

An Investigation of Grade 10 and 11 Boys' Perceptions of Gender, Gender Equality and Sexism in a Secondary School

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research study, *An Investigation of Grade 10 and 11 Boys' Perceptions of Gender, Gender Equality and Sexism in a Secondary School*, represents my original work, carried out under the supervision of Ms S.B. Sader.

It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Social Justice, in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Where use has been made of the work of others it is duly acknowledged in the text.

Cyril Joseph
October 2011

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- To the Lord for His grace that was sufficient for me.
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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality, gender oppression and sexism are a violation of human rights. Gender inequality and sexism is a consequence of the power imbalance between men and women. A significant body of research exists on gender and education. Research on gender equality has commonly focused on boys and education, academic performance, masculinity studies, as well as identity formation of adolescent boys.

With the emphasis on gender equality and the curriculum implementation, my interest was evoked in terms of engaging boys to achieve gender equality. Given that any work towards social justice requires working with both the oppressed and the oppressor to raise consciousness, identify and name oppression, improve and change attitudes and beliefs, much research on gender oppression and sexism has focused on girls' experiences.

In order to engage men and boys, we need to understand their perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism and the extent to which they resist or entrench hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal positioning.

While many studies focus on women and women's movements to achieve gender equality, this study acknowledges the significant role that men and boys can play in achieving gender equality. Understanding boys' perceptions and attitudes towards women and girls is crucial in adopting strategies to interrupt gender oppression. My aim in this study was therefore to investigate the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of young men regarding gender, gender equality and sexism. Focusing on the role that men and boys can play in the achievement of gender equality will not only benefit women and girls, as well as men and boys, but also contribute effectively to the achievement of human rights and the promotion of democracy. I have adopted a qualitative approach to obtain a rich interpretation and description of the young men's perceptions.

This study concluded that while the majority of participants aligned themselves with the dominant discourse of masculinity, there were the minority divergent voices that

valued alternative forms of masculinity. They valued equality for women and girls, and challenged both cultural and traditional norms, indicating a desire to relate to women and girls in non-oppressive ways. These voices need to be encouraged as a viable strategy to promote gender equality.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The dawn of democracy in 1994 saw South African women emerge from gender bondage to claim their rights as free citizens. To give impetus to this, legislation and policies were drafted and implemented. The most important of this is undoubtedly the Constitution of 1996 which guarantees equal rights, including protection from violence and abuse, as well as affirming gender equality as a fundamental cornerstone of our democracy. The Human Rights Commission and Gender Commission try to ensure that women's rights receive the necessary attention. Girls at school are protected by both the South African Schools Act and the Constitution where the rights of learners to dignity, respect and to an education in a safe, supportive environment are set out.

However, the reality in South African society and schools is that policy does not necessarily translate into positive action. Gender inequality and violence still exist. According to Lorber (1994), gender is a social construct, created out of social life and is the texture and order of that social life. It is during these social interactions that power imbalances exist, leading to oppression of women and girls. The Gender Equality Task Team noted that violence was the biggest impediment to achieving gender equality. Morrel (2002) refers to schools as sites of violence. This would include both physical and symbolic violence.

1.2 Rationale and Purpose of Study

The purpose of the proposed study is to investigate adolescent boys' perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism in schools as well as their perceptions of masculinity. The study will aim to make sense of the boys' interpretations of gender issues, gender equality and sexism in their school and social context. By understanding boys'

interpretations of these issues, educators and other role players can engage boys to interrupt sexism and gender inequality in schools

Clearly, policies do not necessarily translate into positive action in many schools. I still see and read of sexism and gender inequality at personal, institutional and societal levels. Being conscientised as a Social Justice Educator, I am keen to find out how boys perceive gender and sexism issues because these will influence their actions as adults. Another reason that sparked my interest was the tensions between culture and gender equality issues that emanated from many vigorous class discussions. Many of my efforts to get boys to challenge gender inequality were fruitless. I therefore realised the need to clearly understand their perceptions and attitudes in order to meaningfully engage with them.

Exploring their perceptions on gender, gender equality and sexism provides insights into the contributory factors as well as contexts within which their behaviour occurs. The oppression, exploitation and inequality experienced by females should not only concern females, but also be a concern to males. Including men in gender equality issues affords them the opportunity to critically examine their own attitudes as well as challenging the constructions imposed on them, such as hegemonic masculinity.

1.3 Key Research Questions

The key research questions are:

- What are the perceptions of Grade 10 and 11 boys' of gender, gender equality and sexism?
- What are adolescent boys' perceptions of masculinity?
- What are the factors that influence these perceptions?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study aims to understand boys' perceptions and attitudes regarding gender, gender equality and sexism. This understanding can be used as a point of departure to get boys to think and act differently and to interrupt and challenge sexism and gender inequality.

Further, educators and other significant role players can devise intervention strategies to engage boys in promoting gender equality by challenging and interrupting sexism and gender inequality.

1.5 Context of the Study

The study was conducted in a secondary school in the Pietermaritzburg region. Of the 16 boys, 14 were from urban areas and 2 were from rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

The age of the boys ranged from 16 to 18 years. While race was not used as a criterion for selection of the participants, it was relevant in terms of the cultural influences on learners' gendered socialisation. It thus warrants mentioning the racial representation of participants. According to South African racial categorisation, there were 14 African learners and 2 Indians. I acknowledge that South Africa has officially moved beyond race classification in terms of apartheid racial divisions, but this still provides analytical insights in terms of participants' socialisation in terms of race and gender.

1.6 Research Approach

The study is positioned within the critical paradigm. The critical paradigm interrogates power relations and uncovers underlying forces that shape the dynamics of educational institutions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Critical theory has, as a focal point, the issues of power relations, promoting critical awareness and consciousness, and challenging the ideologies that promote and reproduce social inequalities in society, with the aim of empowering the oppressed to bring about change. This approach was suitable

because one of the aims of the study was to raise boys' consciousness of their oppressive ways of thinking and to get them to think and act in non-oppressive ways.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study can be considered a case study. A case study is an in-depth study of a group of people and tries to capture the participants' perceptions and thoughts about a particular phenomenon or situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). A distinguishing feature of a case study is that it focuses on individuals and groups of people, and seeks to understand their perceptions (Ibid). My study has focused on a group of boys, using focus group interviews, as well as individual boys, using semi-structured interviews, to understand their perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism.

1.8 Outline of Chapters

Chapter One introduces the study and provides a brief overview. I state the purpose of the study as well as its significance in getting boys to interrupt and challenge the dominant discourse of masculinity. I briefly explain the research approach as well as the research methodology used in the study.

In Chapter Two I have reviewed both local and international literature to generate a conceptual framework for the study.

In Chapter Three I have presented and explained the research approach and research methodology that I have chosen in order to generate data. I have further presented a discussion of the data collection methods as well as the process that was followed.

In Chapter Four I present the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the qualitative data that was generated. I also explain the process of analysing the data.

In Chapter Five I present the analysis and discussion of the findings that emerged from the data.

Chapter Six is the conclusion of the study which presents the main findings, limitations of the study, as well as proposing areas for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I have chosen to combine the literature review with the conceptual framework. In this review, each of the relevant concepts will be discussed under a separate heading. These concepts will then be analysed later in the report.

2.1 Introduction

Equality between men and women is recognised as a principle in international law articulated in many United Nations documents. The idea that men and boys might have a specific role in realising this principle has only been articulated recently (Connell, 2003).

Issues about gender and gender equality were placed on the public agenda by women mainly. The reason is clear - it is women who are disadvantaged by the patterns of gender inequality, therefore it is women who should have a claim for redress. This logic is so strong that gender issues have been widely regarded as „women’s business’ and of no concern to men and boys. But this belief can no longer be held (Connell, 2003).

Moving towards a gender equal society is therefore a complex task involving profound institutional change as well as the small details of everyday life. However, Connell (2003) is adamant that it is not possible to move gender systems far towards equality without broad social consensus in favour of gender equality – and that consensus must include men and boys. Men and boys are thus, in several ways, gatekeepers for gender equality. Whether they are willing gatekeepers who will support practical reform, is an important question. The answer varies from one situation to another, and a critical influencing factor will be the way men’s and boys’ beliefs and practices are shaped by

gender systems. Research has repeatedly shown that patterns of gender inequality are interwoven with social definitions of masculinity and men's gender identities (Connell, 2003; Kaufman, 1999). To move towards a gender-equal society often requires men and boys to think and act in new ways, to reconsider traditional images of manhood, and to reshape their relationships with women and girls.

It is hoped that this research will give an insight into boys' perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism. Having insight into these perceptions will help in steering them to interrupt inequality and sexism, if it is prevalent. Men and boys are likely to support change towards gender equality and non-sexism when they can see positive benefits for themselves and the people in their lives (Connell, 2003). Even when they cannot see personal benefits, however, men and boys have a responsibility in this area. Connell (2003) argues that as long as any systematic gender inequalities persist, delivering advantage to men over women and promising future advantage to boys, the advantaged have an ethical responsibility to use their resources to change the system.

For the last few years, little attention has been paid to gender barriers, in part because so many educators consider gender to mean girls only. The reality, however, according to Sadker and Zittleman (2005) is that gender bias is very much an issue for both boys and girls, an issue too many educators fail to see. Connell (2003) concurs when he asserts that gender relations are an interactive system of connections and distinctions among people and groups of people – what happens to one group in this system affects the others. This reality is clearly contrary to the popular perception that gender is a girls' only issue.

2.2 Gender Definition

What then is gender? Gender can be described as an institutionalised system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organising social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Landry (2007) argues that gender is a social construction where men and women are assigned particular roles in that society and where those roles

and positions are given meaning by members of society. In short, then, Landry (2007) asserts that gender refers to a particular society's views of the proper place and roles of women and men. Kaufman (1999), on the other hand, believes the key thing about gender is that it is a description of actual social relations of power between males and females and the internalisation of these relations of power. The Commission on Gender Equality (1998) describes gender as an array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. The Commission further asserts that gender is relational, and refers not simply to women or men but to the socio-cultural relationship between them.

2.3 Policy on Gender

The democratic Government of South Africa recognised that women have been subordinated throughout their lives and there was a need for appropriate measures to ensure gender equality. In his opening speech in Parliament in 1994, former President Mandela said: "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression" (Prinsloo, 2006, p. 305). It was then that South Africa embraced the goal of gender equality, and formal expression to this is found in the Constitution and particularly in the Bill of Rights (Morrell, 2009). By implication, gender equality is not to be regarded as an add-on programme, but is to be part of all government programmes including education (Pandor, 2005). While policy intent and legal guarantees of gender equality is commendable, the challenge really is to convert these guarantees into demonstrable change. The Commission on Gender Equality (1998) argues that although placing equality on the statute book does serve a normative function, it does not inevitably lead to a change in lived experience. On their own, however, law and legal institutions cannot secure equality for women and men. Therefore the Commission emphasises that the rights of women and men that are entrenched in the Constitution are only affected in reality through state action, such as policy formulation and

implementation, otherwise they remain on an abstract level where they are universal and not responsive to gender-based experience. Although there are great many policy statements, and conventions held, with the aim to enshrine and promote gender equality (Morrell, 2009), it is clear that widespread gender inequalities still prevail in South Africa, as indeed the world. Diko (2007) argues that there is conflict between policy intent and reality.

In response to the new dispensation, the Government established a number of bodies tasked with responding to the Constitutional mandate of ensuring gender equality. Examples of these bodies are Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), Office of the Status of Women (OSW) and Gender Equality Task Team (GETT). Diko (2007) argues that despite the concentrated and concerted efforts of these bodies to achieve gender equality, there are still significant gender and cultural obstacles remaining, and further, there seems to be a gap between political aspirations and social change. Pandor (2005) stated that despite the country's historical bias against women, there existed a misconception among South Africans that there was no gender inequality in education. This may be because there are more girl learners than boys. Pandor (2005) argues strongly that women's continued oppression in education be exposed with a view to dismantle male privilege and ending the tension between policy and practice, and thereby ensuring meaningful social change. Morrell concurs with Pandor (2005) when he succinctly writes:

If South Africa is to be serious about gender equality, it must implement policies that convert rights into the capability of its citizens to live life to the full. This is an ambitious goal for it requires that all citizens commit themselves to respect one another, to abandon ideas of superiority, and to turn away from denigration, abuse, cruelty and hurt. (Morrell, 2009.)

However, South Africa is not alone in experiencing tensions between policy intent and reality. Raza (2007) writes that the Constitution of Pakistan recognises women as equal citizens and that steps be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life. However, despite these constitutional guarantees, Pakistan still lacks the

results needed to excel with other nations in the practical sphere of women in national development. “In essence the institutional apparatus of the government is not geared to achieve the object of gender equality” (Raza, 2007, p.2). Since the new dispensation in Zimbabwe in 1980, the country has strived to achieve gender equality. To achieve this, various gender policies, declarations and conventions were alluded to. However, in 1999, a Commission of Inquiry of Education noted that gender disparities persisted at all levels of education (Chabaya, Rembe, Wadesango, 2009). As a follow-up the government launched another Gender Policy in March 2004. The aim of this policy was to eliminate all barriers that impede the equality of sexes. However, Chabaya, et al. (2009) have noted that despite almost three decades of efforts to achieve gender equality in Zimbabwe, there appears to be little impact in practice. Put differently, there is simply no congruency between policy intent and reality. Another country that has policies in place is Nigeria. But, as in many societies, gender inequalities still exist in Nigeria. Women in Nigeria do not receive the same treatment as men to make their lives economically, politically and socially better (Agbese, 2003). In spite of legislation, Agbese asserts that post-colonial Nigeria was characterised by male privilege, male domination as well as women subordination. “Gender bias and discrimination was prominent in this era (Agbese, 2003, p.7).

2.4 Gender and Culture

One of the crucial factors that play a significant role in shaping our gender beliefs and attitudes is cultural beliefs (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). They argue that widely shared, hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender, and how these impact on social relational contexts, are the core components that influence the gender system. If gender is linked to difference and inequality, then widely held cultural beliefs about distinguishing characteristics of men and women and their expected behaviour are a central component of this gender system. Our perceptions of gender are strongly influenced by our cultural beliefs which are enacted in our social interactions. These cultural beliefs are strong and referred to as “hegemonic cultural beliefs” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 512). They

argue that these hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender are so strong that they have the potential to bias our behaviour and evaluations of self and others in gender issues.

Clearly then, culture is a powerful agent that influences perceptions. An example is Taiwan where culture and indeed society as a whole, was influenced by a male dominated lifestyle. That cultural perspective places women and girls in a subordinate role in which they receive unequal treatment (Lawrenz, Veach & Hong, 2005). Examples of this unequal treatment include girls experiencing seriously unequal treatment from parents and teachers, women and girls suffering violence in their families and commonly endured sexual harassment or sexual violation, as well as unequal treatment in the workplace which include limited promotion to higher positions. Lawrenz, et al. (2005) also found that many girls from low income families sacrifice their own educational opportunities for their brothers.

In South Africa there is also tension between culture and policy intent. Moorosi (2008) cites comments from men such as: “I can’t be headed by a woman,” and “the community needs a strong man for the school”. Moorosi argues that it is these serious cultural issues and practices that prevent policy and legal reforms from reaching desired goals. When Wolpe (2005) raised the issue of cultural factors relating to sexual violence and the rights of girls and women being denied, she was told continuously that she was exaggerating the problem. She argued that certain cultural practices had the “unintended consequence of promoting male rights with regard to sexual practices” (Wolpe, 2005, p.129). Jefftha (2006) argues that men’s actions are constrained by traditional beliefs and expectations, and influenced by divisive cultural beliefs and social norms. Deep rooted conceptions and perceptions are therefore not easily eradicated through policy.

2.5 Gender and Patriarchy

Coetzee (2001) argues that both Western and African cultures are deeply influenced by patriarchy. Therefore being raised in a highly patriarchal society is bound to influence boys’ perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism. Coetzee (2001, p. 300) argues

that because patriarchy is so deeply entrenched in our society, “the current pursuit of gender equality in South African education is up against a powerful enemy”. Kaufman (1999) argues that almost all humans currently live in systems of patriarchal power which privilege men and stigmatise, penalise and oppress women. The Commission on Gender Equality (1998) found that patriarchy is so firmly rooted in South African Society that it is accorded a cultural halo status. The Commission (1998, p.10) made the following pertinent conclusion:

Thus to challenge patriarchy, to dispute the notion that it should be men who should be dominant figures in the family and the society, is to be seen not as fighting male privilege, but as attempting to destroy African tradition. Patriarchy brutalizes men and neutralizes women across the colour lines. (Commission on Gender Equality, 1998.)

Coetzee (2001) and Moorosi (2008) concur that any endeavour at education transformation in South Africa must take cognisance of the fact that mere policy statements are destined to facilitate superficial change only. To create a democratic education dispensation requires “incisive evaluation and eradication of deep- rooted structures of domination, that permeate society” (Coetzee, 2001 p. 304).

The male identity is strongly influenced by cultural institutions (such as family, school, peer groups) and cultural identifiers (such as race, class, gender and sexual orientation). Men and boys in South Africa come from patriarchal cultures with a history of male messages of dominance, power and control. Since the dawn of patriarchy, men have put themselves at the centre of their strong, masculine universe (Pillay, 2009). They are taught to be seen as strong, stoic autonomous beings. Nonetheless, in a research study on the social construction of the male identity in South Africa, Augustine (2002) highlights the dilemma boys and men find themselves in. The problem facing boys and men is that cultural messages that form the males’ dominant narratives are now being challenged by both legislation and the feminist lobby. Women have used the discourse of law to challenge the dominant patriarchal discourse and a consequence of this is the upsetting of cultural roles and norms.

2.6 Earlier Socialisation

Augustine (2002) argues that South African men and boys are ill-equipped to deal with such rapid change due to their earlier socialisation. The way boys are socialised impacts them throughout their lives. Landry (2007) asserts that boys learn early about cultural values and behaviours, such as competition, toughness, being macho and winning at all costs. These are culturally valued aspects of masculinity. Augustine (2002) suggests that society and cultures must change to include men and boys' full range of experiences, emotions and humanity. Men and boys, on the other hand, need to enter into open discussion about competing discourses, because the previously taken for granted, reified cultural codes are no longer stable. In line with this thinking, the University of KwaZulu-Natal Men's Forum (UMF) was recently formed. One of its key aims is to get men to think critically about their gender and its impact on their life. Nevertheless, Augustine (2002) is well aware that not all men and boys will be willing to confront the tension between cultural norms and legislation. Some men and boys will engage in a "constant battle to attain and maintain the ideal of masculinity and stable self" (Augustine, 2002, p. 122). Such men and boys who are reluctant to negotiate changes or compromise their traditions or cultural way of life experience change as very disturbing and tend towards "hypermasculinity" (Augustine, 2002, p.122). They are rigid and will be more likely to show a resistance to change. Dr Maxwell Phiri, speaking at the UMF, spoke emphatically of the challenges men face in risking emasculation by becoming fully fledged emotional beings (Pillay, 2009). On the other hand men and boys who engage with the tension between culture and patriarchy and the feminist voice, supported by legislation, "will find a newfound freedom to be human, to love and express themselves without fearing the loss of their identity" (Augustine, 2002, p. 121). Finally Augustine argues for a critical self-reflection by men and boys, where they learn to perceive themselves and derive self-worth from a variety of roles, not just those culturally prescribed for males (which society constructs as more valued). For then we, as men and women, will be free to connect and to love and respect each other as humans are meant to do. "Our humanness lies in recognising and accepting each other" (Augustine 2002, p. 123).

2.7 Hegemonic Masculinity

The focus of this study is on boys and their perception of gender, gender equality and sexism. Therefore the questions of boys and how they construct their identities and masculinities is of paramount importance. Masculinity, for the average person, implies concepts such as powerful, strong, macho, brave, rational and heterosexual. Young (2001) refers to this as the power of hegemonic masculinity in shaping our perceptions of a “real man” or “real boy”. Connell (in Young, 2001) associates hegemonic with the ascendant position of leadership and power, and is used to represent the practices of masculinity that define it in opposition to femininity, as well as in relation to other subordinated masculinities, for example “wimps” and “gays”. Connell (in Young 2001) argues that hegemonic masculinity privileges certain ways of doing masculinity and produces unequal relations among men and between men and women. Christensen and Larsen (2008) concur with Young (2001) when they argue that the concept of hegemonic masculinity relates to the general oppression of women **and** to a hierarchic classification of men, and it brings into focus the issue of multiple masculinities. Kaufman (1999) argues that patriarchy exists not simply as a system of men’s power over women but also of hierarchies of power among different groups of men and between different masculinities.

Connell (1995) describes four types of masculinities:

- (a) Dominant/Hegemonic masculinity
- (b) Complicit masculinity
- (c) Oppositional masculinity
- (d) Submissive masculinity

Complicit masculinity can be defined as the type of masculinity where men and boys benefit from hegemony. Oppositional or protest masculinity can be defined as being in constant opposition to the dominant masculinity. Submissive masculinity, on the other hand, can be defined as always submitting to the power of the dominant masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity positions itself in opposition to women and takes its status in relation to other forms of subordinate masculinities. The values expressed by the other masculinities enjoy little currency or legitimacy. Hegemonic masculinity presents an idealised version of how “real men” should behave (Jeftha, 2006). Men and boys who identify themselves in the dominant version of masculinity enjoy power and privilege. Therefore, Christens and Larsen (2008) argue the equality dimension is relevant not only in terms of basic relations between men and women, but also in terms of interrelations between men. Young (2001) suggests that masculinity is displayed within particular social contexts. Masculinity theorists such as Connell and Martino (in Young 2001), and Jeftha (2006) suggest that masculine identities are not fixed or stable; they are fluid and constructed time and time again. Therefore, as Jeftha (2006) asserts, even though various types of masculinities exists, it may not always be that easy to distinguish between them as they are constantly changing and shifting. Any one man or boy, may position himself in different masculinities in different relationships and contexts, since masculinity as a social construct is prone to internal contradiction. Caution should therefore be exercised against trying to label any one man/boy as belonging exclusively to one masculine type. Boys and men are held accountable to display situationally specific ways. This display must be constantly upgraded and maintained in and through their interactions and talk within social contexts (West and Zimmerman, in Young 2001). Gender is therefore not something one “accomplishes” once at an early age; it has to be displayed over and over again in accordance with the structures of social contexts (Young, 2001).

2.8 Hegemonic Masculinity and Power

Hegemonic masculinity is closely linked with power. As with other masculinities, it is not stable. It is constantly responding to challenges, accommodating or repelling rival representations of masculinity (Jeftha, 2006). The common features of these dominant forms of contemporary masculinity are that manhood is equated with having some sort of power (Kaufman, 1999). Schoeman (in Coetzee, 2001) comments on the devastating effects of male power in South Africa. This power frustrates well-balanced interpretations of reality to such an extent that the oppressed become restricted in their thinking and also

accept their subservient position in society and presumed inferiority as normal and as a given state of affairs that has little chance of changing. The use of power in the male culture traps both the powerful and the powerless in hegemonic structures that are cruelly dehumanising (Coetzee, 2001). The equation of masculinity with power is one that developed over centuries. It conformed to, and in turn justified, the real life domination of men over women and the valuation of males over females. Men learn to accept and exercise power because it allows them the capacity to exercise control, as well as enjoying privileges and advantages that women and children do not enjoy, or simply, because it is an available tool that allows us to feel capable and strong (Kaufman, 1999).

It is clear that hegemonic masculinity can be problematic. In a study conducted by Robinson (2005) in Australian schools, it was found that sexual harassment was integral to the construction of hegemonic masculine identities. What was also shocking was that sexual harassment was considered legitimate and expected means through which to express and reconfirm both public and private positions of hegemonic masculinity within a heterosexualised, racialised and classed gender order (Robinson, 2005). Robinson found that sexual harassment is not about an individual, but is constituted within a broad cultural and power dynamic and these intersect with race, class and gender. Successful hegemonic masculinity is often measured against aggression, intimidation and dominance shown towards the gendered “other” i.e. girls and women or those men and boys who take up less dominant forms of masculinities. These men and boys consequently experience horizontal forms of oppression. As sexual violence and sexual harassment become part of the performance of hegemonic masculinity, men and boys develop their sense of identity in this form of masculinity. Martino (2000) in a study of adolescent boys found that boys identifying with the dominant masculinity displayed social practices such as “mucking around” in class, “giving crap”, and acting “cool”.

Hegemonic masculinity has implications not only for women and girls, but also for boys belonging to subordinate masculinities. Lingard and Douglas (1999) argue that it is a mistake to regard all boys as powerful, since many boys in subordinate masculinities experience powerlessness, leaving them alienated from themselves and without a

positive sense of their masculine identity. Kaufman (1999) concurs, arguing that men experience contradictory experiences of power. He asserts that while power enjoyed by the dominant masculinity gives them privilege, that same power can cause subordinate masculinities to experience pain, fear and alienation.

A typical example of this is bullying or peer victimisation, which is one of the hidden elements of the culture of violence that contributes to the different manifestations of violence in our society (Nesser, et al., 2003). Further, Nesser, et al. (2003) assert that dominating males and females bully others that are less powerful. Men bully females and even less powerful men, while children often bully less powerful peers. Bullying among learners can be described as intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words or other behaviour, such as threatening, committed by a child or children against another child or children. These negative acts are not provoked by the victim, and for such acts to be identified as bullying, an imbalance in perceived or real power must exist between the bully and the victim (Coloroso, cited in Nesser, et al., 2003). In a study on bullying in schools in South Africa, Nesser, et al. (2003) found that boys were the main perpetrators of in bullying other learners (68 %). This could be attributed to the element of bravado or hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinities clearly have the potential to be counter productive in schools. Lingard and Douglas (1999, p.134) refer to the “harmful standards of hegemonic masculine expression”. They argue that the competitive and stultifying demands of hegemonic masculinity reproduce the need for unequal relations of social power and privilege among males themselves and more obviously between males and females. Broadly speaking, men and boys are expected to be physically strong, emotionally robust, macho, competitive (Landry, 2007; Jeftha, 2006). However, some of these traits translate into attitudes and behaviours that have become unhelpful (Jeftha, 2006). It is against this backdrop that and Kehler and Martino (2007) call for schools to enhance boys capacities for self-problematisation focusing on the limitations that hegemonic masculinity imposes. This, they contend, will help support a counter-hegemonic practice. Similarly Martino (2000) asserts that schools should engage in critical practice, i.e. getting boys to

recognise the injustice they have experienced themselves may be the initial step in enabling them to empathise with other people's experiences of injustice and to recognise ways in which they were complicit in perpetuating injustice.

Hegemonic constructions of masculinity need to be deconstructed. To this end, the UMF encourages new forms of masculinity that are more adaptive, more flexible, more balanced and more engaged with the people around them, which in turn allows men and boys to better understand themselves and their identities (Pillay, 2009).

The big challenge for schools in relation to boys is to support them to dismantle the walls they construct around themselves and others in order to feel "masculine". This includes supporting them to accept and enjoy a variety of masculinities (Lingard and Douglas, 2007; Augustine, 2002). By giving more exposure to other forms of masculinity, and by challenging the dominant/hegemonic masculinity, Jeftha (2006) believes the struggle for gender equality will be enhanced, as well as leading to a decrease in gender based violence and other forms and consequences of gender inequality.

2.9 Gender Violence

While South Africa ranks among the most gender equitable countries in the world in terms of its parliamentary composition, it is also among the most gender inequitable countries in the world if one looks at the level of gender based violence (Morrell, 2009).

De Wet (2007, p. 675) describes gender based violence as:

Violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim; and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical sexual and psychological harm including intimidation, suffering, coercion and/or deprivation of liberty. (De Wet, 2007.)

In South Africa violence against women and girls has long reached critical proportions. Lisa Vetten, Manager of the Gender-Based Violence Programme, run by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, and also a long time stalwart for Women's Rights, states that in 1999 alone, 51 249 rapes were reported to the police, and this she believes, is likely to be merely the tip of the iceberg of actual rapes (Kent, 2004). This study focuses on schoolboys' perceptions, and therefore I will focus on the situation in schools.

Sexual harassment is an important aspect of the reality of school life for many young people in South Africa (Prinsloo, 2006; De Wet, et al., 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2001). Schools are supposed to be safe places where all learners have equal access to educational opportunities and are treated equally (Prinsloo, 2006; De Wet, 2007). However, this is not the case, as is evidenced by many research reports. Schools are described as "sites of violence" (Morrell, 2002) and "neither safe, nor innocent, but provide a stage which permits the development of violent attitudes and behaviours," (Kent, 2004, p. 62). Bhana (2007, p. 34) asserts that schools, including primary schools, are important sites in the making of gender power relations, and it is here that boys and girls enact "poisonous patterns of conduct" . The importance of the school as both a social arena in the construction of gender/sexual identities, and a location in which violence is perpetrated, has been highlighted by Dunne, et al. (2006). They voice concern that in some schools many practices of gender violence become institutionalised and accepted as part of the landscapes of schooling. De Wet, et al. (2008) observed that for many South African girls, violence and abuse are an inevitable part of the school environment.

Research reports indicate the situation in schools is shocking. More than 30% of girls are raped at school (Prinsloo, 2006). The report by the Human Rights Watch (2001) indicates that many girls experience violence in schools, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and assault by both male educators and learners. In a study on peer sexual harassment, Fineran, (in De Wet, et al., 2008) found that 79% of the respondents indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment by peers, while

Mabusela (in De Wet, et al., 2008) found that sexual violence was almost exclusively perpetrated by males known to the girls.

Whilst being a victim of rape is common amongst girls of school-going age, it must also be borne in mind that boys are also victims of violence in school. Fineran (in de Wet, et al., 2008) found that 73 % and 28 % of boys were victims of sexual harassment and violence respectively. While acknowledging that men commit most violent acts, and that it is a problem for them as perpetrators, Morrell (2002) observes that not all men are violent, while Bhana (2007, p. 34) asserts that “neither are all boys violent”. It is therefore a mistake to regard all boys as powerful, since many boys in subordinate masculinities experience powerlessness leaving them alienated from themselves (Lingard & Douglas, 1999).

The social construction of masculinity and femininity exacerbates the levels of violence i.e. the social construction of what it means to be boy and girl nurtures gender violence (Bhana, 2007). This is oppression because the social construction of gender is invested with power and unequal relations which can lead to gender violence. Bhana (2007) contends that in gender relations it is not only the power imbalance between boys and girls that is problematic, but the way in which masculinity and femininity is constructed. Femininity is associated with gentleness and a lack of power, while masculinity is associated with power, and being in control. She describes the dominant expression of masculinity in this setting as the warrior masculinity, one that is connected to violence, which is used as a means of control. Warrior boys feel the pressure to demonstrate masculinity in violent ways and reinforce their dominance over girls and also subordinate masculinities.

Sexual harassment is therefore an expression of sexism which reflects and reinforces the unequal power that exists between men and women in our patriarchal society. Larkin (1994) asserts that it is part of a pattern of male-female interaction in which men or boys routinely express their dominance over women. Larkin (1994) argues that sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women are the logical products of a

culture in which women and girls are generally devalued. The writer further asserts that sexual harassers don't just hatch in high school; they have evolved from years of training in a society that conditions them to treat women as less important than men. Connell (2003) makes a similar claim when he argues that men's and boy's violence against women and girls is both a means and an expression of the conditions of inequality between men and women.

Sexual harassment is clearly a debilitating experience for women and girls and the challenge for schools is to disrupt this behaviour. Larkin (1994) states that schools are a microcosm of the larger society in which men and boys routinely use diminishment and abuse as a way of expressing their dominance over women. It is for this reason that Larkin (1994) strongly advocates educating boys to challenge these attitudes that support sexual harassment. In doing so, we are endeavouring to eliminate the tools of a culture based on subordination of women and girls. Tharinger (2008) also emphasises the crucial role of the school in assisting boys to interrupt sexual harassment. The writer argues that the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and violence, and the ways in which practices within schools reinforce this relationship, need to be disrupted if there is to be a significant reduction in school violence, including sexual violence. It is of paramount importance that schools create a gender-sensitive environment which can help boys to change attitudes and behaviours.

Gender violence is not only a serious issue in South Africa, but in other countries as well. A study in the United States (Lawrenz, et al., 2005) found that 4 out of 5 students reported sexual harassment during school. A study conducted by De Wet (2007) revealed that verbal and physical abuse amongst learners was prevalent in some schools in Lesotho. Ziyane (2006) writes that violence against Swazi women is as old as the human race, and further, Swaziland being a patriarchal society, gives males absolute power of control over the family. In Malawi, Bisika (2008) found that gender based violence exists and that while both men and women are victims, the latter bear the brunt of the practice. Adekeye (2008) argues that violence in all its ramifications is unacceptable, that no woman deserves to be physically battered or made to suffer psychologically.

2.10 Gender and the Curriculum

Girls are also disadvantaged through the curriculum. Gender equality in teaching is a crucial component of a good quality education. For this to happen, gender equality needs to be a central part of the school curriculum (Gender Equality Series, 2005). The writer of this article argues that curriculum stereotypes are impediments to learning. As an example many societies assume that girls are poor at Maths and that boys cannot care for children. Lawrenz, et al. (2005) argue that for a curriculum to be effective, it must be acceptable to students and teachers. Both these stakeholders' perceptions of what constitutes appropriate curriculum content and teaching methods strongly influence their acceptance. Zaher (1996, cited in Lawrenz, et al., 2005) argues that if student perceptions are to be influenced, a gender-equality curriculum must provide meaning.

In South Africa, the democratic Government placed curriculum reform high on the agenda. The curriculum needed to address issues such as democracy, human rights and non-sexism. Coming from an era where patriarchy and gender inequality were prevalent, curriculum reform was necessary and crucial. The curriculum saw a strong emphasis on strengthening the rights-based elements which had implications for how gender would be addressed. However, Chisholm (2003) argues that despite sterling work by the Gender Equality Task Team, and commitments by Government, policy for the achievement of gender equality is not supported by authority or resources. She asserts that a rights-based approach could have, but did not have the substantive effect of diffusing gender issues. Chisholm (2003) concludes her argument by stating that despite the substantial inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum, an assessment of whether South Africa's curriculum has achieved gender equality can ultimately demonstrate only partial success.

Abbot, et al. (2005) assert that the hidden curriculum has sexist overtones. There are mechanisms in place to channel learners into gendered subjects. Purohit and Walsh (2003) found that in Maths and Science, there were gendered expectations among both learners and teachers that have developed to the point that they are taken as normal. They

argue that the discourse in different fields, particularly Maths and Science, work to construct the subject matter and the students, in ways that excludes girls. In a study by Bhana (2005), it was found that boys gender Mathematics as masculine and the social power attached to the subject is a source of inequality. The “masculinisation of Mathematics”, (Bhana, 2005, p.2) results in boys engaging in oppositional and gendered discourses, claiming power over girls, and constructing a version of masculinity that correlates with prestige and these have inequitable effects. The boys’ domination of classroom interactions in schools may also be due to the girls’ fear of being taunted by their male classmates. Classroom observations revealed girls shied away from active participation in Maths and Science lessons because they feared taunting and intimidation by boys (Kalu, 2005). It was evident that boys’ attitudes contributed to female student’s discouragement. This is perhaps why boys enjoy greater proportional share of interactions than girls in questioning, responding to questions and initiation of talks in schools (Kalu, 2005). Abbot, et al. (2005) argue further that while girls may have equal access to schooling, many do not have equal access to the curriculum. They take a critical view of the structure of the school as well as male staff who reinforce girls’ subordination.

Blatchford & Meighan (2007) take a critical look at educators who perpetuate gender stereotyping and girls’ subordination. They argue that in the classroom boys live up to their label when they dominate classroom discussion, whereas girls meet the stereotypical expectations for their sex when they are quiet or accommodate male talk. Girls who deviate from this norm are termed dominating or talkative. The writers assert that girls are more polite than boys because people in a vulnerable position are generally more polite. Girls’ politeness has little to do with their sex but more to do with their position in society. Tiedemann (2002) also highlighted the role of the teacher in determining classroom interactions when he found that teachers hold gender-differentiated views of their students’ academic abilities. Sadker, Sadker and Klein (cited in Tiedemann, 2002) found that boys received more attention from teachers and were given more time to talk in classrooms than girls, and further, boys received more praise and critical feedback than girls. Kalu’s (2005) findings were similar. He found that boys receive more attention

from their teachers than do female students and that girls were much less successful than boys in engaging in discussions with their teacher. It was found that boys became bored quickly if girls are speaking and consequently teachers encourage girls to keep their contributions short. This discourages girls from participating in discussion which is a useful tool for learning.

To conclude, South Africa, with its history of patriarchy and the apartheid system, encapsulates a society that operated under the discourses of gender dominance and subordination. Therefore, as clearly articulated in this review, the achievement of gender equality should not be considered a women's issue, but rather also focus on the critical role that men and boys can play in the achievement of gender equality and challenging unequal power relations. When both men and women are valued equally by society, and discriminatory barriers removed, both men and women can realise their full potential. This recognition will also contribute effectively to the achievement of human rights and the promotion of democracy (EGM Report, 2003).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

My study aimed to investigate boys' perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism. In this chapter I explain the methodological processes selected in order to gather and analyse data. Data collection techniques include focus group discussions using situated scenarios and individual interviews. I try to validate the choices made, as well as reflecting on the effectiveness of different research techniques.

3.2 Research Design and Paradigm

I have adopted a qualitative approach with the understanding that this approach is most appropriate for explaining and understanding people in a social world. Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, cultures and lifestyles (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Cresswell (2007) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding that explores a social or human problem and where the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as the study of things in their natural settings, trying to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research is characterised by the following:

- An exploratory and descriptive focus
- Data collection in a natural setting
- Qualitative methods of data collection
- Emphasis on people by giving them voice

Qualitative research, however, does have its critics. Positivists, for example, question research using a qualitative approach. They claim it is not as valid, reliable and objective as a scientific approach. This world is often dismissed as “subjective” and regarded with suspicion (Neill, 2006). For positivists, all genuine knowledge is based on sense experience and can be advanced only by means of observation and experiment. Positivism claims that science provides us with the clearest possible ideal of knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Habermas (cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) disagrees with positivists. He contends that scientism silences an important debate about values, perceptions, opinions, moral judgements and beliefs. He argues that scientific explanations seriously diminish the very characteristics that make humans human. It makes for a society without conscience. Neill (2006) argues that a major strength of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions, resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation. He further asserts that qualitative research is a way to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving our comprehension of the whole.

The focus of my study is boys’ perceptions and understandings of gender, gender equality and sexism. The qualitative approach is suitable for my study because I do not seek a scientific or quantitative truth, but rather a richness and depth of their understandings, opinions and beliefs regarding gender, gender equality and sexism. Through the boys’ rich descriptions, I wish to discover meanings in the context of their natural settings. The qualitative approach best allows for the attainment of this goal.

This study is located within the critical paradigm. A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs. It represents a worldview that defines for its holder the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical theory has, as a focal point, the issue of power relations. Critical research aims to challenge social inequalities and empower the

oppressed so that change is possible. Cohen, et al. succinctly explain the critical perspective stating:

Its intention is not merely to give an account of society and behaviour, but to realize a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members. Its purpose is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to change them. In particular it seeks to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individuals freedom within a democratic society. (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 26.)

According to Cohen, et al. (2007) critical theory and critical educational research have their substantive agenda in:

- Examining and interrogating the relationships between school and society – how schools perpetuate or reduce inequality.
- The social construction of knowledge and the curriculum, who defines worthwhile knowledge and what ideological interest this serves, and how this reproduces inequality in society.
- How power is produced and reproduced through education.
- Whose interests are served by education and how legitimate these are.

My aim is not merely to understand but to be instrumental in effecting change. My investigation of senior boys' perceptions and attitudes of gender equality and sexism may reveal oppressive attitudes. As an educator committed to and working for social justice, I hope this research will further the cause of gender equality by raising awareness around issues of sexism, gender equality and social justice. The aim really is that while conscientising boys about these issues, they would be educated to interrupt sexism and gender oppression. Gaining knowledge of boys' perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism is critical in terms of engaging boys through, for example, a gender sensitive curriculum, if we want to endeavour breaking the cycle of socialisation and interrupting sexism. My study is therefore located within the critical perspective.

3.3 Context of the Study

The study was conducted in an urban secondary school where I am an educator. I have selected to locate my study at a secondary school as I am interested in the perceptions of adolescent boys. Learners from the school are largely from urban areas. The research participants in the study are boys from Grades 10 and 11. I have selected a sample of a total of eight (8) boys from each of the grades using simple random sampling. In simple random sampling, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. The boys were selected at random from a class list of each of the above grades.

Because I teach at the school, access to boys was not problematic. The rationale for choosing boys from these grades is twofold. Firstly these boys are at a crucial stage in their development, and their perceptions will possibly carry into adulthood. Therefore understanding how and what these adolescent boys think regarding sexism and gender equality is important, if I as a Social Justice Educator want to steer them to commit to equality.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

After boys were randomly selected, I explained to them the nature of my study and how they were selected. We had an open discussion where I explained what I expected from them and where they also sought clarity on issues. Permission to conduct the study at this school was obtained from the Provincial Education Department as well as the Principal and School Governing Body, after informing them about the nature of my research. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the university after submitting a proposal. Parents of boys participating were given consent forms to sign, granting permission for their children to participate. A copy of the interview schedule was also given to parents to help them make an informed decision regarding their children's participation. The boys were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and that they could withdraw at any time with no fear of consequences. I also informed the boys that the interview would be

recorded and later transcribed. Some of the boys wanted to listen to the recorded version of the interview. This was done as well as giving all the boys a copy of the transcribed version of the interview. They were reassured when I told them that I would only proceed to use the data once they were satisfied that the transcribed data accurately reflects what they said.

Ethics has been defined as a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others, and that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better (Cavan, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This is very important to me as a researcher because, while getting the truth and completing the research was important, human dignity was the main priority and should never be compromised. As Stake (2005) points out, participants in the research risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment, and self-esteem. Therefore something of a contract exists between researcher and researched: a disclosing and protective covenant (Stake, 2005).

The basic principles which ought to underpin any research are autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence. I assured boys that their autonomy would be respected and that in participating, no harm would come to them. It was also very important that I was upfront with them in stating that there was no direct benefit for them, and their participation was in no way linked to the curriculum or assessment in school.

Finally, I think ethics is far more than technical forms to be completed. It is more about personal integrity, social responsibility and human dignity. This was uppermost in my mind as I interacted with the boys participating in my study.

3.5 Validity and Credibility

Validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. This corresponds to the question: how can an enquirer persuade his or her audience that the research findings are worth paying attention to? (Golafshani, 2003). With people's understanding of their world and reality changing, and my own subjectivities,

there is a possibility that this study results may not be replicable in other studies, i.e. results could not be generalisable. It is usually understood that the purpose of a case study is not to produce “generalisable results”. Stake (1995) asserts that the real business of a case study is particularization, not generalization. However, to ensure credibility, I have given detailed descriptions of methods and procedures throughout the research process.

To increase validity I have used multiple sources of data collection (interviews and focus groups). Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. It is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research (ibid). Golafshani (2003) argues that triangulation is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. Interviews were transcribed and given back to participants for clarities and confirmation. I, as a researcher, was interested in diversity of perception, and the multiple realities within which participants live (Stake, 2005). Triangulation helps to identify these different realities.

3.6 Methodology and Data Collection Methods

The style of inquiry for this study was a case study. Case studies strive to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation, to catch a close up reality and thick description of participants lived experiences of, thoughts about and feeling for a situation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Stake (1995) writes that case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. He differentiates between an intrinsic case study where the purpose is to better understand a particular case for its own sake, and an instrumental case study where a particular case is examined to provide insights into an issue or to refine a theory. This research study is an instrumental case study because boys’ perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism is not of intrinsic interest in itself, but is of interest because of the understanding and insight this particular case can generate about social justice issues, particularly women and girls’ oppression.

3.6.1 Focus Group Interview using Situated Scenarios

A focus group interview is a planned discussion where a group of respondents are asked a set of semi-structured questions to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment. The researcher defines the topic, and data is obtained through group interaction. The group is ‚focused’ in that it involves a collective effort.

Niewenhuis (2006) lists the following strengths of the focus group interview:

- Promotes self disclosure among respondents as well as widening the range of responses.
- Activating forgotten details of experience.
- Releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information.
- Produces data rich in detail.

However, Niewenhuis (2006) cautions that it is possible that some participants may experience a group encounter as threatening, and therefore not fully participate. Therefore the researcher should be alert to this possibility by observing the group process carefully, and not allow one or two participants to dominate discussion. The purpose is for the researcher to listen and gather data on how all participants think or feel about an issue. The ability to speak for oneself is empowering in that one’s own voice is heard.

For my study I chose two groups of eight adolescent boys, randomly. These were from Grade 10 and Grade 11 classes. The learner participants were put at ease by establishing a rapport with them, explaining how the process will unfold, and assuring them that their responses were all valued. Being their educator for some years and interacting with them both at curricular and extra-curricular level helped in establishing this rapport. I selected eight participants because I wanted to strike a balance between having enough people to generate adequate discussion, and not having too many to feel overcrowded. The focus

group interview was piloted with a group of Grade 9 boys. This was useful in determining if the questions and probes generated sufficient data to answer the research question. Also it gave an indication about the length or running time of the interview and which questions needed modification. The piloting process revealed that some questions were not easily understood by respondents. As an example, the question: Who received preferential treatment while you were growing up? This question proved to be ambiguous and some learners had difficulty with the word preferential. I changed this question to: Were boys and girls treated equally while you were growing up? The responses indicated that this question was well understood. Also the initial length of the interviews was too long. Therefore, I had to modify questions so that the respondents could easily understand them and to ensure that the interview was not more than an hour in length.

Because of the familiarity of the boys and researcher, there was a relaxed atmosphere during the focus group session. I had to be aware of boys dominating discussion which did occur during the initial stages. To counteract this, I found that I had to call on certain boys to give their views, assuring them their views were valued and that grammatical expression was not an issue to be concerned about. Their confidence grew as the interview progressed and with affirmation from me. The other intervention I found necessary was when there was tension between divergent voices and majority voices. The majority voices tended to show scorn and disdain towards the divergent voices. I had to, at regular intervals, remind boys to respect the speaker and that I wanted open, honest responses. This was useful in that divergent voices were not inhibited in freely expressing their views even though there was tension evident.

For my study I used situated scenarios during the focus group interview. Barter & Renold (1999) define vignettes or situated scenarios as stories about individuals, situations, and structures which can refer to significant points in the study of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. Situated scenarios can serve multi purposes when used in research. This includes building rapport with the respondents, investigating topics that may be

sensitive to respondents, and comparing perceptions between groups (Barter & Renold, 1999).

Situated scenarios are often used in conjunction with other forms of data collection to obtain more information about respondents. In my study this was used in conjunction with individual interviews. Barter & Renold (1999) list the following criteria for effective vignettes:

- It must be realistic to the respondent.
- It must be written so that they are easily understood by the respondent.
- It must mirror issues that occur with some frequency in respondent's lives.
- It must provide sufficient contextual information for respondents to clearly understand the situation being portrayed.
- Further questioning may be appropriate to increase the likelihood that respondents reply with what they would do rather than merely providing socially accepted responses.

For this study the verbal format was selected because the respondents preferred to talk about issues rather than write them down. They felt that the latter would be too time consuming and tedious. They also indicated that they would enjoy a group interaction. The scenarios were developed so that the participants could easily understand and relate to them. Another consideration was that the scenarios bring out key themes related to the focus of my study, namely gender, gender equality and sexism.

3.6.2. Individual Interviews

An interview is when a researcher talks to someone with the purpose of gathering information (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). It is, according to Niewenhuis (2006) a two-way conversation where the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and learn about the ideas, beliefs, perceptions and opinions of the participants. The aim of interviews in qualitative research is to see the world through the eyes of the participants,

and obtaining rich, descriptive data that helps one understand the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality. A strength of the interview is that it offers the flexibility to adapt questioning according to the responses of the respondents, to clarify questions and answers, or to probe answers more deeply with supplementary questions as appropriate, and to explore issues that emerge from the respondents.

For my study I used semi-structured interviews. The boys were asked open ended questions. Open ended questions allow for a variety of responses. Further, open ended questions do not predetermine answers and allows the respondents to respond in his/her own terms (Greef, 1998). Where there was uncertainty, a probing question was asked. According to Greef (1998) the value of probing is that it deepens a response and persuades the participants to give more detailed information about an issue under discussion. Clarification probes were also used to check the researchers understanding of what has been said (Niewenhuis, 2006).

I chose three Grade 10 and three Grade 11 boys randomly. The questions were similar to those in the focus groups. This was useful in determining if responses would differ in an individual setting, since, as mentioned earlier, a group situation can be an inhibiting factor for some participants. However, I found that participants' perceptions were reinforced during individual interviews and that were no vastly different perceptions that emerged.

3.7 Reflexivity

The issue of power is also acute in the learner-educator relationship. Being their educator for all their high school years was beneficial. We have an excellent relationship built on trust, mutual respect and non-judgment. We have had interactions at both curricular and extra-curricular level and I emphasised that I appreciated their generosity in being interviewed. This helped with boys being relaxed, feeling non-threatened, and being open and honest in discussions. I did not observe any boy being silent, coy or guarded during interviews. Some boys required affirmation and their confidence grew. Responses were

spontaneous and sometimes vigorous. However, I was also aware that boys could produce responses they think I, being their educator, might want to hear. So, while being their educator was advantageous in that all the boys were rather relaxed and open, I was conscious of the fact that with controversial and personal responses, the possibility existed that boys would convey specific responses because they have an anticipation of what the researcher expects. Therefore, I constantly had to remind boys to give open, honest responses. As previously mentioned, at regular intervals during the interview, especially when views differed and some boys wanted to silence others, I had to remind them about respect, and to keep their responses open and honest. This was crucial because it encouraged divergent voices to freely articulate their honest responses.

3.8 Data Analysis

I have employed a thematic method of analysis for analysing the data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. It involves searching across a data set, for example interview transcripts, to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, before arriving at themes, I had to firstly familiarise myself with the data. To achieve this, I had to engage in a careful line by line reading through the transcripts several times. While doing this, I made notes and brief summaries in the margins. Immersing myself in the data helped me to understand the content of the data, as well as developing a sense of participants' characteristics with regard to language usage.

The next step involved coding the data which entailed labelling units of meaning from within the data. I coded a phrase, line, sentence, or even a paragraph using various colours. This required that I had to, at times, make my own judgements about an aspect of the textual data. As an example, the terms 'strong man' or 'strong boy' in most cases referred to a physically strong, macho type of person. However, in other contexts the meaning of these words was meant to convey emotional strength and had no reference to physical strength. The search for similarities, differences, categories, themes and concepts was not compartmentalised, but rather a continuous process. Following coding,

I searched for recurring regularities in the data which represent patterns that I could sort out into categories. Common ideas and concepts were grouped together to form categories. The data still needed to be reduced and therefore categories were grouped together on the basis of commonalities. These then formed the main sets of themes which was small and manageable and would facilitate interpretation and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will endeavour to unravel the data collected in an attempt to gain an understanding of how the data illuminates the critical questions to my study, namely:

1. What are the perceptions of Grade 10 and 11 boys' of gender, gender equality and sexism?
2. What are adolescent boy's perceptions of masculinity?
3. What are the factors that influence these perceptions?

Boys were coded L 1 to L 16 for identification and classification.

4.2 Masculinity

The initial question focused on boys' understandings of what it is to be a boy or man. The majority of responses were not surprising, emphasising the physical aspect. Nevertheless, issues such as leadership, and emotions also surfaced. The traits of hegemonic masculinity were evident in the responses.

Masculinity defined in terms of strength, power, leadership, provider, and protector came across very clearly from the majority of boys. This was a crucial issue for nearly all the boys. They felt that this was a critical issue in terms of defining a boy or a man.

L 13: For me - being a boy or a man is being like a hard nut to crack - being the protector and leader – he is the one with power.

L 11: I think a boy or a man, sir, is about being the head – he is a strong person – physically and emotionally strong.

L 1: A man was supposed to be a person who is not emotional when it comes to the family or any reason. He should be strong – physically as well as mentally strong.

L 2: He must do all the hard work.

L 11: Well, for me, Sir - it is not about equal - a man is always on top - he is the protector.

However, not all boys placed emphasis on the physical aspect of being a man. Some boys defined masculinity in terms of values such as responsibility, caring and respect.

L 12: Being a man is being supportive to the people around you.

L 15: Being a man means being able to deal with all the negatives around you. It also means providing for the needs of others and taking care of your family and loved ones. It is a gift you must use where other people appreciate you as a man.

This boy is of the opinion that a man's responsibility in caring for loved ones is not an inherent right or an assumption to be taken for granted. He believes it to be a gift or a privilege that by implication should be valued. Implicit in this perception is that if a man does not use this gift or privilege of fulfilling his responsibility, he may not be appreciated or regarded as a real man. Other boys also placed emphasis on the role of responsibility and respect in defining a man.

L 9: I think a man is a man if he shows respect to his wife and takes care of his children - who don't think a wife must only feed the children or do everything in the home

L 3: He must be considerate of the wife as well - they must share in it - even though a man leads as the head, he must be considerate of his wife as well. This will make him more of a man.

4.3 Masculinity and Leadership

Boys expressed confidence in men as leaders, both in the family and community. Most of the boys made it clear that there wasn't even a need to debate that men are the natural leaders in the home and community. To them this was an uncontested domain.

L 12: Being a man is being supportive to the people around you - it is taking leadership and showing strength.

L 11: I think a boy or a man is about being the head.

L 3: I think a man must keep his pants on and be a leader at all times. Basically he is the one with characteristics of a leader - in the job, the home or the community.

The quote above indicates that the boy is defining his masculinity in terms of dominance and superiority over women. This statement clearly implies that he will not allow his manhood to be challenged by women. It is evident that there is hardly any room for women as leaders in the boy's mind. When pressed further about the issue of women as leaders, the response indicated a very narrow understanding of women in leadership roles:

Me: You speak of men being leaders. What do you think about women as leaders?

L 3: I think it – well they can have their place of leadership – like they can lead in the home – like take care of the kids – make sure kids grow and learn – ja.

Me: So are you saying you believe a women's place is in the home?

L 3: Ja, I do.

The traits of hegemonic masculinity emerged very clearly. In terms of leadership Connell (in Young, 2001) associates hegemonic masculinity with the ascendant position of leadership and power, and is used to represent the practices of masculinity that define it in opposition to femininity as well as in relation to other subordinated masculinities. Society has traditionally determined whose role it is to raise children and look after the home, or to work and head the household. In other words, society has categorised certain roles as male and female roles and there is an expectation for men and women to conform to these roles. The quotes above indicate that the majority of boys' perceptions are in keeping with traditional, stereotypical roles as determined by society. For the average person masculinity implies concepts such as powerful, strong, macho, brave, rational, and heterosexual. Most boys presented these concepts as their perceptions of being a man.

Only three boys chose a divergent voice when responding to the questions of being a man.

L 7: Being a man is the way you treat people and the way they respond to you – it makes you a man if you treat people with dignity and respect - then you are a true man.

L 16: Being a man is to communicate well with people especially the opposite gender. You show consideration for women and share.

L 9: A man does not have to be physically strong. He must respect his wife and kids and share in domestic chores.

The immediate disapproval of the other boys showed just how entrenched hegemonic masculinity is in their thinking. The divergent voices were faced with comments such as being “sissy” or being soft and that the women will overpower them. Their stance was interpreted by other boys as being weak.

L 3: If a man shows weakness, he will regret it. A woman will overpower him and it will be too late.

L 11: Ja sir, you must be very strong otherwise you will be a sissy. People will see you as weak.

L 16: But you don't need physical strength to be a leader. You need people to respect you as a leader.

L 7: Treating people with respect and dignity will make you a man.

L 3: But a weak man, who will be easily defeated.

This is in keeping with the point Jefftha (2006) makes where hegemonic masculinity presents an idealised version of how ‘real men’ should behave. Further, the values expressed by the other masculinities enjoy little currency or legitimacy. Most boys define their masculinity in opposition to the ‘other’, that is, women and girls. Support for

women is immediately perceived as being in opposition to hegemonic masculinity and hence your status as a real man is questioned. Many boys expressed disbelief when a divergent viewpoint was put across that real men do not necessarily have to be strong and powerful. While valuing traits such as respect and dignity, physical and emotional strength as well as leadership qualities were deemed more significant for real men. Sentiments were expressed that it is mandatory for a man to be strong and powerful and there is no room for expressing emotions in public. Expressing emotions in public can have dire consequences for a man, as is evident in this conversation.

L 5: ... But he must not be weak and emotional.

Me: When you say he must not be emotional, do you mean he must not show any emotions like crying?

L 5: He can cry, but never in public. He must cry in his own time. Like if he cries in public, he loses his dignity, respect, and the people that used to respect you, they won't treat you the same way they did before because you are too emotional – so then certain things you have to know or certain things you got to do – so then they may pass it on to other people because they think you not man enough to do it.

Me: Just because you show emotions in public?

L 5: Yes, it might not be like that, but people that's how they think – they'll do all this sort of things like not telling you things or leaving you out.

Me: So you are saying people won't have confidence in his ability to make strong decisions?

L 5: Yes sir – they will certainly not.

Most of the boys endorsed this sentiment and it was evident that they left no space for alternative masculinities. Kaufman (1999) asserts that while power enjoyed by the dominant masculinity give them privilege, some power can cause subordinate masculinities to experience pain, fear and alienation.

4.4 Masculinity and Work

Further insights into their perceptions of gender was elicited from the analysis of scenario one, which focused on role reversal, that is, the man does domestic chores and maintains the home, while the wife works. 81% of the boys expressed disapproval of this masculinity role and stated they would not be comfortable in this role. Masculinity defined in terms of work revealed traditional, stereotypical roles of men and women. When asked how learners felt about this masculinity role in the house, strong responses were forthcoming. The ‚real man‘ discussion surfaced yet again. This time it took on two dimensions. Some boys were non-judgmental and admired this man for putting his family first and being caring and responsible. To them he proved he is a real man. However, others felt a real man will not sit at home and be saddled with domestic chores as this threatens his very essence of manhood.

L 15: I think it makes him less of a man, sir, because every man in the community is known to be a provider. He is not expected to stay at home and do domestic chores. A woman is expected to do that. They would not take this man seriously because he is not a provider – he won't be taken seriously by other men because he is doing a woman's job.

L 13: I think if he is a real man, sir – he will not sit at home and look after a baby and do housework. A man must go out there and work.

L 14: Ai – he must not let this be like this – he must find a job.

While some boys admired this man for his role, they expressed reservations about performing this role themselves. Gender stereotyping was evident because boys were conscious of what society would think of them. It seems that society has conditioned these boys into thinking that domestic chores are for women only.

L 5: I admire him for his contribution to his house.

L 12: If he is a real man, he will adjust and get on with what he has to do. He won't worry about the community. He won't be taken down by the negatives of the community.

L 3: Practically I feel I respect him, but because of what society would say and think, it would make me feel awkward knowing my uncle is hanging out clothes. It would make me feel awkward because of the ideas society has. I personally don't think this makes him less of a man - I admire him.

There was tension between boys who admired this man for putting his family first, irrespective of societal stereotypes, and boys who felt that this man is compromising his masculinity. Boys spoke with multiple voices because while many admired their uncle for doing domestic chores, all but one stated they will not be comfortable doing domestic chores themselves. In their homes it is taken for granted that this is a job exclusively for women and girls.

L 3: There must be no rotation roster - a woman or girl does domestic work.

L 9: I won't be comfortable doing domestic chores.

L 3: Taking the person that I am, I won't be comfortable for this thing to go on like this.

L 1: I most certainly won't be comfortable in this role. Why should I be washing and cleaning?

A strong sentiment expressed is that a man's identity and masculinity is linked to real work outside the home. Domestic chores certainly did not count for real work for a real man. In fact, certain domestic chores were considered „taboos' and inappropriate for a man and a head of the household. Just one divergent voice emerged, but his support for domestic chores was conditional.

L 14: I will be comfortable only if my wife or other women still give me respect that I deserve, and if they, as women, still know their role and place.

While the divergent voice said he will be comfortable doing domestic chores, he was also very concerned about the threat to his masculinity in that there was a possibility of the women losing respect for him and looking at him as less of a man. He clearly wants to guard his masculinity by insisting that while he may do domestic chores, the woman is still subordinate to him and that her role and place is clearly defined. The condition attached to him doing domestic chores is spelt out very clearly - there must be no perceived threat to his masculinity.

Whereas the divergent voices received a lot of criticism for saying a man does not have to be powerful, or a leader or strong, this time the criticism was not as harsh. The only

proviso the majority stated was that the man working at home could not persist – he must work outside the home as a real man.

4.5 Threat to Masculinity

Disturbing threats to the traditional gender roles emerge when women start to earn money and become economically independent. Some boys expressed worries that women who earn their own money may start to see them as useless. The fear of loss of dignity was real. Economic independence was therefore perceived as a threat to their masculinity.

Me: Are you saying because you are not earning, she will look down on you?

L 4: Yes she'll maybe see me less of a man.

L 3: I also think there is another factor making us feel intimidated because women demand they can depend on us and if they cannot then they look at us less of a man and weak .

The fact that the man was not working and the women brought home the money, made no difference to who is the head of this home. The majority felt the man is the leader in the home and the women must be subordinated.

L 11: I think that although the man is doing domestic chores, but at the end of the day the head of the house is the man - so I think it is very important for the woman to listen to the man. I think the man is also in charge of finalising the decisions in the house because the children are also learning these things - that the man is the head of the house.

L 10: The man, Sir - definitely the man is in charge - he is the head.

L 16: In this situation even though this woman is the one providing for the family, but it's the man - he knows he is the head of the home - he must make the final decision because he is still the head and the woman is like the neck.

L 10: By a man not having a job does not mean a woman must have the upper hand. Sometimes you get that - when a woman provides they think they are queens - but strange queens because they want to play the role of kings.

Words by L 11 “so I think it is very important for woman to listen to a man”, as well as the head and neck imagery used by L 16, leave no doubt as to the position women must take at home. Most boys were adamant that regardless of the man’s economic and social status, he is still ‘king’ and that woman must play second fiddle. The minority divergent voices advocated equality and democracy in the home when they stated there should be discussion and consultation between the man and woman in the home. The implication is that the man and woman have equal power, but that the man should not exert dominance and superiority over the woman.

L 5: They can both share in decisions to be made - they must discuss things.

L 2: Yes, they must talk equally. The man must not do all the decisions himself.

The disapproving majority responded with a proviso: that when it comes to a final decision, it must be the man who makes it. This sentiment was expressed by both the Indian boys as well as most of the African boys. This kind of thinking is congruent with a study by Hadebe (2010) on Zulu masculinity, where he found that participants stated that a man should have authority, to have rights to decide what his wife and children should do in the household because a man has power over his family members.

4.6 Equality

Boys were asked their views on girls or women forming a lobby group demanding equal treatment, as well as promoting gender equality. Many boys struggled with the promotion of equality between men and women stating that this has resulted in the loss of respect, dignity, power and authority of men.

L 1: I really don't think this group is necessary because women have enough rights. They want to create more confusion. I don't support this. They must not go overboard.

L 10: They must know their places as women because sometimes sir you find that since they were given rights, they tend to get the upper hand, for example, if you have a quarrel with a girl – she can come and slap you and you can't do anything because if you slap her back, you are the one that is the perpetrator. They are demanding more. So, they think they free to do anything because they are getting the upper hand.

L 9: Well, they want everything sir.

L 7: Sir, girls must watch how they dress, behave and how many boyfriends they have – they must acknowledge all this

behaviour before they ask for more rights. Look at themselves and ask am I worthy of the boys' respect.

Boys expressed genuine fears that women are „overdoing it’ and it is now ‚payback’ time where women want to control men. Women pressing on for equality were clearly problematic for the boys who felt frustrated because their manhood was undermined, as well as threatened because of a loss of power.

L 12: Yes, now it is turning out like the women want to have control over me – they are pushing this thing too far now – it is like they want to be above us.

Me: What is your concern about this?

L 12: Well instead of solving the problem, it creates another problem. Because once they are above men, men will start fighting – they won't be happy about that.

L 15: Yes, I think woman are overdoing this – instead of trying to correct the past – I think woman are taking this as payback time - because in the past they were controlled and told what to do - now they want to do the same to men which is definitely not right.

L 6: I really think that they are overdoing it – look at our mothers - they don't mind doing those chores. They still love their husbands whether they get a beating or what.

L 1: I think the women are modernised and informed, but they are more concerned about their rights, not their responsibilities. They are definitely overdoing it because in

*any culture a woman is brought up by knowing her place –
not to expect more rights - no – this is just overdoing it.*

The risks of alternate masculinities were evident when only one boy voiced support for women pushing for equality. There was immediate disapproval from other boys who felt that a group that is a threat to their masculinity does not deserve their support. Therefore there was scathing criticism for the divergent voice that supported advocating equality for women. Most boys define their masculinity in opposition to women and girls. It is evident that boys who do not identify with the dominant masculinity are deemed as the ‚other’ or ‚not real men or boys’. It was commendable that the lone divergent voice was prepared to reconsider his traditional, stereotypic image of manhood and also to reshape his relationship with women and girls. This resulted in his masculinity being questioned as well as his allegiance to boys.

Boys: No we won't support this group.

L 5: We think he is also like a girl or woman.

*L 2: He is not man enough – he does not believe in himself as a
man.*

4.7 Women as Leaders

When asked about how they felt about women leaders in general, and more specifically a woman principal for their school, most boys stated that women are soft and emotional. Nevertheless, these traits had two dimensions. Firstly, some boys saw this softness as a positive factor for a woman leader, while the others saw this as a negative factor. Support for women leaders included comments such as:

*L 13: Sir, women have a soft spot for children, so it is fine if she
is a principal.*

*L 12: A woman can operate well with children like in the home.
So it is fine.*

*L 15: I think it is okay because a woman can understand
children well.*

Some boys perceived a woman's softness and emotions as a handicap when faced with difficult situations. They believed a woman's lack of an imposing physical presence and strength will lead to problems such as implementation of rules, disciplinary challenges, being unable to have a strong influence in school as well as being unable to exert influence on male staff. It was evident that they preferred a man because of his physical presence which in turn poses a threat to learners, thereby maintaining discipline in school. For most of these boys, a softly spoken woman is unable to ensure discipline and a smooth functioning school. This, according to the boys, could only be achieved by a macho man.

*L 3: Sir in a school like Kwa-Mashu, it has to be a man.
Especially in a mainstream school, you need a strong man
because the boys are difficult.*

*L 5/L 3: We regard women as being too soft – so the
implementation of rules will be a problem.*

*L 6: If there is a woman principal, then the deputy must
certainly be a man.*

Me: Why must this be?

L 6: So then if the boys are giving problems, there is a man to sort it out. A woman may talk softly – you must feel intimidated or scared for the principal.

L 1: A woman principal only believes in shouting whereas a male will do physical abuse.

Me: This is the “strong man” point you raised earlier?

L 1: Yes sir.

It is clear the traits of hegemonic masculinity strongly influence many young boys' perceptions. This was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. They clearly do not have confidence in women leaders who lack physical strength and macho. For them there is no space for emotions if you are to be a strong leader. This is regarded in no uncertain terms as a handicap.

L 3: Ai, no sir – their emotions get in the way.

L 5: Sir, I don't think women should be given those opportunities because the women – they let their emotions get the better of them. They are not realistic and because they get emotional they tend to make all the wrong choices. They expect to be given different treatment, so I don't think they should be given those choices.

The tension between culture and women leaders surfaced. The African boys seemed to believe the notion of male dominance and superiority is traditional and acceptable in Zulu culture, although this is clearly in conflict with Constitutional guarantees of gender equality. The two Indian boys also indicated that in their culture and ways of growing up, a man was in a position of superiority and dominance. It was the accepted norm in their

culture that the man is the head or leader. Boys seem to want to give preference to deeply held cultural and traditional beliefs, rather than embrace the notion of equality status granted to women by the Constitution.

L 10: We are mostly disciplined by our fathers, so it is not usual to have women who can discipline boys.

Me: Does this concept of women leaders clash with your culture?

L 5: Yes sir it does – because generally in our culture men are leaders.

L 14: In our African way, the male is the leaders – it all begins at home. Because we are accustomed that we as men must be the head of women, so it will be hard for us to accept – that is why I say I will feel bad because we are used to that.

Me: But in school you learnt about justice, democracy, equality and equal rights. How many of you boys still believe that a man is the better leader?

Nine boys responded in the affirmative. Moorosi (2007) asserts that cultural expectations are an impediment to women's advancement. She further argues that traditional stereotypes also associate school principalship with masculinity, a view that hampers women's career progression in education management. Attwell (2002) argues that men are struggling to adapt to the changing status of women and to redefine themselves in ways that maintain their sense of themselves as men while giving due regard to women's rights.

In contrast, just two divergent voices emerged. These voices that challenged entrenched cultural beliefs were not well received by the other boys.

It was reassuring to note that these boys recognised that culture can be used as a tool to treat women unfairly.

L 4: I believe, sir, you can get a tough woman to do the job. You can get a woman principal who is capable of disciplining. I would be okay working under a woman principal.

L 7: If she can do the job well, I don't mind working under her. Some women are good leaders. Some Africans say weird things about women which is not true.

Me: So some things said about women in your culture – you do not agree?

L 7: Yes sir – culture should not make us treat women unfairly.

4.8 Gender Violence

It was reassuring to hear the majority of boys were against gender violence. Many said a real man does not hit women, and there is no justification for hitting or abusing a woman. However, in stark contrast, some boys said there are times when a man is „forced’ to hit a woman.

L 10: By her being given rights – she tends to want to be the man of the house – want to rule – well I have show that I am the man.

L 1: ... then you have to use your hands on her – to show her I'm still here – I'm the man of the house. It is not right in any culture for a woman to stand up to a man.

L 4: These modern women nowadays – they know their rights and if you tell them something they suddenly want to ask for divorce or walk away, so I believe that laying your hands on a woman is still sometimes a solution. Sometimes violence makes her respect you - get her to look at you as her husband.

L 11: Well sir – you don't want to lose her – you want to be with her - but what if she is still doing wrong – so now you want her to get back on track – so now the thing you use is obviously like beating. That's why they call it shaya mentality.

L 6: Ai sir, when you just threaten a woman – she do the same thing all the time, therefore I will hit her.

It was disturbing to note that some boys thought that one can subordinate women through violence and thereby exert your dominance and superiority. If, for any reason, their masculinity was threatened in any way, violence was a mechanism to restore this. There is an assumption that the men have power and domination over women, and can use some violence to bring an apparently wayward subordinate back on track.

Still, as mentioned earlier, the majority of boys were very strong in their condemnation of gender violence. They stated that a man must never use violence as a means of control, and that if he does, he lacks communication skills. Another concern raised was the negative impact this violence has on children. The issue of culture was again raised. This

time most of the boys said that culture must not be used as an excuse to abuse women. Men who abuse women should be dealt with harshly by the law.

L 2: If you hit her, you are a failure as a man.

L 5: Ai sir, I would not lay a hand on a woman.

L 12: She must charge him because he will not only hit her, he will end up doing something worse like killing her.

L 12: I don't think hitting a woman is justified. At the beginning I said a real man is strong and I don't think a real man will hit a woman.

4.9 Gender Socialisation

I endeavoured to find out who and what factors played an instrumental role in shaping the perceptions of the boys. The initial questions focused on their earlier socialisation and later moved to equality in the family experience.

When asked who or what influenced their perceptions of gender equality, the majority stated it was dominant male figures in the family. Some of these perceptions are that boys come first, girls are to serve men and boys, domestic chores are for women and girls, a woman's position is subservient to men and, finally, a boy must be strong.

L 10: My understanding is through my father – he taught me about life and that, well – as people we were given positions – so it would be totally unacceptable for a woman to take a man's place - a man must be where he supposed to be and the same with a woman.

L 9: My father told me not to play with girls so I could be a strong boy.

Me: Was there a problem playing with girls?

L 9: Well, Sir, girls are soft and my father wanted me to be a very strong boy, so playing with girls was not allowed.

L 16: My granddad taught me I must be a good leader – he wanted to instil leadership characteristics in me.

Me: So why only in you and not the girls?

L 16: Because he thought it is the man – nature created us to be the head.

L 5: Even though my sisters are older, my father always gives me the advantage. When my mother is not there, I should be strong in the family and always be there for them.

L 4: My father raised me to believe we don't share equal rights with women because women tend to take over because you gave them the privilege and equality and then they want to, like to take over.

All but one boy stated that they did not do domestic chores while growing up. The following comments sum up most boys' feelings:

L 14: Girls should do the cleaning, etc. I feel it undermines me as a boy to wash and clean the house. I believe a man is

there to discipline – the other domestic responsibilities are for the woman.

L 4: Basically domestic work is for women.

The divergent voice stated that he cooks, washes and irons, much to the disbelief of other boys. The fact that he was a leader in school as well as a capable sportsman could possibly be the reason why eyebrows were raised at this admission. Many of the boys expressed disapproval and stated that this was not how they were raised. It was entrenched in their minds that masculinity is not congruent with doing domestic chores.

The next question focused on the issue of equality while growing up. The large majority recalled experiences where boys and girls received different treatment from family members. Boys received harsher punishment than girls because they were made to believe they are strong or a „man’. Boys were allowed to eat first while girls served them. Boys also enjoyed more freedom and privilege than girls. This was because girls needed more protection. Work at home was clearly differentiated. Domestic chores were for girls while work outside the house was for boys. Many boys grew up with the understanding that girls are subordinate, as is evidenced in the following quotes:

L 3: In places like family gathering the girls are required to bring us a bowl of water for us to wash our hands before we eat.

L 8: During a ceremony – boys eat the meat first while girls serve the boys.

L 10: It is like in our culture where the woman and girls bring water and food to the men while the men discuss issues.

L 4: Sir, in my family my father is very strict – in my family my sisters got up early to fetch water while my brothers still slept.

It is evident that the boys' earlier experience impacted on their perceptions. The Indian and African boys were expressing similar sentiments when it came to the way they were raised or socialised. Socialisation is the general process by which members of a cultural community or society pass on their language, rules, roles and customary ways of thinking and behaving to the next generation. This implies that young children acquire social competence through concerted efforts of adults (Edwards, et al., 2007).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Being a Man

The focus group discussion began with a general discussion of what it means to be a man or boy. For most of these boys, physical strength and a macho image was important in their understanding of being a man or boy. Although issues such as leadership, work responsibility and being a breadwinner emerged later, it was significant that the immediate response of most boys focused on the macho image as well as keeping emotions in check.

The boys took great care to emphasise their masculinity both in the focus group discussion as well as the individual interview. Their views resonate with the assertion by Adams and Govender (2008) who stated that a traditional masculine ideology proposes that men portray and maintain a specific social persona which reflects toughness, emotional invulnerability, heterosexual dominance, as well as avoidance of anything deemed feminine. Tharinger (2008) describes boys' idealised form of masculinity by which boys can be measured by themselves and by others, to determine the extent of their manliness. Some common elements are physical and intellectual strength as well as supremacy over those perceived as inferior. Connell (2005) describes "manly" men as men of action who are silent, emotionless and physically combative (and often violent). He voices concern that under this dominant construction of masculinity, boys act aggressively towards less aggressive or masculine boys, as well as women and girls.

The boys went to great lengths in terms of voicing their opinions as well as body language, to show their „manliness'. They wanted a clear message sent to others in the group that they are real men. Physical prowess is a central attribute underscoring high school masculinity. Some attributes are toughness, fighting and sexual talk (Kehler &

Frank, 2005). While highlighting the practice of hegemonic masculinity, Harris (1995) found that men and boys strive to conform to traits such as bravery and courage, being the breadwinner, being in control (of relationships and emotions), provider of money and status and being tough (not show emotions or cry). Morrell (2001) concurs when he asserts that for many school going boys, the physical performative aspect of masculinity is seen as the most acceptable and desirable way of being a male. It must be acknowledged that these boys are at an impressionable age and a crucial stage of their development, so being accepted by the group was significant. The question therefore arises as to how much of these boys' perceptions are what Edwards and Jones (2009) refer to as "performing masculinity". They found that society's expectations of being a man were narrow, rigid and limiting. Expectations included aspects such as aggression, being in control of emotions, being rational, strong and the breadwinner. These expectations were not just about who men or boys were supposed to be, but also who they couldn't be, such as feminine, vulnerable, shedding tears and expressing emotions. In response to these external societal expectations, participants in Edwards and Jones' study described putting on a performance so they would be seen as men. This performance was like a mask that they put on to cover up the ways they did not meet these expectations. The study further revealed that participants so deeply internalised society's messages that they often acted in ways that contradicted their own values without even being aware that they were doing this. Examples of falling short of society's expectations include objectifying or demeaning women and suppressing their own emotions. Frosh, et al. (2002) argue that boys „do' masculinity differently depending on who they are with. They may also express their masculinity and attitudes towards women and girls differently in different contexts. The authors found that young men and boys are restricted in making their own choices or expressing positive or non-stereotypic views about women and girls when they are in groups with other boys. Imms (2000) makes a similar claim when he asserts that boys who display sexist attitudes, a propensity for aggression, as well as a tendency to discredit all things deemed feminine, are merely performing an enactment of gender roles. While participants in my study valued hegemony based on physical strength, Sathiparsad (2006) found that participants contested and diminished the role of physical power in defining a man. The stereotypical notions of a man being strong and a

woman being weak were challenged. In other words, hegemony based on physical strength and power is not sufficient for successful manhood.

Boys in my study also voiced divergent views and did not place any currency on physical strength. They valued traits such as responsibility, respect, showing consideration and treating women well, as defining features of being men or boys. This resonates with Kehler & Martino's (2007) study which found that boys do have the capacity for problematising social relations of masculinity, as well as supporting a counter-hegemonic practice committed to interrogating gender oppression. Risman (cited in Connell, 2003) found that changes have occurred in men's practices within certain families, where there has been a conscious shift towards more equal sharing of housework and childcare. The writer refers to such families as "fair families". What emerged from her research was that the change in men's attitudes required a challenge to the traditional model of masculinity. As my study has shown, there are boys who are not passive recipients of gender norms, but who instead filter and construct their own meaning from them. Boys and men have the ability to question traditional views of gender equality, and often do (EGM Report, 2004). The majority of boys showed strong disapproval and even disbelief when these traits were mentioned. It was evident that hegemonic masculinity was entrenched in their thinking.

5.2 Boys will be Boys

Boys displaying traits of hegemonic masculinity, sexism or gender inequality are often referred to as "boys will be boys". Trimm (2009) argues that such "common sense" understandings have permeated public and even educators' perceptions of boys. However, both Kimmel (2000) and Trimm (2009) are very critical of such a viewpoint, arguing that such a view implies a sense of resignation and hopelessness. They further argue that this view implies that we should overlook the actions of boys, and there is nothing to make a fuss about, or that it might prove futile to do so. This "common sense" understanding of boys is fraught with danger (Trimm, 2009). Rather, Trimm argues that society and especially educators have a critical role to play in challenging the actions of

boys who perpetuate gender inequality and sexism. Boys are not pre-destined to be this way, and focusing on attitudes and behaviours of boys as well as challenging the dominant model of masculinity is an important way to deal with unequal gender relations as well as violence against women and girls (EGM Report, 2004). Dissenting voices in my study received strong disapproval from other participants. Perceived repercussion for dissenting voices was the threat of being overpowered by women, being labelled a „sissy’ or weak. While dissenting voices and experiences may be from a minority of young boys willing to go against the grain, it is important that their voices and experiences be acknowledge and supported as legitimate ways of being young men (Kehler & Frank, 2005).

5.3 Toxic Masculinity

Nevertheless, there are risks involved for young men who challenge hegemonic masculinity. As Kaufman (1999) points out, not all boys are powerful. Resisting dominant codes of masculinity within the school site is a precarious business (Trimm, 2009) while Kehler & Frank (2005) assert that there are tensions involved when young men resist conventions of high school hegemonic masculinity. As an example, boys who do not conform to the traits of hegemonic masculinity are labelled “wimps”, “nerds”, or “gays” (Harris, 1995). This emerged in my study when boys who advocated equality for women as well as treating them as equals, were labelled „sissy’, weak and not a real man. Expressing a more egalitarian view on gender equality received scorn from other boys who enacted a more aggressive masculinity. This resonates with the experience of Mbuyiselo Botha, a stalwart of the Sonke Gender Justice Organization, a progressive organization that lobbies for gender equality. He received severe criticism for advancing women’s rights and for “letting the side down”. He was accused of turning men into “softies”. He was told in no uncertain terms that “a man must be tough, and not told by a woman what to do” (Botha, 2010). Botha described these perceptions as a battle against, what he appropriately termed, toxic masculinity.

5.4 A Man's Job

While the majority of boys defined the classical notions of appropriate male behaviour as aggressive, macho and unemotional, a few mentioned putting others' needs first, serving, being responsible, treating others with respect and dignity, as well as doing domestic chores. The majority of boys were not in favour of a man or boy doing domestic chores since they were of the opinion that a real man does real work outside the home. Domestic chores were not regarded as appropriate work for a real man. It was considered a woman or girls' domain. Being defined as a real man with self-worth depended on him doing a "man's" job. These perceptions are congruent with findings by (Seidler, cited in Adams & Govender, 2008) who stated that by narrowly defining self-worth according to work, many unemployed men feel inadequate because they have not been able to be men in a way society expects them to be.

The findings in my study are consistent with research by Martin Wittenberg, a researcher at the University of Cape Town, who found that women tend to work considerably more than men, with single men appearing to be the biggest slackers. He argued that patriarchal traditions may be largely responsible for the apparent belief of the average young man that he was entitled to sit back while women did all or most of the work (Ferreira, 2008). Hadebe (2010) also found that men cling onto their cultural roots, which promote individualist status or patriarchy over the household affairs, while Chisholm (2001, cited in Moorosi, 2007) also affirms that in South Africa men hardly take full domestic responsibilities, while women more often seem to be grappling with issues of career and family at the same time.

5.5 Ideology of Headship

For the majority of boys there was little contesting that the male is the undisputed head of the home. It made little or no difference if the man worked or not. The woman's economic contribution to the home was irrelevant. Mogosetsi (2003) asserts that in the

traditional African culture, patriarchy was at the core of the family life. Men generally were the unquestioned heads of the family, as well as the leaders, authority figures and decision makers. Boys felt very strongly that a woman must assume a subordinate position in the home, stating categorically that the man is in charge and the woman must listen to him. Hadebe (2010) found that men struggled with the promotion of equality between men and women, stating that has resulted in a loss of respect and authority of men especially over household affairs. Heading the household entailed decision-making, enforcing rules and providing for the family. This contention was, however, challenged by some boys who emphasised that a woman should be afforded equality in the decision making and leadership roles. These dissenting voices were questioning and resisting the sacrosanct tradition of patriarchal positioning. They were prepared to remove the cultural cataracts that so often prevent boys and men from examining their culture and how it contributes to gender inequality. As Matsunyane (2008) asserts, some traditions are not worth keeping because they are outdated, sexist, homophobic, inconvenient and downright barbaric. The majority were, however, quick to resist, insisting that the headship role belonged to the man, irrespective whether he worked or not. Even if the woman was given some „degree’ of equality, this should undoubtedly be under the overarching authority and headship of the man. This contention merely reinforced support for conservative gender roles as well as social and cultural values. The general construction of women in positions of subservience is encapsulated in statements such as “so I think it is very important for a woman to listen to a man” and “the man is still the head and the woman is like the neck”.

The boys were very firm in their support for the ideology of male headship, indicating an acknowledgement of the father as the patriarch. The man was considered to have unchallenged power. Patriarchy is used to indicate how relations of power are balanced in favour of men, and plays a powerful role in promoting hegemonic behaviour (Sathiparsad, 2006). It has kept many women in a position of powerlessness and subservience. Coetzee (2001) argues that African culture seems to be deeply influenced by the idea of the supremacy of the fathers, and in turn patriarchy which enables men to dominate women. Working women who are economically independent are perceived as a

threat to traditional gender roles. Some boys expressed fears that economically independent women may look down on them and regard them as weak and less of a man, thereby threatening their masculinity. As mentioned earlier, many boys linked a man's role with headship and economic provider. A woman contributing to the economy of the household has implications for the man in his position as head. The statement "women demand they can depend on us, and if they cannot then they look at us less of a man and weak", encapsulates the participant's fears of marginalisation in the home, as well as being dislodged from his role as economic provider and leader. Whereas young men ought to be the providers of economic stability in the home, many seem to be recipients, a position that the majority of boys strongly resented. They were adamant that a man's economic disempowerment is a serious threat to his masculinity. These perceptions may be linked to identity problems. As stated earlier, if social definitions of masculinity include being the breadwinner and being "strong", then men and boys may be offended by women's professional progress because it makes men seem less worthy of respect (Connell, 2003). Furthermore, men and boys may resist gender equality because of "patriarchal dividend" (Connell, 2003). This means that men and boys may have an expectation of informal benefits, such as receiving care and domestic benefits from women in the family, as well as benefiting materially in terms of higher income. As Sathiparsad (2006) writes, the rapid social, political and economic transformation has led to the blurring of boundaries of gender roles and has led to the uncertain and changing positions of men. Mogosetsi (2003) further highlights the dilemma of men when he argues that black men feel threatened in their roles as family leaders; they feel they have lost control of their families as well as experiencing a sense of worthlessness as women are taking up responsibilities which were traditionally the domain of men.

5.6 Equality

Equality for women and girls was perceived as threat to their very manhood and the majority of boys expressed great frustration of women campaigning for equal rights. The socio-economic and constitutional changes in the country has had an impact on how boys perceive themselves as well as their future roles. Whereas men and boys earlier assumed

a privileged position in which they assumed superiority and dominance over women and girls, the Constitutional changes have now guaranteed equality for formerly marginalized groups. This means that women and girls can now share the privileged position which results in boys and men feeling displaced and threatened. This perception was evident in my study when participants expressed sentiments such as women going “overboard”, wanting the “upper hand”, “they want everything”, “overdoing it” and “payback time”. Boys’ assumptions of dominance and superiority appear to be linked to girls’ subordinate and subservient positions. When girls are assertive and fail to accommodate boys’ assumptions of dominance and superiority, boys seem to feel frustrated and threatened (Attwell, 2002). Koki Muli (2004) explains gender equality as: “The equal valuing by society of women and men by removing discrimination barriers and making resources equally available to women and to men to enable them to realize their full potential”.

Boys were fearful that equality would mean being controlled by women and one participant even used culture as a reason to justify why men should be at the top. Another boy expressed a genuine concern that if women are above men, some men may react violently. The tension, fears and insecurity felt, are the experiences of “disappointed” men (Hadebe, 2010). In view of the high levels of gender violence in South Africa, boys’ expression of insecurity should be taken seriously. Mogosetsi (2003) asserts that in the traditional African family and community, women played material roles. Women’s responsibilities were mainly around the home doing domestic work in line with family and community expectations. Women were expected to be submissive. However, the Constitution afforded women equal rights as well as the right to dignity and respect. Some men, as well as boys in this study, found this problematic and a threat to their masculinity.

Thenjiwe Mtintso, South Africa’s ambassador to Italy, in an interview, also expressed concern about men and boys’ reluctance to accept women as equals. She stated that the faster we were going in terms of gender equality, the more challenges men were facing. Many men were not ready to be led by women, not ready to have their women earning more, not ready to transfer leadership roles to women. Unfortunately, violence was a

response. Men and boys' frustrations combine against women (Gutierrez, 2009). Another prominent figure concerned about gender inequality is Angie Motsekga, Minister of Basic Education, as well as the ANC Women's League President. She states that although there are laws to ensure women are not discriminated against, much still needs to be done to ensure total emancipation. She argues for gender inequality and patriarchy-related social ills to be part of a transformation agenda (Miya, 2010).

5.7 Women in Leadership

Women in leadership roles, particularly in the role of principal, evoked a mixed reaction from the boys. The issues of women being soft and emotional had a positive as well as negative connotation. Some of the boys perceived women's gentle nature and being emotional as an asset to their leadership, especially regarding children. However, for other boys, these attributes were considered a serious flaw because they believed it impeded one's ability to be an efficient principal. Doubts were raised as to the woman's ability to maintain discipline and a functioning school. Also, boys felt that for a woman to implement rules would be problematic because these may be resisted by males. Boys were of the view that in their culture male leadership is the reified, taken for granted status, and therefore there was tension created in any reversal of this status. It was stated that boys are generally disciplined by their fathers or a male. It is a male who is the leader at home, and boys were adamant that a man must be the head of a woman. This is the situation that boys were accustomed to at home. For many of the boys, cultural expectations and traditional gender stereotyping does not allow them to view women as efficient leaders.

Nevertheless, the dissenting voices, again in the minority, rejected culture as a reason to treat women unfairly. They were prepared to acknowledge women as good and capable leaders and would not mind working under their leadership. What emerged was that these boys were prepared to critically evaluate cultural expectations and not allow these to cloud their perceptions. Oraegbunam (2006) asserts that man is the creator of culture, and therefore man has the capacity to effect cultural change, so as to embrace human rights,

which include gender equality. He argues that obnoxious cultural practices which tend to relegate women to lower positions, need to be critically re-examined. The South African Human Rights Commission also fingered cultural traditions as an impediment to gender equality, notwithstanding the most progressive Constitution for Gender Equality (SAPA, 2008).

As a comprise, one boy suggested that in the event of a woman being principal, the deputy must be a man because you need a “strong” man to deal with issues like boys giving problems. Other boys concurred, and it was clear they lacked confidence in a woman’s ability to deal decisively with male students and staff. They believed this could only be effectively done by a strong, macho male. It was evident that these traits of hegemonic masculinity were highly valued by some boys.

These perceptions are in keeping with Okhakhume’s (2008) argument that traditionally, workplace institutions were regarded as having masculine value because it involved aggressiveness, competition and achievement. Before women can gain their status in the workplace, they may have to embrace and express those masculine characteristics. She argues further that because social orientation towards leaders or managers is male, successful women must push hard and strike to be independent, even though they may be seen as tough and bitchy (Ibid). This is challenged by feminists who are critical of the masculine nature of the workplace and women’s exclusion. They argue that these masculine characteristics should be challenged.

The boys lack of confidence in women as principals or leaders, resonates with findings by Niemann (2002) who states that despite legislation, a large number of women in education are still subject to sexism and unfair discrimination, experiencing obstacles in performing tasks because of perceptions staff hold of women, such as women being dependant, passive, not aggressive, emotional, not competitive and lacking in confidence. The following experiences of women in the Niemann study provide insight regarding sexism and unfair discrimination:

1. *In my school boys don't have any respect for women – they just look at you and don't respond. There are also male staff members who have no respect.*
 2. *I am often afraid to be alone with the bigger boys. There are so many incidents of gang rape.*
 3. *My male colleagues are always telling jokes in the staff room which make fun of women and portray them as being stupid and the worst part is that I don't know how to react in such situations.*
 4. *I really don't know how to handle this type of sexist treatment I get. I don't know what to do when men attack me emotionally.*
 5. *During an interview it was suggested to me that women are generally over emotional and I was asked whether I think it is possible for such a person to be a successful principal.*
- (Niemann, 2002, p 178.)

Such fossilized male attitudes are clearly typical of the long history of male domination in South Africa. Both Moorosi (2007) and Zulu (2003) identify sex role stereotypes and broader cultural expectations as a social barrier to women's advancement. Society ascribes characteristics such as aggressiveness, assertiveness and independence for males, and submissiveness, dependence and being emotional for women. As a result of these commonly held beliefs or gender stereotypes, certain careers or roles functions are deemed suitable for either women or men. Zulu (2003) asserts that our gender stereotyping affects our perceptions. Therefore, in a patriarchal society like South Africa, and in institutions dominated by strong hegemonic masculinities, it is hardly surprising that women are clustered at the bottom of the hierarchy and almost non-existent at the top (Zulu, 2003, p.99).

5.8 Gender Violence

Violence against women generated much discussion and diverse responses from the participants. The majority of boys, even those who earlier did not support equality for women, expressed condemnation for violence against women and girls. They

acknowledge that beating a woman or girl was in no way justified, and in fact a man who beats a woman is regarded as a failure. Participants' distancing themselves from gender violence is reflected in the statement "I would not lay a hand on a woman". Boys spoke with multiple voices in that while earlier supporting patriarchal positioning, they now insisted that a man has no right to enact violence against women, in his family or outside his family. They also insisted that culture should not be used as a tool to justify violence against women. The following responses exemplify the counter discourse contesting the dominant hegemonic ideology of violence or aggression:

"If you hit her you are a failure as a man."

"I don't think hitting a woman is justified. At the beginning I said a real man is a strong and I don't think a real man will hit a woman."

In view of the high levels of the gender based violence in South Africa (Hadebe, 2010) such views expressed by boys are welcome. While many of the boys earlier valued traits of hegemonic masculinity such as strength and aggression, they now made it abundantly clear that these qualities should not be used to enact violence against women and girls. As previously mentioned, this topic generated much discussion and whereas boys were divided on previous issues, even showing scorn towards divergent voices, they now were united in their condemnation of gender violence. Some boys even went further to mention the detrimental effects gender violence has on the children in particular. They felt strongly that the perpetrators must be dealt with very harshly. There was a complete contrast in emotions as compared to the discussions on previous issues. There was no defending patriarchy, culture or the headship of the man. Some of the boys spoke with such passion that I got the impression they were talking from personal experience. Nevertheless, on ethical considerations, I did not steer the discussion to personal experience.

However, a few of the boys expressed the view that while generally not supporting gender violence against women, there were instances when violence was necessary and appropriate. Views were expressed that with the rights afforded to women, it may sometimes be necessary to use violence to show who the man in the house is. Also violence may force the woman to show respect to the man. One boy was worried about “losing” the woman and advocated violence as a necessity for getting her back on track, while another stated violence was the last resort if verbal threats fail to achieve desired results. There was vociferous scorn and disdain from all the other boys who refused to buy into this simplistic reasoning that tried to justify the occasional violence against women.

Such views expressed by boys needs to be challenged vigorously. It is evident that women’s rights is regarded as a threat to one boy and therefore violence is regarded as necessary to preserve his masculinity, echoing Bhana’s (2007) observation that most violence is committed by males and thus can be regarded as a violent expression of masculinity. The need for the boy or man to be in control in a relationship emerged, and this merely reinforced earlier discourses relating to prevailing patriarchal notions about a man’s entitlement to a woman, as well as asserting authority in their relationships with women (Sathiparsad, 2006). What was evident in the discussions was that these dissenting voices did not perceive the occasional violence against women as problematic. Rather it was justified as “normal” or as a means of discipline and correction. Such perceptions can be viewed against findings in the EGM Report (2004), which assert that many men and boys come to believe that violence against women is part of masculinity, and that subordinating and undervaluing is a mark of manhood. Whether these perceptions are deeply rooted in custom, religion, tradition or culture, they can never be allowed to be normalised. It calls for an interruption and challenge, as the majority of the boys endeavoured to do. Gender-based violence should be regarded and tackled as a violation of basic human rights and a manifestation of gender inequality (EGM Report, 2004).

5.9 Early Socialisation

The boys' earlier socialisation has impacted on their perceptions regarding gender and gender equality. Both the Indian and African boys regarded the father or in his absence, some other dominant male figure in the family, as the one who most influenced their understandings of gender equality or inequality. What emerged is that the Indian boys and African boys were socialised in a similar way and had similar experiences and influences in their upbringing. Boys and men were perceived to be natural leaders. This assumption was not contested because this was how things were for as long as the boys could remember. Leadership skills were taught only to boys in the family because boys were perceived to be natural leaders. What also emerged was that boys enjoyed preferential treatment even though girls were older in the family. Adult men in the family had a profound influence on boys' perceptions of gender and gender equality. Connell (2005) maintains that masculine culture does not spontaneously erupt in adulthood; rather gender role socialisation begins at birth. Therefore parents and significant others become facilitators of behaviour that conform to approved ideologies. In the case of the boys, adult males played a significant role in their lives. This is consistent with Adams & Govender (2008) finding that in a father-son relationship, the father exercise a significant degree of influence in his son's life.

Boys stated that their fathers taught them to be tough and to achieve this, playing with girls was forbidden because girls were perceived as soft. As mentioned earlier, traits are learned rather than being a spontaneous occurrence. Showing toughness, repressing emotions and dominating women and girls are learned traits. Being hardened into a man was learned at an early age. Also boys were taught to be leaders because this was considered natural. It is evident that from an early age, these boys were taught to view girls differently. The seed of hegemonic masculinity and inequality were being sown at a very early age. This is summed up in a boy's response: "My father raised me to believe we don't share equal rights with women".

The majority of boys stated they did not do domestic chores as this was regarded as a girl's or woman's duty. They felt that doing such work undermined their masculinity and they were supported by their fathers in their stance. They were therefore very surprised when a leader in school admitted that he does chores like cooking, sweeping and washing dishes. The lone voice expressed pride in his domestic contribution, while the others continued to express disdain. For the other boys it was taken for granted girls would take care of domestic chores. Doing domestic chores did not fit in with the macho image of a young man.

Treatment afforded to boys and girls differed significantly. Boys alluded to preferential treatment. They were given more voice and enjoyed more freedom than girls. Boys expressed the view that a girl's place was at home. These responses were a reflection of the feminine-masculine oppositions where being a girl meant an internal focus on the home while being male involved an external focus on the outside world (Sathiparsad, 2006). Girls' subordination extended to girls taking the role of serving boys and men. Boys were accustomed to girls fetching water, serving food to boys and men, and generally waiting upon men and boys, especially at family functions. There was distinct hierarchical positioning which favoured boys and men and rendered women and girls subservient. The upbringing of the majority of boys indicated the overarching perception that the superiority of men and boys must be recognised and respected.

CHAPTER SIX

LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Limitations of the Study

This has been a relatively small-scale research project conducted in a secondary school in an urban area, and is therefore restricted in terms of its transferability to other contexts or settings or to the general population of urban adolescent males. Also, the research required interpretation, and therefore it must be acknowledged that interpretation can be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher.

One cannot say with absolute certainty that the boys' responses were truthful, untruthful or even exaggerated (Sathiparsad, 2006). In the focus group interview it was possible that boys were playing up to others, therefore this process may not have been a true reflection of what boys actually believed or did at an individual level. To counteract these limitations, individual interviews were conducted with six boys. While this method is also no guarantee for honest responses, the boys may have been more truthful since they were not playing up to an audience in a group setting.

6.2 Implications for Further Research

This study demonstrated that adolescent boys' perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism, as well as masculinity, are part of a complex and contested domain (Sathiparsad, 2006), which justifies the need for future research programmes that will provide opportunities for adolescent boys to re-negotiate the dominant norms of masculinity. This research was conducted with adolescent boys in an urban secondary school context. Future research can investigate the attitudes of rural adolescent males, providing a fuller

picture of the adolescent boys' views on gender, gender equality and sexism. In this way a rich body of research can be developed, and more adequate explanations offered, as well as devising intervention strategies to interrupt and challenge sexism and gender inequality.

6.3 Conclusion

My study found a majority of boys voiced consistent support for a dominant ideology of masculinity. Also, although in the minority, a diversity of masculine attitudes and perceptions were expressed. These diverse voices supported more equitable gender relations. The overarching conclusion drawn from this study is that while the majority of boys display and support dominant forms of masculinity, there were boys who displayed alternative forms of masculinity.

Most of the boys displayed sexist attitudes and expressed views that did not foster gender equality, which was perceived as a threat to their masculinity. Patriarchal practices and the subordination of women, including male headship and leadership, reflect the values which boys endorse. Cultural values and beliefs are a reflection of the boys' earlier socialisation and these have clearly impacted on the boys' perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism. While growing up, boys were accorded more freedom and privileges than girls, who were expected to perform domestic duties. Boys assume that power and privilege for them is the norm, while girls are subordinate to boys. Boys and girls therefore act out the way they were socialised at home and the community.

What was reassuring, however, was that while most boys aligned themselves with hegemonic masculinity, there were a few who were prepared to critically reflect on masculinity and challenged traditional norms, including cultural norms. They were amenable to new ways of thinking, and advocated relating to women and girls in non-oppressive ways, indicating that there are indeed boys who desire to distance themselves from practices that are harmful to women and girls.

Connell (2003), asserts that the widespread belief that men and boys cannot change their ways, and that “boys will be boys”, and sexism, aggression, and violence are “natural” to men and boys, and are an obstacle to gender reform. On the contrary, Connell (Ibid) maintains that there are a diversity of masculinities and that boys and men do have a “capacity for equality”. Research in British schools by Mac and Ghaill (1994) corroborates this when they found that boys do encounter alternative models of masculinity which include equal and respectful relations with girls. Boys capacity for equality has tremendous value in that it would enhance their lives and relationships with other people (Kehler & Martino, 2007), while Jeftha (2006) argues that by challenging hegemonic masculinity, and giving greater exposure to alternative masculinities, it may lead to a decrease in gender based violence as well as other forms and consequences of gender inequality.

However, as is evident in this study, boys who embrace alternative discourses of masculinity risk being scorned and marginalized. Robinson (2005) found that many young men feared being ridiculed and alienated if they engage in alternative performances of masculinity. It is therefore imperative that such boys get support from parents, educators and the community. Connell (2003) points out that when boys interact with adults and peers who reinforce alternative ways of being a man, boys are more likely to be flexible in their perceptions about the roles of men and women. If we wish to interrupt the obnoxious practice of sexism and gender inequality, we need to encourage men and boys to think, reflect and act in new ways and to reconsider traditional versions of being a man. They need to reshape their relationships and perceptions of women and girls. Challenging the dominant model is one of the main ways to deal with unequal gender relations. In this way boys and men are viewed not as part of the problem, but rather as part of the solution. Connell (2003) strongly advocates involving men and boys in strategies for creating a non-violent and gender equal society. Men and boys are important agents for changing attitudes, behaviours, and power relations. Men and boys have merits, capacities and attitudes that can be utilised to positively influence gender power relations. Such men and boys need support and encouragement.

This study has found that most boys favoured an alignment with the dominant discourse of masculinity, with its attendant traits of sexist attitudes, gender inequality and unequal power relations. However, the emergence of alternative discourses to the dominant model of masculinity in the study signifies hope for a positive change in gender relations in society.

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APPENDIX 1

Ethical Clearance



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

30 SEPTEMBER 2009

MR. C JOSEPH (206521856)
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Dear Mr. Joseph

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0656/09M

I wish to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been granted full approval for the following project:

“An investigation of grade 10 and 11 boys’ perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism in a Secondary School”

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

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

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Collings".

.....
PROFESSOR STEVEN COLLINGS (CHAIR)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Ms. SB Sader)
cc. Ms. R Govender

APPENDIX 2

Permission to Interview Learners and Educators



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO

Tel: 033 341 8610
Fax: 033 341 8612
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

228 Pietermaritz Street
PIETERMARITZBURG

INHLOKHOVISI

Imibuzo:
Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

PIETERMARITZBURG

Reference: Inkomba:
0042/2009

HEAD OFFICE

Date:
Usuku: 03 July 2009

MR C JOSEPH
PO BOX 8132
CUMBERWOOD
3235

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.
2. Educators' programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.
5. Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.
6. A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.
7. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **An investigation of grade 10 and 11 Boy's perceptions of gender, gender equality and sexism in a Secondary school**

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

RESOURCES PLANNING DIRECTORATE: RESEARCH UNIT
Office No. G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3201

APPENDIX 3

Letter of Consent: School Principal and School Governing Body

The Principal / SGB

Dear Sir

I am presently studying towards a M.Ed. in Social Justice Education. As part of my course I have to complete a research project. My research is around the issues of gender, gender equality and sexism. I need the permission of both the Principal and SGB to complete my research at the school using grade 10 and 11 boy learners. The reason for the choice of school and participants is accessibility because I teach grade 10 and 11 learners at the school. During the research process, I will not use teaching time but use time after school or during breaks. Attached is a copy of my interview schedule.

I wish to make it known that participation in this project is voluntary with participants being free to leave the project at any time they wish to without fear of any consequences. At all times I will protect the anonymity and confidentiality of learners participating in the project.

This project is being done with the knowledge of my supervisor – Ms S.B. Sader from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her contact number is 033 260 6148. I look forward to your favourable response.

Yours in education

.....

Mr C. Joseph

APPENDIX 4

Consent Form to Parents

Date:

Dear Parent

I, Mr C. Joseph, am presently conducting research as part of my Masters Degree in Social Justice. My research focuses on issues of gender, sexism and gender equality among a group of boys in Grade 10 and 11. In order for me to get this information I will be asking a these boys questions on their perceptions and feelings on these issues. I therefore require your permission to allow your child to participate in this study. Please be assured that your child's anonymity is assured, and participation is voluntary. Furthermore, your child is free to withdraw at any time without fear of any consequences and all information is strictly confidential. Attached is a copy of my interview schedule. The study is being conducted with the permission of the Principal and School Governing Body.

Thank you.

.....

Mr C. Joseph

Consent Form

IParent/Guardian of
in Grade will/will not allow my child/ward to participate in the study.

Parent Signature

Date:

.....

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What do you understand about being a boy or a man?
2. While you were growing up, what did you learn about being a boy?
3. Were girls and boys treated the same in your family? What, if any, was the difference that you remember?
4. Whose responsibility is the domestic chores at home? Explain.
5. Do you believe a man should have more power or should men and women have equal power? Explain your answer.
6. Women are taking up jobs that were done by men. Women are being presented with equal opportunities. How do you feel about this?

APPENDIX 6

SITUATED SCENARIOS

Sexism

Scenarios

- 1. Your uncle has lost his job. His wife works and earns a salary. However, they cannot afford the domestic help. Therefore your uncle does the household duties like cleaning, laundry, washing, cooking and also taking care of the two young children.**

How do you feel about your uncle's role in the home?

Do you believe this role makes him any less than a man? Explain.

Who would you say is the head of this home? Explain.

Would you be comfortable in such a role? Why?

- 2. There is a girls group at school that undertakes to promote the interests of women and girls. They hold protest marches against sexism, violence against girls and demand that boys and men treat them equally and with respect. They want more leadership roles in school and also plan to name and shame boys and male educators who treat women and girls unfairly. They plan to encourage other schools to do the same.**

Do you think such a group is necessary in schools? Why?

Do you support such a group in school? Explain.

What do you think about boys who support and even join this group?

Some men think these girls are "overdoing it". What is your opinion about this?

- 3. The local school has got a new woman principal after the previous male principal retired. While some community members were happy, many were**

not. Some men commented: “the community needs a strong man for this tough job” and some male educators said: “I can’t be headed by a woman”.

How do you feel about being headed by a woman? Explain.

Do you believe women are capable of doing the tough job of principal?

What is your opinion of the comments made by the men?

Can you easily accept instructions from a woman? Does it in any way clash with your beliefs/culture?

Women are being offered more and more study bursaries. How do you feel about this?

- 4. David is a policeman and considers his career a success. However, at home, he often gets very angry and is violent towards his wife as well as verbally abusing her. He blames it on stress and tells his friends that sometimes a woman deserves a beating to get her on track.**

David offers two reasons for being abusive towards his wife. Do you think these are justifiable? Why?

Do you believe that sometimes a woman “deserves it” when a man beats her?

Explain.