educational Psychology**

Thank you for your formal proposal dated 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011 to complete your thesis for the above degree.

We hereby grant our consent to the proposal, subject to the conditions below, and I wish you every success.

Please could you note these points;

- I am happy to support but feel you should know that I would be cautious about the following
  - We have worked hard on moving away from hegemonic masculinity. I would be sensitive to findings that indicate that we are not conscious of the need to do so. With this point in mind I request that you state clearly the policy of the school with respect to hegemonic masculinity: i.e. Every attempt is being made to move away from a hegemonic description of masculinity at . Whether we are succeeding may be the point of the research.
  - No problem with Data Collection and essay provided anonymity prevails in the final submission.
- With the above proviso in place, I would therefore not require that maintains the right to limit the publication of the thesis as we did with
- We are not contributing to the cost but understand that you will be using some school time for her work. That's fine as I feel we will benefit from the research.
- Please could you ensure that the necessary arrangements for your practical/internship have been made

I have placed this consent on an email letterhead. I will send the original to you.

Best wishes,

  
G R B

Principal

## APPENDIX E

### Example of coding from transcripts

R	Ok coming back to school – you spoke earlier about the popular guys .... tell me about them.	
P	Lots of the popular guys they're um <b>they're not just sport</b> some of them <b>are also very clever</b> so they're very well rounded. They're popular because they have <b>good personalities and they bond well with people</b> . There are some boys who are more shy because they don't talk a lot, they are more quiet and those boys I would put in the <b>nerdy</b> group because they're quiet. Then there are boys who are very popular that are show offs that are like the <b>popular boys don't even like</b> them because they are too much <b>like show offs</b> and then they just get filed as like a stupid person ... <b>showing off and boasting is not what they want</b> . But lots <b>of the popular boys are very nice people</b> .	-Pop guys good at sport -clever good personalities  -nerds –quiet  -pop guys not liked show-offs  -they don't like boasting - pop guys are liked
R	So you're making a distinction between the popular boys who are fairly confident and outgoing and friendly – nice people and then there's a group .....	
P	Of <b>popular boys who are not the friendly ones</b> .	-Pop guys not friendly
R	Yes, what makes them different?	
P	I've got a feeling that those unfriendly ones...they're they're <b>good at sport</b> – they they all they think about is sport um...(pause) and then they try and show off a bit too much, so they <b>mess around in class</b> and then they <b>get into trouble</b> and then the teacher blames the class and then all <b>the boys tend to not like him</b> . <b>But he is still popular</b> because he makes a fool of himself sometimes so	-show-offs good at sport  -show-offs disruptive -show-offs not liked -somehow still popular
R	So how do the other guys feel because of these guys that fool around and get them into trouble?	
P	<b>They get angry</b> and then they get over it it's like why you being so stupid and then it's done.	-Others get angry about them
R	Can you think of a word to describe that group?	
P	Show offs – that's all I have.	
R	And who do they impress?	
P	I think that they are trying to <b>impress the popular boys</b> like the (indistinct) kind of group. The boys that like ok like the boys that <b>are good at sport</b> . They try to impress them. And then if they're also good at academics then they will try and <b>impress the other academic boys</b> . So they try and impress what they can match with.	-They are trying to impress -impress because good at sport -try and impress academic boys
R	OK while we are in that area ...um...what has been your experience not necessarily personally and what your feelings are about bullying?	
P	Um...to me I <b>was bullied some time</b> ago ...or actually quite	-Experience of bullying

	a long time ago I was bullied and I didn't like it at all.....and I got over it	
R	How did you deal with it?	
P	I dealt with it without ...I didn't talk to a teacher but I actually I hit him back and then he left me alone.....And after that I thought I started to become a bully as well and then I was told by my friends who were being bullied that you're changing you're not being a good person any more and that got me changing back.	-Didn't talk to teacher - hit him back - worked -experience of violence led to more violence -friends told him
R	That's interesting that your friends told you this	
P	If it had been like another....like another boy like a bully who had said it to me then I probably wouldn't have cared, but because it was my friends then I realised that it is something that I have to change.	-friends were able to tell him he'd changed
R	interesting ... and that your friends noticed ....	
P	It was like that for a week and then....no its not cool so I stopped	-Realised not OK – stopped
P	Then there was another boy who left this year and he was bullied a lot, I think he was bullied the most out of our entire grade. Um...not by specific people it's just that he had a tendency to be bullied ....I think he was....I think he acted a bit different um he tried to be too different, I mean if he had acted normal, just....he had friends he had quite a lot, I was his friend, a lot of other boys were his friend but then when he tried to look a bit more popular and started to wear fancy clothing it wasn't him and then other boys were why you trying to be fancy and that's when he started to get bullied.	-acting different leads to bullying - if he had conformed ...  -tried to impress and fit in with the popular guys
R	So it kind of got worse....um....so do clothes make a difference do you think?	
P	I think that clothes do make a difference because cos....if you like have normal tackies, if you have white tackies that are normal and you just bought them because you needed a pair of tackies. Then there are other boys who buy colourful expensive gel thingies and they barely even run whatsoever, but they like sport they do it because they want to be cool and they buy fancy basket ball shoes and black writing and they try and look cool and there are boys that just wear clothing underneath, trying to be stupid by wearing their pants low down its one thing that they do right now, it's kind of stupid I don't know why they do it. It's trying to make themselves look cool.	-importance of clothes for cool guys  -not acceptable to try and look "cool"

## APPENDIX F

### Example of preliminary thematic analysis for some themes

The mes	Sub-themes	Statements from coding
Sport	Role of sport	<p>I don't actually care...like this is not the most important thing in my life....not like those A team guys etc...</p> <p>"I sometimes wish I was better at sport not to be part of the popular group but to be respected"7; in the younger grades "you will always do sports because its what you do you know you don't think of anything else"</p> <p>I mainly come here for the sport.3;Most of us like to be active on the field, kicking a ball, running around...</p> <p>The part about school I enjoy is the sports. I like getting muddy and having fun I like rugby I am assistant coach</p> <p>Collage: chose cricket it's not necessarily the most manly sport but I think its quite a gentlemanly sport...2</p> <p>In college it will be different because there are different sports likerowing</p>
	Role of rugby	<p>I focus less on teams and more on enjoyment...lots of other boys would rather be cannon fodder for the A team than actually play for the C's</p> <p>Rugby is more if you're a physical type</p> <p>I don't play rugby...but I do go and medic there 4; I never really thought I was built for rugby because I'm not too stocky..10</p> <p>If we lose the rugby festival then everyone's head goes down like for a week.</p> <p>Everything goes quiet ...it's quite funny" 9</p> <p>Collage: Rugby is a manly thing to do 1 Also chose a rugby ball which is a man's sport and where guys will put themselves on the line2 Rugby is tending to be a manly sport 7</p>
	Role of teachers	<p>The teachers are equally there for sport and academics....some emphasise the sport and some emphasise the academics. ....assemblies you tend to hear more about the sport. 10</p> <p>A lot of teachers refer to rugby a lot and they I mean everybody likes the sport....I mean if somebody got a scholarship for rugby they would talk more about it than if somebody got a scholarship for English 11; but most people know that academics is more important than sport 11Sport is "fully important" in the school 9</p>
Labels	Sporty Guys and Geeks	<p>Some boys who are in the first team for every sport that they do but they still do well in their academics.... Many boys who don't do as well in academics because they slack off because they are concentrating on their sport; ...30 or so who think academics is more important than sport</p> <p>Other boys will call boys who work hard "nerds"8 – not me even if I get A's for everything....because some of the other boys "I guess some just seem weaker I am on the smarty side I guess...more of a geek than a nerd3(Geeks are just smart...nerds are smart and weird I guess...socially awkward); boys who work hard "are more respected than teased"6 I work hard....all of the first sets work hard</p>
	Popular Guys	<p>A group of sporty boys...who are considered cool because they are in the first team rugby; The A team for everything I think if they weren't then they wouldn't be popular (for 4 major sportsPopular group: "I like them...they are all rounders, they are like good at academics and they're good at sports6; boys in the popular group: "all got leadership skills you know like .... Lots of the popular guys they're um they're not just sport some of them are also very clever so they're well rounded.. they're popular because they have good personalities ) popular boys7; Popular boys who have the courage to talk to girls that's my idea– maybe because "he is too shy to talk to the girls" ... then I saw how much I hurt them (my other friends) ....</p>
	Cool guys and show-offs	<p>lots are very nice people then there are boys who are very popular that are show offs....the popular boys don't even like them.....showing off and boasting...these show offs they're good at sport...all they think about is sport....mess around in class and then</p>



		<p>get into trouble and the the teacher blames the class....I think they are trying to impress the (nice5however the cool guys are "the athletic guys...and jocks .....and I think it's because they're rich (all three characteristic I think trying to be cool is like trying to impress your friends and diss other people and s necessary) 5; sometimes these cool guys will "chirp" another guy</p>
	Nice Guys	<p>Nice guys who are friendly, open, warm and generous...and obviously fun to be with; a lot of my friends are quite the same level as me..</p> <p>"In g 2 you don't have groups of friends you just play with whoever is there... you might have close friends though"10 They cheer me on, they say come on R, well done...they don't tease (because of difficulty with public speaking4</p> <p>"something relevant to talk about and interests that are the same....and probably humour 5 My friends don't really have a go at me by calling me a coconut – you know something that is black on the outside but white on the inside 2...</p>
Controlling masculine identity	Bullying	<p>one or two boys in the whole grade involved in bullying</p> <p>I was bullied (some boys started to hit me and push me around)...Another boys who was bullied – "I think he acted a bit different um he tried to be too different, I mean if he had acted normal, just ....8.he tried to look a bit more popular</p> <p>apart from one example "I don't think anyone ever really bullies someone else on a regular basis I have never been bullied...never really seen people being bullied 5 ..because usually it's just a fight</p>
	Dissing	<p>; bullying I hate is when people diss your mom...they think of it as a joke. .that sort of thing makes me want to explode; sometimes the dissing of nerds</p> <p>Name calling "happens quite a lot....it's more of a joke...the other person is not really hurt by it" ....they smile</p> <p>Name calling – "most of its good fun...I don't think they ever mean for it to go deep maybe they will diss me in a fun way (call me a coconut)...but I don't really get offended</p>
	Fighting and Aggression	<p>I've seen fights break out" ....this is encouraged by others shouting "Barney, barney because usually it's just a fight 6...not really bullying if it is two-sided</p> <p>Boys can be quite aggressive, if they're upset they can become extremely aggressive and angry</p>
In relation to the óther'	Are they men?	<p>a few boys would be fine with it...there would be immature boys that would make jokes and diss him</p> <p>I think he would get picked on some would say oh gay gross get away ...some would be the same as me ...still a person 11"</p> <p>There would be more shock (when asked if you can tell if someone is) homosexual – "you mean gadar? ..not really...sometimes it's hardly obvious"</p> <p>I think some would think like me and some would think it was wrong ...that you should like a woman if you're a man1</p> <p>: Gay person is an evolved type of man ..re-stated in the group that he think homosexual men should be in their ownWhat I think of gay is chilled –</p>
	It was just a joke	<p>Our idea of gay is not homosexual ...that is sooo lame;</p> <p>"I think it's more like saying you're weird...something you would say to someone if you're angry with them"8"doesn't really cut deep with most people" ..."when you're younger you can't really take the hits as hare you know....you get a thicker skin"</p> <p>Boys use the term gay if you're like different 14</p> <p>It's more of a joke....usually it's between two friends....it's more like if you did something silly ...this silly behaviour is more like...like the type of gay as in a girley type of thing to do or something like a girley thing to say</p>
	In relation to girls	<p>"Women should get it easy" You see more women in the shopping centres....girls are sort of softer....girls get into word fights Women have the role to nurture and they care 14; women protect the child13 Girlie behaviour: strange sounds or screaming if you saw a spider 7 I think women should do.... That men shouldn't do like things like gossip to be bitchy or something like that. Our society is too materialized that's why when we see a girl we think ah...she's pretty let me go and speak to her...whereas a girl who is not so pretty (but nice personality) we don't even want to speak to them</p>

## APPENDIX G

### Ethical Clearance



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

#### Approval Notice New Application

13-Apr-2012  
MCDONALD, Anne Elizabeth

Protocol #: HS766/2012  
Title: Primary school boy's narratives about masculinity

Dear Mrs Anne MCDONALD,

The **New Application** received on **14-Feb-2012**, was reviewed by Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Committee Review procedures on **01-Mar-2012** and has been approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: **01-Mar-2012 - 28-Feb-2013**

**Present Committee Members:**

Fouche, Magdalena MG  
Van Wyk, Berte B  
Mostert, Paul PJ  
Hansen, Leonard LD  
De Villiers, Mare MRH  
Hattingh, Johannes JP  
Theron, Carl CC  
Viviers, Suzette S  
Bitzer, Elias EM  
Engelbrecht, Sidney SF  
Van Zyl, Gerhard Mkhonto  
Jacobs, Hilda H

**Standard provisions**

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your **protocol number (HS766/2012)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

**After Ethical Review:**

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council

Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

**Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval**

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health (healthres@pgwc.gov.za Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health (Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant parties. For approvals from the Western Cape Education Department, contact Dr AT Wyngaard (awyngaar@pgwc.gov.za, Tel: 0214769272, Fax: 0865902282, <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>).

Institutional permission from academic institutions for students, staff & alumni. This institutional permission should be obtained before submitting an application for ethics clearance to the REC.

Please note that informed consent from participants can only be obtained after ethics approval has been granted. It is your responsibility as researcher to keep signed informed consent forms for inspection for the duration of the research.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

**Included Documents:**

Application form  
Interview Guide  
Consent form  
DESC checklist  
Research Proposal  
Letter of permission

Sincerely,

Sidney Engelbrecht  
REC Coordinator  
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

## APPENDIX H

### List of labels and common terms used by boys

Label	Meaning
<b>Nerd</b>	Someone who is academically strong, but socially awkward.
<b>Geek</b>	Someone who is academically strong and very interested in technology.
<b>Woosie</b>	Ineffectual male – a label meant to shame.
<b>Wimp</b>	Ineffectual male – a label meant to shame.
<b>Poofter</b>	Homosexual male – a label meant to shame.
<b>Macho</b>	Aggressive and ostentatiously male.
<b>Cissies</b>	Behaviour associated with acting like a girl.
<b>Jock</b>	Male, very good at sport and knows it.
<b>Diss</b>	Scathing comment – often meant to hurt.
<b>Niked</b>	Verbally shouted down.
<b>Dak</b>	Physically strong and muscular.
<b>Buff</b>	Physically strong and muscular.