UNDERSTANDING MASCULINITY FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Understanding of masculinity has been largely approached from Western epistemology which universalises the conception of gender. However, different societies have different ways of organising gender roles which can contribute to a better understanding of masculinity such that we can begin to address gender inequalities holistically. This study focuses on understanding masculinity from an African perspective. It pays attention to factors such as poverty, upbringing, culture and generational differences that shape varied experiences and conduct among men. The study used qualitative research methods to collect data. The researcher spent six weeks in the field, conducted five in-depth interviews, and two focus group discussions with ten participants, and used participant observation to collect data. In this study, the data analysis employed a thematic coding process informed by theoretical perspectives on masculinity and post-colonialism.

The findings reveal that young men's understanding of masculinity is influenced by both Western definitions and related concepts like gender and patriarchy. This highlights the complexity of South African masculinities and their potential to influence violent behaviours toward women and other men. The study concludes that African masculinity is multifaceted, reflects individual socio-economic conditions and impacts behaviour and the assertion of masculinity. There is thus a need for further academic research that addresses the complexities of South African masculinity in the post-apartheid era, emphasising the importance of understanding these complexities to grasp how masculinity is asserted and what its societal impact is.

KAKARETSO

Tlhaloso ya bonna e tlhagisitswe thata go tswa mo epistemology ya Bophirima e e dirang gore kgopolo ya bong e nne ya lefatshe lotlhe. Le fa go ntse jalo, ditšhaba tse di farologaneng di na le ditsela tse di farologaneng tsa go rulaganya ditiro tsa bong tse di ka thusang gore go tlhaloganngwe botoka gore banna ke bomang le gore re kgone go simolola go bua ka go sa lekalekane ga bong gotlhelele. Thutopatlisiso eno e bua thata ka go tlhaloganya bonna go ya ka pono ya SeAforika. E ela tlhoko dilo tse di jaaka lehuma, tsela e motho a godisitsweng ka yone, setso le go farologana ga dikokomana tse di bopang maitemogelo a a farologaneng le boitshwaro jwa banna. Thutopatlisiso e dirisitse mekgwa ya patlisiso ya boleng go kokoanya tshedimosetso. Mo dibekeng di le thataro tse ke di feditseng ke le mo lefelong la dipatlisiso, ke ne ka tshwara dipotsotherisano tse di tseneletseng di le tlhano, dipuisano tse pedi tsa ditlhopha tse go tlotliwang thata ka tsone le batsayakarolo ba le lesome, le batho bao ba elang tlhoko go tsaya tshedimosetso. Ke ne ka dirisa mokgwa wa go sekaseka tshedimosetso ka go tlhagisa kgang nngwe le nngwe mme ka dirisa mokgwa wa bonna le wa pele ga nako ya bokoloni jaaka letlhomeso la tiori.

Diphitlhelelo di bontsha gore tsela e banna ba basha ba tlhaloganyang bonna ka yone e tlhotlhelediwa ke ditlhaloso tsa Bophirima le dikgopolo tse di amanang le bong le go nna tlhogo ya lotso. Se se gatelela go raraana ga bong jwa banna ba Aforika Borwa le bokgoni jwa bone jwa go tlhotlheletsa boitshwaro jwa tirisodikgoka kgatlhanong le basadi le banna ba bangwe. Thutopatlisiso e konotela ka gore bonna jwa Seaforika bo na le dikarolo di le dintsi, bo bontsha maemo a loago le ikonomi ya motho mme bo ama boitshwaro le tlhomamiso ya bonna. Ka jalo go na le tlhokego ya patlisiso e nngwe ya seakatemi e e buang ka mathata a bonna jwa Aforika Borwa mo nakong ya morago ga tlhaolele, go gatelela botlhokwa jwa go tlhaloganya mathata a gore bonna bo tlhomamisiwa jang le gore seabe sa jone mo setšhabeng ke eng.

ISIFINGQO

Ukuqonda ubudoda kuye kwakhulunywa kakhulu ngolwazi nemigomo yenkolelo yeqiniso elilungisiwe lapho amanyuvesi ecabanga ngobulili. Kodwa, imiphakathi eyahlukene inezindlela zayo zokuhlela izindima zobulili ezingaba nomthelela ekuqondeni kangcono ubudoda kangangokuthi singakwazi ukuqala ukubhekana ngokungalingani kobulili ngokuphelele. Loluncwaningo lugxile ekuqondeni ubudoda ngokombono wase-Afrika. Inaka izici ezinjengobumpofu, indlela esikhuliswe ngayo amasiko kanye nokwehluka kwezizukulwane ezakha ulwazi nokuziphatha okwahlukene phakathi kwamadoda. Ucwaningo lusebenzisa izindlela zocwaningo olusezingeni eliphezulu ukuqoqa imininingwane. Emasontweni ayisithupha engiwachithe ensimini, ngenze izingxoxo ezimbili zamaqembu engigxile kuwo nabayishumi, kanye nokubheka kwababambe iqhaza ukuze ngiqonde idatha. Ngisebenzise indlela enesihloko ukuhlaziya idatha kanye nezindaba zomlando njengezinhlaka.

Okutholiwe kuveza ukuthi ukuqonda kwezinsizwa ngobudoda kuwumthelelal wezincazelo zaseNtshonalanga ngobulili kanye nokubonwa kwamadoda engaphezulu kwabesifazane. Lokhu kuqgamisa inkimbinkimbi yabesilisa baseNingizimu Afrika kanye namandla abo ukuba nomthelela ekuziphatheni okunodlame kubantu besifazane namanye amadoda. Lolucwaningo luphethe ngokuthi ubudoda base-Afrika bunezimo eziningi, bubonisa izimo zezenhlalo nezomnotho zomuntu ngamunye futhi zinomthelela ekuziphatheni kanye nokugomela ubudoda. Ngakho-ke kunesidingo sokuthi kuqhutshekwe nocwaningo lwezemfundo olubhekana nobunzima bobudoda baseNingizimu Afrika esikhathini esenzeke ngemuva kobandlululo, okugcizelele ukubaluleka kokuqonda lezi zinkimbinkimbi ukuze kuqondwe ukuthi ubudoda bugonyelwa kanjani nokuthi uyini umthelela wako emphakathini.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Why masculinity?

In August 2011, I was dressed in a blue cardigan, blue jeans, a white tank top and sneakers for a bowling outing with friends from my strict Anglican school together with a few new acquaintances we had made at a recent social gathering with students from other schools, often mixed or boys' schools. Arriving at the mall, I noticed one of the tall figures; one of the new friends we had made. It was all new to most of us, mingling with boys and having friends of different genders. We talked, bowled, and watched a movie. The following Monday at school a rumour spread that I was seen interacting with different boys, and I was now labelled 'loose'. One girl who had been friendly towards me suddenly turning unfriendly, all because of the story that I was seen with a 'lot' of boys having good moments at an outing. On the other hand, the boys we had spent time with were celebrated and described as 'players'. This rumour about me and being labelled as 'loose' dented my reputation for my entire stay in the school, and things were never the same.

What started as a rumour, was followed by changed attitudes I received in the school. Most girls who walked the ancient hallways in brown polished shoes and blue uniforms who looked like me would not even greet me. As I took a step back, I noticed other girls going through similar experiences. In all the outings that followed, groups of girls would go out and come back to whisper in corners about what they had done. On the other hand, the boys after the same outings would come back walking like heroes as stories of what happened in the outings circulated. Boys had the world in the palms of their hands; their behaviours were the norm and celebrated while we remained the butt jokes. The jury (our schoolmates) decided that we as girls were not free to enjoy the outing by interacting with anyone we felt comfortable with, irrespective of gender. The boys, however, were allowed to do and interact with whoever they wanted to and would be celebrated. These school experiences at school were the beginning of my reality that men seem to be permitted to do as they please.

My curiosity about the differences in the consequences of the actions of boys and girls arose around this time in my life. I wondered how our behaviours in various spaces contribute to how we are treated in life. Furthermore, why our gender determines what we can and cannot do. As I became a young black woman wanting to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of our citizens, I went back to these experiences to make sense of them. I know that there

could be some flaws in the interpretations of my younger self. However, there are some truths in how women and men are expected to behave. In my adult life, I have observed that men and their actions do not have similar consequences as their women counterparts. This seems to have contributed to some of our societal ills such as gender-based violence (GBV). It is therefore important that we pay attention to the formation of men and their masculinity.

In Setswana, one of the indigenous languages in South Africa, there is a saying that '*motho o utlwa ka letlalo*' which translates to 'a person learns from their experiences'. It is indeed through personal experiences that I have learned there are different expectations of men and women. I learned that the same behaviour leads to different interpretations for women and men. I learned that things which are celebrated in men and are frowned upon in women. I learned that experiences that may appear insignificant can reveal important lessons about how society creates and reinforces behaviours that can be detrimental to the well-being of all citizens. Using Geertz's (2008) expression of thick description, I analyse how mundane behaviours become normalised to such an extent that they become embedded in cultural practice..

1.2 The background of the study

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the main challenges faced by South African society. According to Reid (2018:1), "South Africa's history of colonization and apartheid left some populations of men – of all races – in the country with a higher status than other men, as well as women." This argument suggests that gender-based violence is a product of colonisation, status and cultural practices. It is important therefore to locate the attitudes towards men's behaviour within the legacy of the past and cultural practices. Moreover, "South African masculine ideals give preference to heterosexual performances of toughness and strength" (Reid, 2018: 2, citing Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell and Dunkle, 2011:2). Reid (2018: 2) continues to argue that "[t]hese performances are predicated on the ability to control women through physical and sexual violence". Against this background, we must pay attention to the enablers of negative behaviours towards women. There has been an outcry against what has been labelled as toxic masculinity. The question that follows is: is there a positive masculinity? This forms the base of my study, namely to understand masculinity from an African perspective.

Some African scholars such as Mfecane (2016) and Ratele (2014) theorise masculinity from an African perspective. They highlight the dependency on Western theories to understand masculinity all over the world and argue that it is important to understand the conception of masculinity and how it plays itself in different communities as well as the role that culture plays in this. Mfecane (2016: 205) argues that "South African research on men and masculinities has been characterised by academic dependence on the West to provide theories of masculinity upon which research questions and empirical research are based". This means that if we want to understand masculinity in our communities, we need to move away from Western theories and source the information from our own communities. It also requires us to locate masculinity in the understanding of gender in communities.

In the seminal book titled: *Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse* by Oyěwùmí, she argues, that "the categorisation of gender that is observable in all societies is Western" (1997a: 7). This means that the conception of gender in different societies is not the same, and it is important to pay attention to how different societies express gender and external influences. What is also important is to understand the roles assigned to different genders and their impact on the relationships between genders.

Masculinity in South African communities has been affected by Western views because of colonialism. The aftermath of this is that South African societies are currently still predominantly patriarchal. Theorising masculinity in the South African context means that one must consider this legacy. However, according to Mfecane:

> Contemporary masculinity theories are characterised by the "erasure" of the experience of the majority of men from their foundation. Founded in the West, masculinity theories generally reflect the experiences and "concerns" of their societies (Mfecane, 2016: 205).

In addition to the point Mfecane raises, masculinity tends to be looked at without consideration of the fact that in African societies a person is seen as more than a body but as a person with an inner essence (Mfecane, 2018). This inner essence can be the individual's faith or traditions and their performance of these.

One of the results of the apartheid era is the racialisation of South Africa. During apartheid, the construct of the country was based on relations of race and power which became normalised and still exist today. This construction has led to acts that were used as methods of categorising individuals (Posel, 2001) for political reasons. The colour of one's skin is still a key identifier in many instances as most documentation such as university registration,

and job applications, include a tick box that best describes race. In some instances, unfortunately, these ticks still impact the treatment that one receives and the opportunities made available to one. The racialisation of South African societies impacted the power hierarchy in general as well as the one which regards black men as inferior to white men and women, thus affecting how men see themselves and perform their masculinity.

In South African society, concepts such as masculinity and femininity are largely still rooted in theories of gender that were developed by the West (Mfecane, 2018). The country celebrates thirty years of freedom in 2024 and despite independence from white rule, Western influence remains and contributes to how issues at societal levels are seen and solved. However, as Oyewumi (1997a) argues, it is important to note that the existence of Western influence does not mean that what happens in the West in terms of masculinity mirrors itself in Africa.

South Africa's patriarchal structure highlights issues of Western influence that have caused the censorship of women and their struggle for equality and freedom from oppression. It is only recently, over the past three or four decades that the role of women has been analysed and discussed more; prior to this, women have largely been subordinated to men (History of Women's Struggle in South Africa, 2021).

The evolution of the role of women in a largely patriarchal society has challenged power relations causing some conflict, which in this country's case has often played out violently. It has also resulted in questions around masculinity and particularly African masculinity. This is highlighted in the increase in cases of gender-based violence, especially over the past few years during the national lockdown in 2020, when the president acknowledged gender-based violence as a serious issue in the country.

Exploring theories of gender developed from a Western perspective versus aspects of masculinity and personhood from an African perspective can contribute to our understanding of masculinity, and how it affects societal interrelationships (Mfecane, 2018). In South Africa, black people have been in touch with and practised their traditions which have impacted their concept of masculinity.

1.4 Problem statement

Masculinity has largely been understood from a Western perspective. This limits holistic understanding in an African context because other experiences and behaviours of men towards their women counterparts need to be taken into consideration. Secondly, the misunderstanding around the role of performativity in spaces that men occupy. The manner in which African communities practice traditions and rituals can impact the social identity of men by applying pressures and responsibilities that are commonly known as those for masculine identities. In addition, there are influences such as poverty, environment and generational differences between men that contribute to how men behave in society. There is thus a need to contextualise male behaviour and not to universalise masculinity.

1.5 Research objectives

The study aims to find the meaning of masculinity from communities to assist in making connections between what is labelled toxic masculinity and accepted and celebrated male behaviour. This will contribute to identifying what communities do to condemn or perpetuate certain behaviours that have adverse effects on relationships between men and women.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Explore the performance of traditional masculinity in South Africa in communities.
2. Describe the influence of performed tradition on masculinity from an African perspective.
3. Explain the effects of male behaviour, body language and language.

1.6 Research questions

The main research questions that the study seeks to answer are:

1. What are the theories behind understanding masculinity from an African perspective?
2. How much influence does tradition have on aspects of personhood and other key influencers such as schools where universal masculinity is taught?
3. How are behaviours toward women practised and how is language used with regard to the concept of violence in men and the mistreatment of women?

1.7 Significance of study

The challenges which women face in South Africa need serious attention. The legacy of the past is entrenched in patriarchy which "favours certain gender identities over others; in this context, masculine identities are preferred to feminine ones" (Reid, 2018: 5). This has made it difficult for both women and men to have healthy relations. What is observable in our times is the scourge of violence against women which in most cases is perpetuated by their male counterparts. This situation is aggravated by the fact that apartheid was sustained by the normalisation of violence (Reid, 2018). There is thus a need to pay attention to the enablers of these ongoing challenges. The significance of the study lies in providing an understanding of what is regarded as normalised male behaviour in some communities. This understanding can contribute to shedding light on behaviours that contribute to what we call toxic masculinity, as already mentioned.

1.8 Theoretical framework

The study uses masculinity theory to make sense of people's behaviour. This assists in understanding themes of gender and their performativity. It also applies post-coloniality to highlight Eurocentricity and its influence on Africa at present as well as on masculinity from an African understanding. This theory allows us to understand how contemporary communities developed the current views and performances of masculinity as well as what may have changed over the years.

The second theory that the study will employ is postcolonialism which is concerned with the legacy of colonialism. Postcolonialism is important in historicising the current conditions. Through understanding and knowing South Africa's history, we can understand the influence that Eurocentric concepts have on the people of South Africa and how they conduct themselves. The acknowledgment of Western influence leads us to the realisation that there must also be an African perspective and this allows questions regarding what are the African understanding of various concepts and their effects.

1.9 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 introduces the study by providing the background to the research, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the theories used to ground the study. It also discusses the significance of the study which can contribute to addressing the challenges faced by South African women by understanding the construction of masculinity in

communities. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis to prepare the reader for the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review for this study. It starts by giving the background to the current research via the literature on masculinity and the concepts it is rooted in. The chapter includes discussions about masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, masculinity from an African perspective, masculinity and multiculturalism, the impact of colonialism on masculinity, the Western perspective and its influence on masculinity, masculinity and gender, male and female body politics and understanding gender-based violence. The chapter also looks at some of the critiques of masculinity that may appear in these themes. This is one of the important chapters in the thesis as it highlights the strides made in efforts to understand masculinity. But it also shows serious gaps in understanding masculinity from an African perspective.

Chapter 3 presents the methods that were used in the study to collect data which are qualitative as the study is within the field of anthropology. The methods discussed in this chapter include a description of ethnography, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and participant observation. The chapter further explains the data analysis process, limitations and ethics associated with the study. To provide a context and perspective used in the research, the chapter discusses personal experiences in the field to show that as a researcher I was also a tool as I constantly made interpretations as I was trying to make sense of data.

Chapter 4 presents the data collected during the fieldwork phase of my research. I grouped the data based on the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews conducted with the participants, focus group discussions and insights on participant observations. I conclude this chapter by discussing the approach I used to interpret data. Here I show the importance of using personal experiences to make connections between the participants' experiences and personal experiences. This assists in achieving the "thick description" to ensure that field experiences are not taken for granted as this is an important aspect of anthropology.

Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the data. I interrogate the Western understanding of masculinity using the data I collected in the field to answer the research question. This includes understanding masculinity, the influences that affect masculinity, masculinity in relation to fluidity, power relations linked to masculinity and manifestations of violence

related to masculinity. I use literature to substantiate my interpretations of data and to show some convergences and divergences with literature.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. I start by giving a summary of the dissertation. I then discuss the contributions of the study towards understanding masculinity from an African perspective. I conclude the chapter by providing conclusions drawn and suggestions for future research. The following chapter discusses the literature that frames the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the research undertaken by other authors on topics that relate to my investigation to answer the research questions I pose. The main theme is the concept of masculinity. The topics in this chapter are Western and African perspectives of masculinity. They are discussed under themes such as power and violence and concepts such as gender, personhood, multiculturalism and body politics. Central to the literature review is the impact of colonial legacy. . The focus is on the impact of the worldview of masculinity on the African society in which the youth live today. It discusses how this results in men being perceived as superior to their female counterparts and how they show their superiority through actions of violence specifically, gender-based violence.

2.2 What is masculinity?

The Freudian movement was the first to conduct scientific research on masculinity and explain significant patterns related to it through their study on gender, particularly femininity. However, the research concluded on a paradoxical note. The research discusses a stage during adolescence that is accompanied by confusion and turbulence. The Freudian concepts of Oedipus and father complexes constitute a phase experienced by adolescents of both genders, primarily driven by their sexual desires. (Connel, 1994). On the other hand, the Oedipus and father complexes were also perceived by the Freudian movement as unconscious emotions that occur in one's life.

Following Connell's 1994 examination of Freudian insights into masculinity, the field has gained significant academic attention, with scholars increasingly analysing masculinity as a key component of gender studies. Gender theories explore concepts of both masculinity and femininity which means that masculinity is rooted in gender roles and characterised by the changes that can occur in sex roles. This includes the attitudes and behaviours associated with either masculinity or femininity (Kimmel, 2018). They are social constructs that define gender roles based on biological sex. Masculinity is therefore the performance of being biologically categorised as a male individual. However, the biological aspect of the male, as well as the social part of the concept of masculinity are subjects of a continuous study that highlights the differences in types of masculinities.

2.2.1 Hegemonic masculinity

The concept of hegemonic masculinity came about during the 1970s, and the role norms of men were analysed in the literature (Porter, 2013). Connell (1994) defines hegemonic masculinity as 'an analytical instrument to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other (often minority groups of) men.' Hegemonic masculinity is characterised as a set of values that have been created by those in power. This has resulted in an imbalance in society.

According to Jewkes et al. (2015), the concept of masculinity, particularly hegemonic masculinity has been in use since the early 1980s to describe the power of men over women through their interactions. It is a practical and performative ideal that extends itself beyond structure and societal hierarchy in theory and practice. Men benefit from a patriarchal divide caused by gender relations in society; however, they are afforded the right to occupy or wave the occupation of being oppressors of women as well as other men.

Jewkes et al. highlight that a man's idea around gender and gender practices are influenced at a societal level; these ideas include the social order of a man which includes how they think of themselves, their behaviours and how they relate socially towards women and each other (Jewkes et al., 2015). Society thus exerts influence on the becoming of a man. However, not all men are categorised under 'hegemonic' masculinity notion, and men's actions and behaviours have shown in the literature of the 1970s/80s that it is fluid and can change (Porter, 2013). Therefore, all men may not be of hegemonic masculinity, but all men aspire to reach this standard, and men are thus ranked according to it, resulting in the marginalisation of others.

The fluidity and possibility of multiple as well as dynamic masculinities exist amongst the various versions of masculinity and under hegemonic masculinity; there is also the possibility of occupying more than one type of hegemonic masculinity (Jewkes et al., 2015). Masculinity is thus about 'manhood'; it is a practice that consists of multiple ways in which one can become a man (Porter, 2013). It is something that can be achieved and in the Western sense not something that is given (Ibid.). Various types of masculinities are formed based on criteria that are deemed essential to being a particular type of man, for example, in

hegemonic masculinities being heterosexual forms part of the characteristics of belonging to this group. Furthermore, the criteria imposed on one context may vary in another.

The existence of multiple forms of masculinity creates space for hypermasculinity to emerge.. Hypermasculinity is a type of masculinity that is known to be destructive (Jewkes et al., 2015) and thus negative. This type of masculinity typically exists among people of a less privileged background; individuals from urban slums and individuals who have been socially marginalised. This form of masculinity, however, is not excluded from the hegemonic form as it results from the relationship that exists between hegemonic ideals and the ability of men to meet these ideals (Jewkes et al., 2015).

Masculinity is thus a concept the construction of which varies according to the situation, environment and individual. It can reflect socio-political issues, regional cultures and the dynamics of an area. However, men scale themselves against a standard of hegemonic masculinity and undergo testing of their abilities to become men in various ways. Not meeting the standard comes with consequences that can result in feelings of shame and inadequacy (Porter, 2013) and possibly in violent behaviour.

2.2.2 Masculinity from an African perspective

Research on men and masculinity in South Africa is largely based on theories of gender derived from the West. These theories discuss masculinity in a manner that can exclude African male experiences. The realities of the economic, social and political determinants of African masculinity are a commonly excluded factor in discourse about African perspectives of masculinity. Instead, it is significantly based on the Western theoretical interpretations of masculinity, a colonised African man. The African perspective of masculinity is therefore theorised by researchers as a collective experience rather than an individual experience. Porter (2013) asserts that most African perspectives of masculinity are influenced by the state they live in and the responsibilities they carry as individuals.

Masculinity as a performance of duties allows individuals to feel as though they have completed the duties associated with what it means to be a man. In countries that have experienced colonisation and conflict, the history of the country, its social structure and home settings all contribute to this. Therefore, when changing states, the socio-political

positions of men and women change as well. Masculinity and its perceptions are also negotiated through transformations of states (Levon, Milani and Kitis, 2017).

The responsibilities that men carried during colonisation and times of conflict are thus how they are influenced to perceive masculinity from an African perspective, particularly in societies in which historical contexts and institutions are still prevalent such as in South Africa. In the Western context, hegemonic masculinity, which emerged in the 1970s, has been crucial in understanding how masculinity is defined and maintained. Connell (1994) submits that the concept serves as an analytical tool to identify the attitudes and practices that sustain gender inequality, emphasising men's dominance over women and the power dynamics among men, particularly the marginalisation of minority groups. Western interpretations of masculinity often revolve around a set of values and norms established by those in power, leading to an unequal distribution of societal resources and influence. Therefore, validating Jewkes et al. (2015), masculinity is not merely a theoretical idea but a practical and performative ideal, reflected in the everyday actions and interactions of men. Society, therefore, plays a significant role in shaping male identity, influencing how men perceive themselves, and how they behave and relate socially to others, reinforcing the ideals of masculinity in the Western paradigm. The Western concept of masculinity excludes African-centered theories of masculinity that acknowledge the power and unequal distribution of resources and influences but recognise the role that interactions with others have on our social identities.

Mfecane (2018) when he discusses African-centred theories of masculinity, includes personhood as an element of African masculinity. Personhood has three main features (Mfecane, 2018), namely the physical and nonphysical elements, the creation of a human being's identity being achieved rationally through social relations rather than isolation. Personhood is also discussed as a status that can be achieved through actions such as participating in society, traditions and rituals. Through being a member of your community and performing these activities of participation, a male individual can be acknowledged based on these elements of personhood.

Personhood in the African understanding of masculinity helps us to understand and account for the complex lives of black men, showing the relation between individuals as beings with an inner life or a spiritual component and not only a body that commits gender-specific acts.

This further highlights a multiplicity of responsibilities that may not have been theorised by Western interpretations. While the African perspective of masculinity includes identifying the man as having an inner essence, it does not though exclude the fact that a man has to participate in a set of practices in society that can position him as the man at the top of the hierarchy - the standardised male individual of which some may aim to be (Mfecane, 2018).

Through Mfecane's elements of personhood, the non-physical factor encompasses the inner essence which can be spiritual or religious. According to Ratele (2014), who focuses on the male's religious location, dominant masculinity, or hegemonic masculinity, can be represented in various ways such as through religion. According to this argument, there is no African masculinity. Masculinity is understood by the Western definition and conceptualisation and values that exercise power, gender and resource inequality. This Western perspective of masculinity and the differences between it and African-centred theories of masculinity result in the latter being marginalised. Therefore, African masculinity is considered marginal and embedded (Ratele, 2014). African masculinity is categorised by behaviours and beliefs not centred around oppression or control, this form of masculinity is, in theory, a standard that men would aspire to in their communities.

In our current society, religion and its influence would fall under Mfecane's feature of personhood being a status that can be acquired through participation and performance. Furthermore, cultural identity, race, and social categories such as sexuality, marital status, and men's relations with women are additional aspects that affect how masculinity is identified for South African men (Dharani; Vergo and April, 2020). Through the analysis of personhood, we are allowing ourselves to look at various aspects that impact the African man and his creation of himself in a capacity where the West has less influence than the man's own environment.

The research on masculinities in African settings thus allows for the existence of various masculinities to co-exist; the significant difference in African perspectives of masculinity is the setting (Porter, 2013). There are differences between various ethnicities as well as between rural masculinity and urban masculinity, and these differences can intersect. The differences as well as the changes in the socio-political positions of men and women reflect complexities in what masculinity means and who influences it. The research also accepts the complexities that are related to masculinity in African settings due to intersectionalities and

relations that occur between physical and non-physical elements which can affect African masculinity.

The African perspective of masculinity continues to be affected by various and sometimes specific challenges and characteristics. These challenges and features in societies such as South Africa's society retain negative connotations and taboos such as men being violent, mentally unwell, and perpetrators, these connotations are usually against aspects such as expressions of emotions, and rigid gender norms such as men being protectors in the physical and financial sense which can result in the suffering of men and women (Porter, 2013). In the South African context, men exercise their roles predominantly through gaining social and economic power. These men are represented in the media and can thus influence the youth and their views on masculinity.

2.2.3 Masculinity and multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a characteristic in a variety of indigenous societies including African societies and religious groups, particularly when comparing these to Western societies that differ from theirs. Okin (1999) defines multiculturalism as the idea that people from other cultures are the same as us and also regarded as human beings, thus meaning they deserve equal respect (Okin, 1999).

However, it is important to note that the similarities and differences that occur between the West and Africa also occur within the various African societies. Not all of these societies are the same which means that masculinities and how they are created and perceived may vary. Okin (1999) argues that the cultural location of a male can result in being a basis for control over women's lives. His perspective is affirmed by Edgarton (2001) in his book titled 'Warrior Women' about the Amazon who resided in West Africa, which discusses gender relations through space and time. The book focuses on the concept of control over women's lives through an African/non-Western narrative prior to the colonialisation of their community.

Oyĕwùmí (1997a) argues that Eurocentric studies that use gender binaries do not take into account precolonial societies such as African societies which use seniority as an organising principle, not gender. Therefore, the lack of consideration of precolonial societies and their knowledge while simultaneously asserting Eurocentric studies of gender binaries makes

concepts like social hierarchies natural and gender as a social construct that is placed onto non-Western cultures and societies. The West thus becomes hegemonic, and through this hegemony over other societies, the emergence of patriarchy occurs (Oyěwùmí, 1997b).

2.3 The impact of Colonialism on masculinity

The above section discussed gender. Horvath (1972) defines colonialism as "a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and or behaviour of other individuals or groups", and with this definition in mind, we can highlight the relation between power and domination through colonialism. According to Dirks (1992), who agrees with Horvath (1972)'s definition, colonialism and its after-effects are not only evident in various cultures (specifically, lands of indigenous people) being ignored or dismantled, through Eurocentric studies and concepts taking priority in colonialist states, is also evident in the logistics of the world's capitalism and dominative capitalistic way of rule. The act of dismantling and transformation of states was done through the assertion of power onto those that they considered different from them or lands they were unfamiliar with.

One aim of colonialism as mentioned by Coates (2004) was to recreate Europe through rule. This included the recreation of their own societies and therefore their theories were taught to their colonised states. Colonialism, its conquest and white rule continue to segregate various lands into 'the colonised' and 'the colonisers'. Dirk (1992) asserts that in the lands that were owned and ruled by indigenous people of the indigenous, the effects of colonialist rule are evident through their original ways of ruling and performing being overthrown and therefore, othered. Thus, making their now cultural forms become known as what we now know as 'traditional societies'.

Colonialism in these societies created new identities for indigenous people, and this contributed to how men and women were perceived. Morrell (2007) mentions the transformation that took place; where race and class were now essential to the masculine identity and in forming various types of masculinities. In South Africa, colonialism ended the political independence of the indigenous people and therefore, through the effects of segregation, only key African institutions survived. These institutions are the ones whose masculinities compete with hegemonic white masculinities in contemporary South Africa.

Due to colonialism and white rule, the societies of lands that were now under colonial rule have been restructured and transformed into how we know them now. The power dynamics and property politics have been largely shaped in modern times by colonialism.

The oppression of Africans through colonialism and apartheid in South Africa emphasised Western dominant masculinities and subordinated indigenous masculinities and marginalised them. Thus, through the continuation of racial hierarchical privileges despite democracy being reached in 1994, privileges are still based on skin colour with black men at the bottom of the hierarchical structure (Dharani, Vergo and April 2020).

2.3.1 Western perspective and influence

The above section provided an analysis of definitions and concepts of gender. The next section takes a closer look at the definitions and concepts of colonialism as this is where the Western influence on African perspectives of masculinity is rooted. Through colonialism and the implementation of Eurocentric studies, there was an understanding that we developed based on these studies from the West that was now used to understand a variety of concepts such as gender in current African societies. A colonised perspective and thus a marginalised view was bred through the imitation of a Europe that the colonisers were intent on re-creating. This indicates that there was a form of masculinity that existed prior to colonialism, during colonialism and postcolonialism. Furthermore, the influence of Western theories upon colonised territories indicates a superiority: their knowledge system was seen as the one which should be understood universally and therefore concepts such as masculinity were to be understood universally as well – with Western masculinity as the standard for all societies.

The existence of a Western perspective on masculinity implies that there are other perspectives such as an African perspective. According to Mfecane (2018), African masculinity is characterised by a key aspect of personhood. Personhood is a traditional thought based on the idea that human beings are conceived as having both physical and non-physical parts; human beings are more than their physical body but are also their lived experiences which create their inner essence. This African perspective is also discussed by Oyĕwùmí (1997a) in her argument that what is done in the West is not necessarily done in Africa. This indicates that there are differences that exist between the West and Africa and therefore the two territories are to be understood and studied as two separate entities.

2.4 Masculinity and gender

The relation between masculinity and gender can be observed through actions and behaviours. Ratele (2014) mentions that there is no African masculinity because masculinity is understood through a Western conceptualisation. This view can be presented by an analysis of influences on the establishment of masculinity in African societies. Masculinity in Western theories is seen as the standardised version and is therefore what others are meant to achieve. Those that are marginalised by this definition such as Africans are expected to become this type of man through behaviours and actions of the 'standard' man. Hegemonic masculinity is understood through Western theories that are rooted in masculinity and maleness. This includes an understanding of gender.

2.4.1 The conceptualisation of gender

It is important to understand that just like race, gender is a concept that is a result of colonialism (Oyěwùmí, 1997a), which means that Western gender relations are now imposed on African communities' social relations resulting in social change and have contributed to the way our society works and operates. In order to understand masculinity effectively, it is important to understand gender first. Oyěwùmí (1997a) states that through gender the West was able to create the category of 'other': individuals were categorised according to bodies thus creating a biological and social identity. These bodies are however not constructed or perceived as equals according to the universal view of gender and became universal through colonialisation (Ibid.).

Oyěwùmí (1997a) argues that hierarchies in Africa were based on seniority rather than gender, thus meaning they were not gendered resulting in concepts and definitions of patriarchy and matriarchy as a result of the Western society and their intent to gender society. Barretto and Ellemers (2005) discuss gendered society in the West and describe women as a body and men as more than that. Gender is characterised as a language of difference as it depicts the real and material inequalities between the two genders. Another characterisation of masculinity is the representation of masculinity in the public sphere (Barretto and Ellemers, 2005), namely the individual's identity and how they are perceived by others.

Furthermore, Africa's oral arts history shows an example of the influence of gendered society in African societies. Language, in this instance, African proverbs can assist in the

creation of gendered cultures (Hussein, 2005). These proverbs are indications of how men and women should behave in everyday social practices. In our ability to understand gender, we are understanding a common aspect of identity creation and thus gender's impact on the creation of the masculine identity, and African individuals. The Western influence that occurs during colonialism impacts the male gaze upon themselves as well as others.

2.4.2 The body politics and gender

Female body politics

This section analyses the theoretical interpretations of body politics in relation to gender. This is of relevance to the study as it highlights the importance that biology has had on maleness and masculinity. Bodies have imposed conscious and subconscious responsibilities and behaviours as we will see in the literature. However, in order to understand this, it is essential to understand femininity.

The placement of women in social hierarchies due to biology is a concept that was adopted by Western theories of gender as it views bodies as a creation based only on physical essence. Women have to let go of their femininity to reach higher rankings in their careers as well as to receive respect or seem brave in society. This highlights the fact that the use of the term 'woman' is associated with cowardice and weakness (Edgarton, 2001), making being a 'woman' an easy target for violence and disrespect. Furthermore, the connotations around being 'women' being perceived as targets for violence and disrespect are also shaped by the concept of the virginal body which is continuously determined by our cultural context as well as our traditions (Bernau, 2007:128).

An individual's body and what it represents has been impacted by Western influences and still determines how we relate to our own bodies as well as the bodies of others around us whether they are individuals of the same or opposite genders. Bernau (2007) argues that the virginal body is not a real body in the sense that it cannot exist as its own entity, hence it is determined by the cultural context that it exists in. Female sexuality is therefore theorised and legalised in the way that it is used based on the spaces it inhabits. Virginity has been perceived as beneficial in moral, spiritual as well as physical aspects. This instigates that the female body is a beneficial space that can become a territory for those who seek these benefits (Bernau, 2007:134). An indication of this is seen in the literal naming of landscapes as well as metaphorically depicted in the way women are treated as virgins were perceived

as social territory (Bernau, 2007:138). Therefore, female bodies and virginity are seen as currencies.

Male body politics

Similar to female bodies and how they are perceived, the same is done with the male body. According to Bernau, unlike the female body, the male body is perceived as naturally designed for superiority and therefore male bodies naturally receive benefits that women do not or receive a limited amount of. These benefits can be economic or social. Male bodies are seen as bodies that cannot be polluted; they are pure and cannot be located in relation to private sins such as sexual transgressions.

Body politics being how male versus female bodies are treated and perceived due to cultural contexts comes into play in the way in which we are influenced to view the genders and their roles (Bernau, 2007:137). How one is seen can affect power relations and can help us when analysing power as one of the key influences on men and also a key influence in the violent and unequal treatment of others.

2.4.3 Understanding gender-based violence

The statistics of violence perpetrated by men from an African perspective are thus rooted in the historical contexts of the country of the man's origin. South African men are a by-product of apartheid history and a patriarchal society in which inequality resides and therefore, men can be put in weak positions socially that result in them emphasising power and force in various manners (Mshweshwe, 2020).

In South Africa, violence, particularly violence against women, Mshweshwe (2020) argues, is the result of patriarchy, culture, low levels of education and negative constructions of masculinity which include the ideological construction of behaviour and socialisations of men. South African societies remain inherently patriarchal, which means that women are significantly defined by their reproductive and sexual roles rather than as human beings. This results in a hierarchical structure in which men are superior compared to them (Albertyn, 2009). Patriarchal societies are persistent due to behaviours of people within them. Mshweshwe (2020) points out that the diversity of masculinities is related to the types of violence that are carried out as gender is intersectional with other factors (socio-cultural) that affect the ideology of being a man (Mshweshwe, 2020).

The intersectionality of gender and other factors such as socio-cultural influences are discussed by Gqola (2007) in an article titled *How the 'cult of femininity' and violent masculinities support endemic gender-based violence in contemporary South Africa. African identities*. Gqola (2007) describes how the patriarchal structure of South African societies, rooted in the violence from colonialism, has resulted in the behaviours of those that occupy the colonised space becoming militarised. This militarisation takes place in gendered roles and is played out in the interactions we see amongst genders. An example of this is gender-based violence.

Physical violence against women is also carried out under the ideology of women being inferior or needing to be controlled; she is the victim of male control as the 'oppressed'. Defining women as victims categorises them as 'objects-who-defend-themselves' and therefore powerless whereas men are seen as powerful in society. Okin's (1999) reading regarding multiculturalism and its effects on women validates behaviours and their relation to aspects such as religion. Some cultures and their ideologies as well as religious ideologies are depicted as a way to control women's lives, therefore, religion and a man's religious location can result in control over women's lives. This is a result of the domination of women due to a gender hierarchy and highlights domestic violence that occurs worldwide.

Mohanty (1988) discusses women as victims of male violence through an analysis of Franz Hosken (1981) of the relationship between human rights and female genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East. Hosen attests that the goal of this process is to eliminate the sexual pleasure and satisfaction of women; women's sexuality and their bodies are controlled. Hosken (1981) states that male sexual politics in Africa and around the world share the same goal which is to assure female dependence.

Female genital mutation is an African tradition established in pre-colonial African societies and perpetuated by elder women in these societies. It is practiced in countries located in eastern as well as some southern African countries (Earp and Johnsdotter, 2021). This practice which has been debated by the World Health Organisation highlights the fact that not all violence against women is perpetrated by men. It also highlights that violence towards women existed prior to colonialism, and even though the women went through this procedure to protect their virginal bodies; this type of violence was done by women on women.

In African epistemology, however, Mfecane's (2018) argues that persons are created by both physical and non-physical aspects which equally impact their behaviours and who they become. When analysing masculinity from an African perspective and its relation to violence, it is important to consider the non-physical aspects and how they can influence behaviour (Ibid.). This requires consideration of determinants such as societal, economic, and political aspects that contribute to who a person is and how they behave.

Makema et al. (2019) argue that violence is the result of a person and their circumstances rather than institutional structures such as policies and laws or cultural practices. Makema et al. (2019) state that through public and academic discourse around the construction of masculinity in the Western world, we commonly see connections between men and violence, positioning violence as a result of poverty rather than a structural problem (Makema et al., 2019), thus, suggesting that the poorer a black man, the more violence there will be, which was the case when analysing the 2017/2018 financial year where the number of murdered women being murdered had increased from the previous year. And how are these numbers linked to poverty?

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored Western and African perspectives on masculinity. It highlighted the intricate interplay between cultural, historical, and social factors that shape the construction of masculine identities. It discussed the Western viewpoint, rooted in a complex history of colonialism, evolving gender norms to show the diversity of masculinity, and how it can present itself as hegemonic and therefore, a standard that should be reached. On the other hand, the chapter showed that the African perspective is multifaceted and requires deeper understanding. It is embedded in cultural traditions, communal values and other determinants such as economic and societal factors that are the results of Western interpretations of masculinity and patriarchal societies being a norm in South Africa. This literature review contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding masculinity, particularly masculinity in South Africa, and assists in the analysis of the fieldwork discussed in Chapter four.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology that I have used to achieve the research objectives. I explain the validity of qualitative research as my chosen methodology. I further substantiate the reason why I have chosen this and the concepts that relate to the methodologies as well as the implementation of the concepts and methodologies. Fieldwork is introduced in this chapter as well as the requirements for fieldwork to be effective and efficient to substantiate the data and literature that was analysed. The ethical considerations and limitations that affected the research are also discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Description of research methodology

Anthropology and the research conducted under this discipline aims to acquire insightful observation, forms of expression and verification of theories that highlight the relationship between culture and nature (Research Methods - Learn and Teach, 2021). The research I conducted is qualitative and aims to achieve the abovementioned objectives by implementing various methods and challenging theories on the topic of African masculinity. It is further substantiated by using literature on the various themes as well as interviews, a focus group and participant observations. A qualitative approach to research makes meaning of the interactions between individuals and their world (Merriam, 2002), and is widely used in anthropology. It allows researchers like me to understand the experiences of individuals and their social worlds and to interpret these experiences which forms part of ethnography.

Ethnography is a concept that aligns with fieldwork and is one of the methods that was used to collect data for this study. Ethnography is a process that has the objective of describing the lives of people who are not us, with the accuracy and sensitivity associated with prolonged observation and first-hand experience (Ingold, 2008). The notes taken during my interactions with the participants include narratives that were shared by the participants about their experiences, the language used, my thought processes, and the behaviours exhibited by them during our time together. This methodology is defined as fieldwork and is described by Malinowsky (2007) as the ability to evoke the true experiences of the spaces and people that are being studied. I also applied other methods such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and participant observations.

3.2.1 Participation observation

Participant observation is an extension of Malinowsky's concept of the ethnographic goal which is to grasp the views of others in relation to their lives and their perceptions of the world (Malinowsky, 2007). Therefore, participant observation is seen as an aid to understanding as it allows researchers to engage with the participants while also observing their lives (Tedlock, 1991). During the observations, I was able to make use of the ethnographic methodology by taking notes and spending time at a public location with the young men while observing their language and interactions.

The observations took place in October 2023 at a pool restaurant/pub where the University of Pretoria students spend a lot of time unwinding. I visited this restaurant every Thursday and Friday in October to do my observations. I started in the afternoons around 16h00 so that I could see students arriving and hear the small conversations they were having. Most of the time I would leave around 19h00 as by that time the music would be loud and it became difficult for me to hear anything. However, even though it was difficult to hear the conversations, their physical interactions were also taken into account. Analysing their overall behaviours formed an essential part of data gathering and assisted in the data analysis phase of writing this thesis. It also assisted in the in-depth interviews I conducted because I asked questions based on some of my observations to explore my interpretations.

3.2.2 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews provided the opportunity to explore the perspectives of the participants and their understanding of masculinity from an African point of view. This was possible as in-depth interviews are characterised by repeated face-to-face meetings between researchers and participants aimed at getting to know the latter in more detail (Robles, 2011), and understanding them and their perceptions. The participants were young black men aged 18 – 25 years, residing in Pretoria. I conducted one-on-one interviews, each lasting 45-60 minutes.. I interviewed five participants, purposefully chosen, to ensure that I gained enough information. I asked some of my male friends and cousins to introduce me to some of their friends who fit the criteria and whom they knew would be able to respond to my questions.

The interviews began with an introduction of who I am, the research, and who the participant was as well as their role in the research. This was done intentionally. Firstly, for ethical reasons, so that consent forms and participant information were gathered. Secondly, to create rapport with each other and establish a space of comfort where they felt they could share their narratives.

Data were then gathered by having discussions with the participants about their upbringing, their social lives and their interactions with others and by asking questions that related to the themes of the research to understand their perspectives of masculinity and what influences it. A follow-up interview was conducted to gather any lingering thoughts/ideas that may have come about after the initial interview. Initially, the total number of interviews was to be ten, however, this changed.

3.2.3 Focus groups

To gather data in the focus groups, questions that relate to the themes and the main research question were asked in an hour-long discussion. The aim was to elicit general perceptions that exist around masculinity from the young men as well as to observe their communication and behaviours towards each. This allowed for experiences and perspectives that varied and for added information to be included.

The first focus group I held did not have enough participants; only four people showed up due to challenges such as schedule clashes and time constraints. The discussions were therefore categorised as in-depth interviews. I struggled with the turnout. I was disappointed in the numbers and felt frustrated and stressed about the impact that this outcome would have on my overall research. However, after a meeting with my supervisor, I was assisted in a manner that made it possible for me to still use the information to curate a second focus group later.

The discussions that took place allowed for the participants and me to engage in topics that were not discussed in great depth with the other participants. This included topics such as navigating masculinity as a queer individual and influences of suburbia and living in urban areas. When this topic was brought to light it made me realise the necessity of discussing queer masculinity in this thesis as it is another form of masculinity that exists and could be very challenging for Africans due to religions and cultural beliefs.

The focus group as a research approach is characterised by it being a group of individuals who engage in a specific topic or set of themes/issues to simultaneously collect data from multiple sources (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). In this study, the focus groups allowed for the collection of various perspectives from different individuals while also showing the advantages of being able to see the relationships that exist between the people and their context. Although I faced challenges such as the circumstances I explained above, the central questions and themes for both the focus groups remained the same.

The participants were open and interactive; I assume the reason for this was thatthey knew each other from a university extra-curricular activity in which they all participated during this time. The session went smoothly because they were able to converse with each other and me because of a level of comfort.

Similar to the first focus group, the second focus group with six participants was very informative because the participants seemed to be comfortable and responded to my questions openly. The reason for this was also because they were friends who had met previously in high school. We began by getting to know each other, and I allowed the participants to ask me questions while we waited for everyone else to join, which created trust between us. I saw this grow, as the session continued, they would even pose questions to me towards the end and had a chat with me after the session about how much they enjoyed it and thought of it as a learning experience.

This group brought to light different focus areas from the first one; it brought a level of ease and joy to me as I could see the impact of hosting it and incorporating the findings into the rest of the data. It highlighted key areas such as religion and the impact it has had on the participants as well as romantic relationships and how they could contribute to the performativity and responsibilities related to masculinity which I discuss further in the next chapter.

3.4 Analysis of collected data

Data analysis was completed by collating the literature review and ethnographic notes, allowing me to draw conclusions from the research. A thematic method was used to analyse the collected data. This method is widely applied in qualitative research. It is defined as a method used for organising, identifying, and providing insight into various perspectives of themes that appear within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The focus of the method is to

look at the meaning of the themes that occur and to make sense of collective or shared experiences. This methodology made it easier for me to narrate and address the problem statement as well as the theoretical framework and how it could be adjusted.

A thematic method was used to analyse the collected data. This method is widely used in qualitative research and is defined as a method used for organising, identifying, and providing insights into various perspectives of themes that appear within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The focus of this method is rooted in an analysis of the meaning of the themes that occur. The themes include understanding masculinity as a young African male, influences on the concept of 'being a man', the fluidity of masculinity, hierarchy, masculinity and the power relations that exist as well as the violence perpetrated in masculinity. It is also used to make sense of the collective or shared experiences. This methodology made it easier for me to narrate and address the problem statement and the theoretical framework and how it could be adjusted.

3.5 Limitations

I came across several limitations as I was conducting the fieldwork. This was a learning curve for me as I found solutions and saw how I could improve future studies as I overcame them. Going into the study, a limitation that I had anticipated was my gender. By identifying as a woman and my pronouns being she/her could be perceived as a disadvantage in the study, my gender may have the ability to influence factors such as the participants' behaviour and attitude towards me in terms of them being honest during interviews. This was evident in two interactions; one was a discussion with one of the participants where the topic of initiation in Xhosa culture was brought up. The second focus group had a similar situation where a Xhosa participant was not able to divulge information about what occurs when they are in an initiation process, and I was thus only given censored information. However, I do believe that starting all discussions with an introduction of both myself and the participants assisted in getting acquainted and creating an opportunity for such topics to be brought up. The choice of holding discussions at venues that were agreed upon and safe also assisted in creating an environment that allowed for open conversations to take place.

The themes in the discussions included: understanding masculinity as a young African male, influences on the concept of being a man; the fluidity of masculinity, hierarchy and masculinity: the power relations that exist; and the violence in masculinity which allowed

me to make a clearer and deeper analysis on masculinity and how it is perceived by the young black male demographic that reside in Pretoria. One of the limitations of the research methodology would be if there were underage participants, however, I verified the ages of all the participants prior to starting any ethnographic work.

Other challenges that I faced were having my phone stolen as I was busy with fieldwork and therefore losing some recordings of interviews that were not yet loaded on the cloud and could not be retrieved. In the future, I will back up my information immediately after any fieldwork to avoid situations such as this one. An additional challenge was the influence of the original hometown of the participants which had an impact on their perspectives of becoming men and how they perceived masculinity. This could be classified as an influence of nature versus nurture. Although it was a challenge, it also assisted in addressing the fluidity of masculinity with age and environment.

3.6 Ethics

A participant sheet and an informed consent form were distributed to all the participants. The informed consent form explained the study in detail and showed that the participants were not coerced into participating. The form was distributed via email and the content was also verbally explained to them at the beginning of the in-depth interviews and focus group. After the participants then signed both forms, they were returned to me via email or during our time together.

I collected the data. Measures to prepare for data collection included ensuring the venue was safe and available for the discussions to take place, making sure my phone was charged to contact the participants and recording the discussions if permission was given as well as collecting participant information sheets and consent forms. All fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and the focus group took place in Pretoria at an agreed-upon private location that was safe and accessible and ensured privacy for confidentiality.

Participant observations were the exception and were conducted in a public location with a trusted individual that had agreed to and signed a third-party confidentiality form sent ahead of time so that he was able to accompany me and ensure ethical behaviour as well as safety. Being accompanied by a trusted individual was useful, particularly for the focus groups as my trusted individual was a young black male who was able to blend in during the focus

group settings. Furthermore, being accompanied by a male peer who shared characteristics with the participants helped establish trust and facilitated rapport building.

3.7 Conclusion

In the journey of understanding Western and African perspectives of masculinity in South Africa, this chapter has verified the use of qualitative methodologies employed in anthropological research, which was also deemed fit for implementation in this research. The multifaceted nature of anthropological inquiry combines diverse and adaptable methodologies which were discussed, particularly concerning challenges such as the first focus group being too small and the data being conceived of as in-depth interview data. The chapter specifically explored the use of focus groups, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis as the key methods employed in the research while shedding light on their contributions to the exploration of masculinity in this socio-cultural landscape.

The focus groups allowed for a comparative analysis of Western and African perspectives, providing an understanding of how various influences intersect and diverge in the understanding of the demographic's perception of masculinity as young males in Pretoria. The in-depth interviews, characterised by their one-on-one nature, provided a platform for the exploration of individual narratives and perspectives on masculinity rather than general perceptions. Participant observation, as an immersive and holistic method, has allowed me to embed myself in the natural context of the community where young black men interact in their spare time. This approach enabled the exploration of social interactions which shaped their perspectives on masculinity. It also assisted me in gaining information in a more intricate and natural manner.

Thematic analysis is the key tool used in the next chapter to assist in making sense of the data collected through these qualitative methods. It provides an opportunity to identify and interpret recurring themes and patterns as well as any outliers that I came across. It will be used to present a structured interpretation of Western and African perspectives on masculinity, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research question. The following chapter discusses the research findings.

Chapter 4: Recognising masculinity

4.1 Introduction

The presentation of the data in this chapter is based on the data I collected through ethnographic methods. I start by discussing the three thematic pillars that I developed based on the themes observed in the data. I then present the tables that showcase the data collected using different research methods. Using Geertz's (2008) conception of thick description, I show how the data presented here is crucial to the exploration of Western and African masculinity. The chapter offers an overview of the findings, encapsulating the essence of the themes that emerged during my fieldwork.

4.2 The three thematic pillars

The thematic focus of this study revolves around three guiding questions that serve as pillars for understanding Western and African masculinity. Firstly, I investigate the foundations of African masculinity, aiming to unravel how participants understand this construct and what they relate it to. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, the participants shared their narratives, providing insights into masculinity within the African context, particularly as young black men from Pretoria, South Africa.

The second pillar examines the impact of external factors, particularly those influenced by Western theologies, on the conception of African masculinity. In-depth interviews and focus groups contribute to highlighting the various factors as well as their influence on the idea of masculinity in the participants. This is where I came to appreciate the intersectionality that occurs between social, economic, and political determinants and masculinity as well as their ability to shape and redefine traditional notions of masculinity in African societies.

The third pillar explores the manifestation of violence towards others in relation to African masculinity. The study investigates the complex relationship between power, aggression and social structures, unveiling various dimensions of violence and their connection to cultural perceptions of manhood.

This chapter is a condensed presentation of the findings from the field, focusing on the themes' similarities and differences that were identified by studying individual experiences and their relation to cultural influences and broader societal dynamics. The narratives shared

by participants, guided by a few key questions, have allowed me to explore the complexities of African masculinity.

4.3 In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews were conducted in 2023 after receiving ethical clearance from the university's board of ethics. They were conducted with black males between the ages of 18 and 25 years old who reside in Pretoria, South Africa. The interviews were recorded, but due to an unfortunate circumstance, the recordings were lost, which posed a challenge when wanting to check on the information. This challenge is understood as a learning curve to understand that when you are conducting research you must always think of a back-up plan such as taking notes all the time. Based on the recordings that were saved to the cloud in time as well as the field notes, the information was analysed and collated to show the following:

Themes based on research questions asked	Summary of findings
The foundations of understanding African masculinity	- Understandings of masculinity were rooted in childhood ideologies, many of which were rooted in Western influences and/or theories. - The understanding of masculinity from an African perspective became more evident when discussing cultures and traditions. - All of the participant responses showed an integration of Western and African understanding.
The impact of external factors based on Western theologies on the conception of African masculinity	- Academic institutions were a prevalent theme. - Academic institutions further justified certain Western conceptions and theories that impact

	the way participants think of masculinity as young African males.
	• Religion was a theme that also emerged.
Violence towards others	• Stories shared with me highlighted the violence caused by hierarchies that exist in society. • Violence was experienced by peers due to behaviours that were regarded as less masculine.

4.4 Focus groups

4.4.1 Focus group 1

The first focus group was conducted in 2023 after receiving ethical clearance from the university's board of ethics and after the in-depth interviews were completed. The focus group was held with different participants from the in-depth interviews with the same requirements which were black males between the ages of 18 and 25 years old who reside in Pretoria, South Africa. The first focus group data consists of notes from the discussion. Based on the field notes the information was analysed. The following data were collected from the first focus group:

Themes based on research questions asked	Summary of findings
The foundations of understanding African masculinity	• Similar understandings of masculinity were rooted in childhood ideologies, many of which were rooted in Western influences and/or theories. • Cultures and traditions were discussed and the positioning that they places men under which

	highlighted hierarchies as well as other factors.
	• Traditional practices as a way to enter manhood
The impact of external factors based on Western theologies on the conception of African masculinity	• The modernity of cities (space) is a place where other masculinities such as queer masculinities can exist. • Academic institutions such as Universities, are a space for the expression of masculinities and allow for the complexities of Western and African masculinity intersectionality to be perceived.
Violence towards others Note "excretion" means the elimination of metabolic waste. In other words, what you do in the toilet.	• Traditional procedures as a means of man-on-man violence, particularly in villages and rural areas • Marginalisation of other masculinities, particularly queer masculinities by those who represent standardised masculinity

4.4.2 Focus group 2

The second focus group was conducted at the end of 2023. After realising the challenges of hosting a focus group with no recording and only fieldwork, the second focus group was decided upon after a discussion with my supervisor. This was done so that I could gather more information on my topic and substantiate my thesis. I conducted this focus group and proceeded to the next steps of the investigation. My supervisor ensured I recorded the session this time and had notes I could revert to plus transcripts to show evidence of the data collected. This focus group was held with different participants from the in-depth interviews as well as the first focus group, but the requirements remained the same, namely black males between the ages of 18 and 25 years old who reside in Pretoria, South Africa. The focus

group data consisted of notes from the discussion. Based on the recordings and field notes, the information was then analysed. The following data were collected:

Themes based on research questions asked	Summary of findings
The foundations of understanding African masculinity	- Understandings of masculinity rooted in childhood ideologies showed up as a commonality again and were discussed. - African masculinity was understood in a context outside of traditions and cultures as the participants were not traditionally centred.
The impact of external factors based on Western theologies on the conception of African masculinity	- The roles of friends as influential factors were brought up. - Religion, which had been a recurring theme, was brought up again as an influential external factor. - Women and their positioning in society compared to men were discussed and analysed. This was done in a manner in which the effect of Western ideologies was prevalent as women were perceived as attainable achievements in the participants' younger days. - The complexities that are attached to manhood were brought up as the duties and responsibilities that the participants noted as essential to being a man, were rooted in external

	factors such as money and achievements.
Violence towards others	• Violence was alluded to during conversations where relations were discussed between men and women. Direct violence against women and gender-based violence were not discussed as a topic alone as time was of concern. There was also a possible limitation that the participants may conceal their true feelings around this subject as it is a sensitive topic.

4.5 Participant observation

The timing of this session was crucial as it was essential to see interactions between the participants with their environments and the people with whom they occupy this space. The participant observation methodology embraced considerations of safety due to the gender-based violence epidemic in South Africa. The question of safety had to be addressed before I could receive ethical clearance from the board which required being accompanied by a trusted individual and completing the necessary third-party forms. Approval was granted.

As excited as I was to receive approval and move on to this next stage of my research, I was nervous to go into the observation session. This was caused by my biology and occupying new spaces. I am aware that the spaces I occupy as a woman may cause changes in behaviours, especially since the participants and I did not have a relationship, nor did we have the time to develop a level of acquaintanceship. This was one of the main challenges I had to overcome going into the participant observation. Another challenge was finding a suitable venue.

I decided to conduct the observation at a student relaxation area near the University in Pretoria, located near the student residential area, Hatfield. I embarked on the journey with a trusted third party for safety reasons as mentioned above. However, it was challenging to

synchronise our schedules and choose a day to go to the field as we both faced other responsibilities such as family and work.

The fieldwork was conducted during the summer season, which made my day a little easier as I love a sunny day and I believe people tend to go out more when the weather is warmer. I spent most of my fieldwork at a hangout restaurant/pub on Thursdays and Fridays which is when most students visit the place. The restaurant had wooden tables outside for seating, limited seating inside, pool tables and a bar in the enclosed area. Most of the wooden tables outside were occupied by larger groups which consisted of a mix of males and females. There were a few options where we could be on a Friday as the majority of students were out looking to relax. This was a perfect restaurant for my participant observation as I would be able to experience a variety of interactions. Most days of my fieldwork, two of the pool tables would be occupied by two different groups of young men. In some instances, they would have few female companions there as well. It seemed as though these groups were based on different friendships as they would laugh together and shake each other's hands while some banter was included in the conversations every time one of them blundered their turn to play.

The venue was loud as the voices of the youth and music from the DJ booth filled up the room. This led me to focus my participant observation on the smaller groups playing pool. The key sightings were the prevalence of cliques and their relations with the individuals. When observing the smaller group, it became clear that the participants were part of a youth choir, and therefore in many of the interactions between them I heard mention of choir practice. Their conversations seemed to flow and were filled with chuckles of laughter here and there; it was evident that they were all more than acquaintances.

In one of the days of my fieldwork, a particular instance occurred that reminded me of the power of language. A friend of the group entered the room and instead of the usual greeting, I had heard during my time here, namely "my boy", this particular young male was greeted as 'grootman'. I made a note of this in my book of fieldwork notes as I thought it could be interesting to discuss this in my broader thesis when that step came around. The body language between the group seemed platonic as the boys interacted with the girls in a platonic manner, hugging with one arm or arms above the waist. However, it is noteworthy that flirtatious behaviours occurred between some of them such as stolen looks and blushing. The boys seemed calmer at the beginning since it was just us, however, once girls were

mentioned or entered the space, there were slight behaviour changes such as an increase in tones, side comments, 'shu' exclamations or 'chipi' (Pretoria slang which directly translates to steel but is used to refer to a beautiful girl). This to me was a sign that the girls had an impact on them and the way they reacted or behaved. The conversations between the young men also changed and some conversations were left unsaid; conveyed more in physical signs such as the lifting of eyebrows to hint at conversations carried out at other times.

Participant observation contributed to making sense of the data I had collected during my in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. I was able to observe what was said in the interviews but could not understand. I therefore had to embark on the journey to make sense of the data I collected before I could attempt to analyse it.

4.5.1 Making sense of the data

In the article *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight*, author Geertz (2005) describes the cultural significance of cultural phenomena in society. He highlights his personal experience of being an outsider in a Balinese village and gradually gaining acceptance through a shared experience of a Balinese cockfight, which holds significant cultural significance as it is a deeply ingrained practice that reflects the values and social structures of Balinese society. It is one of the few activities exclusively held for men, making it a unique expression of masculinity and status in a culture that is otherwise quite unisex, with most activities involving both men and women equally. The cockfight is a central driving force in Balinese society that celebrates prestige. Through focusing on the cockfight, gender dynamics, status and prestige as well as social cohesion, economic activity, historical significance and symbolism in the community are reflected. I was able to understand personal experience and society through Geertz's account. This became a crucial aspect for me as I had to find methods of validating the evidence gathered despite all the challenges I had faced. The little time I had to engage in participant observation, the outcome, and the process taught me the relevance and necessity for an understanding of cultural and social dynamics that exist in various societies. Furthermore, another concept that I incorporated in validating evidence was based on Geertz's (2005) discussion of the deeper understanding of things that others may not consider – the science behind interpretive anthropology. Interpretive anthropology highlights the value of smaller details, stressing the importance of context, meaning, and the intricate layers of social discourse. It is important that we realise this concept evolves but is concretely grounded in the realities of human experiences

(Geertz, 2008). Participant observation showed dialogues conveyed by body language as well as everyday linguistics that assisted in unveiling some of the insights gathered.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored three key themes to understand Western and African masculinity among young black men in Pretoria, South Africa: the foundations of African masculinity, the impact of external factors, and manifestations of violence. These themes contribute to the understanding of South African masculinity and the complex nature influenced by both Western and African ideologies. Furthermore, the themes developed show that Western influences play a significant role in the understanding of masculinity. An in-depth examination of the data is discussed in the following chapter where I explore its relationship with literature on Western and African masculinities.

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that emerged from the literature and fieldwork. It gives an in-depth analysis of the perspectives on masculinity of young South African males. The discussion is substantiated by evidence from the field and literature. It takes a broader look at the understanding of masculinity: internal and external influences, fluidity of the concept, power relations and violence. The chapter traces the Western influences in cultural practices that influence the understanding of masculinity and its performances. I also look at the language to trace the understanding of masculinity from an African perspective in order to provide a balanced view. I conclude the chapter by bringing scholars who call for decolonisation in the production of knowledge so that research on Africans can be understood using the African lens.

5.2 Themes and focal points to consider

The chosen analytical approach and thematic method allowed me to analyse similarities, differences, patterns, and narratives in the qualitative data collected. This method involved the examination of the interview recordings, the creation of transcripts which are also added in the appendix and revisiting the field notes. The first point focuses on the foundation of masculinity – the internalised perspectives and influences that guide young men as they start to define themselves.

The methodology included asking questions about their history and how they see themselves to gain an insight into societal expectations, familial dynamics and the cultural influences that contribute to the construction of masculine identities. Phrases such as "when I was younger" were used by participants such as Q and Sabelo (not his real name), who alluded to the fact that how they perceived the world and boyhood during adolescence, has evolved. An example of this is how they used to interact socially versus now. All of the participants mentioned seeing their role models as strong and accountable; aspects that I still see in what they consider to be the ideological man in their adulthood. This reveals that as the participants developed physically and mentally an aspect of fluidity emerged with regard to their understanding of masculinity. The rigid boundaries that once defined masculinity are giving way to a more flexible and inclusive understanding.

Through the data provided, I aim to discuss the evolving nature of masculinity, acknowledging the spectrum of identities and expressions that young males engage with during this time. An aspect I was made aware of was the relations amongst queer and cis identities, particularly between gay and heterosexual men, and the way they receive each other and are received. This was brought to the table during the second focus group when a participant shared their reasons for hiding their sexuality from their family. The conversation indicated the power relations within masculinity. Another participant felt safe enough to share his experience as a queer individual dealing with heterosexual masculinity being the standard in high school. This became another important theme that emerged during the qualitative investigations.

Examining the dynamics of power, privilege, and dominance within male identities unveils critical insights into the societal structures that highlight traditional notions of manhood. As we will see, these notions are signalled in hierarchies that exist in society as well as in smaller communities and social groups. Later in the chapter, I discuss the power relations and their implications on the construction and perceptions of masculinity. I show how the understanding of power leads to violent bahaviour and its acceptance. This alludes to both conscious and subconscious violence showing in either subtle or more visible ways. It also highlights how violence is understood and represented. The manifestations of violence within masculinity and its impact on the lives of young men and those around them are also analysed in this chapter.

5.3 Understanding masculinity

The participants mentioned that their initial understanding of masculinity and manhood was related to their biological identities to which, as time progressed, they attached their understanding of social identities. In my interview with Q, he asserted, "A man should be strong and withstand any and everything and protect right." This was his response when I asked him what he thought a man should be like when he was growing up. The word "protect" was also brought up as an attribute of manhood when Sabelo was asked the same question. These are responses that highlighted key attributes of what their male role models looked like. The question was posed to gather insight from the participants on how they understood masculinity in their adolescent years. The responses, as indicated, mentioned knowing the difference between male and female behaviour and characteristics such as strength and the ability to protect.

The knowledge of what a "man" is, was imprinted on the participants and they explained that it is when they were able to understand what a boy is supposed to behave like versus what a girl is supposed to behave like. This confirms that an initial foundation of knowledge relating to masculinity is based on the concept of gender. From here stems the association of male identity to certain traits such as being a superhero and liking the colour blue and then seeing these traits in the environments around us and our peers. A participant mentioned that besides viewing the men in his life as an example of what a man is, he first saw Spiderman and was able to relate to him during his developmental years as he was a fictional character that resembled his biological make-up.

Understanding who one is based on the concept of gender comes naturally as most participants said they do not think about their gender because it is who they are. This is my experience to as I do not think about my gender it is who I am. My earliest memory of understanding gender and the difference between boys and girls was through fictional characters that represented our genetic makeup as far as physical attributes are concerned. As a little girl, I loved Barbie and I was surrounded by pink (the colour associated with Barbie and most commonly, girls) and all other things that resembled Barbie such as the brand's merchandise. This was how I understood being a girl and navigated girlhood, but of course, this understanding and experience evolved over the years. However, this foundation shed light on the idea of girls versus boys and gender relations as well as norms.

As a continuation of the conversation around understanding masculinity and gender, two of the in-depth interview participants mentioned their experiences at religious schools. These experiences reinforced their identification with a particular gender and the behaviours associated with that gender. One of the participants, Q, mentioned how girls and boys at the schools were treated differently, particularly when it came to expressing their emotions. When it came to the boys, their emotions tended to be overlooked and not addressed. The difference in treatment between the two genders in this type of environment was confirmed by the second participant, Sam (not his real name). This participant mentioned how etiquette and some other lessons subconsciously highlighted the difference between the two genders.

Attempting to understand the concept of masculinity from an African perspective, it is essential to note a point made by Oyěwùmí (1997a) that gender is a social construct. Oyěwùmí (1997a) argues that gender in the context of colonialism is impacted by the logic

of the coloniser. Therefore, gender is seen because of colonialism, as it carries the institutionalisation of colonialist states. From its establishment in African societies until now the concept of gender has been a way of creating a biological and social identity. As argued by Oyěwùmí (1997a), it is necessary to understand how the implications of colonialism and its consequences have shaped the way society operates and the construction of male and female biological identities.

The discussion around Christian schools is similar to what I had witnessed in the community I was a part of during my primary and the major part of my high school years in a girls' only Catholic school, where phrases such as "ladies shouldn't….", "ladies don't…." were common – instilling in us behaviours and traits considered to be feminine and discouraging those that were not. This further strengthened the way female bodies were to be perceived in spaces such as social settings instead of challenging them. This discussion with Q and Sam highlighted that many of us experienced this and that our environments had a significant impact on our behaviours and perceptions of masculinity and femininity as well as how these two relate.

Growing up, as I was still developing terminology and theories to understand the difference between the roles we played in our schools and the roles boys played, I learnt that the expectations were not the same. Like Q mentioned in the interview explaining his experiences in the school that he encountered "double standards". This was because one thing is expected from one gender while another is expected from the other. Langa (2020) in his book titled *Becoming Men* argues that double standards are an endorsement of male supremacy as I will show throughout this chapter. Males are perceived as superior beings in public and amongst each other. And this has been inculcated in our cultures and everyday practices.

It is essential therefore to factor in the role of religion in the construction of masculinity, In South Africa religion has a historical background and continues to play a large role in various societies. Many South Africans view their commitment and membership to their chosen religion as a means to a better life. As religion has evolved so has what it has meant to many, based on the analysis of the conversations held and my personal experiences of being a scholar at a religious school Burchardt (2018) supports the argument that the understanding of gender has evolved.

Burchardt (2018) argues that religion provides the opportunity for women to access authoritative positions that they may have otherwise not been able to reach, whereas for men it allows and still values male leadership and male dominance. The article highlights that even through religion men are dominant beings who can assume leadership whereas women have to find gaps for an opportunity to rise to leadership roles It is also important to factor in arguments made by Burchardt (2018), that there is a need to move beyond the narrow focus on women's influence in conservative religious communities and instead to establish an approach that focuses on studying the dynamics of male gender ideologies. This would allow for a more insightful understanding of male gender ideologies while simultaneously addressing the lack of resources in studies on the correlation of gender and religion in African contexts, to provide more insights on African masculinity and the role of religion in being an African man.

It is also important to consider the argument presented by Meyer (2020) who highlights the significant need for understanding the intricate dynamics between religion, masculinity, and gender relations. This is essential to our understanding of masculinity from an African perspective since the above data and readings confirm that religion/spirituality correlates with the South African construction of masculinity to a certain degree.

As the various discussions with the participants continued, it appeared that from pre-adolescence to their current ages, they seemed to have made limited changes to their perceptions of masculinity. The relation to masculinity and religion as I was analysing my data, came up as a theme in the in-depth interviews. Men, in the South African context, perceive their masculinity as an identity that ties to more tangible aspects such as responsibilities and duties. This is significant as they grow into their bodies and assert masculine identities together with realisations of hierarchy, benefits, threats, and duties placed on the male body.

5.4 Influences behind becoming a "man"

It came as no surprise to me when discussing the influences that the participants have encountered in their lives that their perceptions of masculinity were linked to patriarchy, considering that South Africa has largely patriarchal societies with a history rooted in colonialism. It was therefore expected that colonialism and its aftereffects are also evident

in various cultures as supported by Dirk (1992). This means that impressions about concepts such as masculinity are tainted by colonialist influences. The participants that capitalism, religion as well as non-physical and physical aspects come into play.

When I asked the participants what being a man meant to them and how they perceived manhood, a significant number of participants in both the in-depth interviews and focus groups, mentioned that they perceived a man as "someone who is able to provide for their families." When asked what this meant to them, they said in a financial manner. Therefore, performativity in the form of actions and capitalism emerged as a theme that confirmed that masculinity is based on behaviours, and in this context the behaviours were linked to finances. These two aspects recur later in the chapter in a different context; it is important to note the role performativity plays.

Performativity is a concept that is essential in asserting the identity of self. As argued by Nentwich and Morison (2018), it refers to the intersectionality that occurs between performativity and discursive psychology, particularly in the context of gender identity construction. Performativity is a key factor in the formation of gendered identities, challenging essentialist notions and emphasising the dynamic, reflexive, and agentic nature of subject construction. It is, however, important to note that with the performativity of gendered identity comes the opportunity for fluidity of performances. Nentwich and Morison (2018) highlight the complexities involved in the construction of gendered identities. Performativity as a means of asserting masculine identity through finance, as alluded to by a participant in the in-depth interviews, Sam, stems from traditional gender roles that he had witnessed through male figures that he would like to emulate. It therefore highlights the influence money has on who is seen to be dominant (e.g. the man/head of house) in households that are women-led and where women take on the role of caring for the household and bringing in money. Money is linked to traditional male roles such as being the breadwinner and taking care of the family which was mentioned by nearly all the participants.

It is also evident in the logistics of capitalism and dominative capitalistic way of rule understandings of a patriarchal society the view of men was already as Bernau (2007) had stated imposed on the male bodies. Malton (2016) discusses the result of racial capitalism amongst complicit masculinities. According to Wojnicka (2021: 201), complicit masculinities are defined as a type of masculinity that is neither hegemonic nor marginal but

sustains the gender regime and reaps patriarchal benefits such as power and leadership a post-colonial state such as South Africa in which race is still a prominent categorisation. Race can thus determine one's positioning in the masculine hierarchy as well as being a contributing factor in the achievement of standardised masculinity. The theory of performativity indicates that pivotal behaviours benefit from biological identification as a man and expressing "masculine behaviour" as a result of complicit masculinity.

Malton (2016) discusses the intersection of masculinity, race, and capitalism, particularly in the context of un- and underemployed black men. He focuses on the concept of 'complicit masculinity' and its implications for black men, highlighting the impact of access to capital on mediating masculine identity. The challenges which are faced by un- and underemployed black men in asserting their masculine identities during a sustained economic crisis are discussed as well as how they navigate economic participation within the context of racial capitalism and colonial legacies.

Complicit masculinity is also discussed in an academic article by Wojnicka (2021) who argues the role that this type of masculinity plays. This article examines complicit masculinity in South Africa, particularly how it emerged within the context of racial and ethnic divisions established through colonialism and later reinforced by the apartheid regime. The analysis demonstrates how complicit masculinity served to uphold and perpetuate hegemonic masculine ideals. Complicit masculinity assists in supporting hegemonic masculinity through power relations, particularly in race and ethnicity as well as gender norms which are Western concepts.

Malton (2016) touches on the impact of colonialism which disrupted traditional provider norms of masculinity while also shedding light on complicit masculinities and their role in sustaining relations of domination within the economy. Malton gives an analysis of the complex relations between masculinity, race, and capitalism and how black men navigate economic participation and assert their identities. Furthermore, Malton (2016) argues that there needs to be a deeper understanding of the crisis of black masculinity in the context of racial capitalism and colonial legacies, to shed light on the complex dynamics of economic participation, masculine identity, and the impact of historical and contemporary power structures.

As a means of identity for underemployed youths as well as those who are employed, money (generating it as well as spending it) remains a key factor. Instead of rejecting the result of racial capitalism where black bodies signified exploited and undervalued labourers (Malton 2016), the study I conducted shows that this is now being asserted differently: the black male body and its economic positioning is now perceived as a representative of social worth. This notion is reinforced by Dharani, Vergo and April (2020) in their investigation when interdependence amongst black males was shown as a determinant of successfully achieving manliness. This means that the standard of what being a man is correlated with the success of the man, the more successful he is then the more of a man he is. In an academic article, Dharani, Vergo and April (2020) argue the intersection of social categories with hegemonic masculinities and internal hegemony in the South African context. They investigate the social categories that intersect with hegemonic masculinities and internal hegemony, focusing on the significance of cultural identity, race, sexuality, marital status, and the number of wives and children in defining hegemonic masculine identity for South African men. It highlights the importance of cultural identity, race, and social categories in defining masculinity and shaping internal hierarchy among men in the South African context.

Dharani, Vergo and April (2020)'s research findings suggest that culture, race, and social categories play a vital role in shaping hegemonic masculinities and internal hegemony, contributing to the complexities of masculinity in South African society. To further validate the role of social contexts, Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017) argue that social contexts play a pivotal role in shaping masculine identities and behaviours. They give a deeper understanding of the limitations and possibilities for change within these contexts and argue that there needs to be an understanding of the factors and social structures that exist in areas such as urban rural settlements and how they can affect and possibly support change amongst men.

Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017) highlight the important need to understand the intersection of social categories with masculinities to challenge and break out of internal hegemony. Furthermore, validating the argument that supports the complexity of African masculinity as it is characterised by various determinants that can influence how it is understood and attained by African men. Sabelo is an example of a participant who acknowledges that the environment he grew up in is a determinant of how he understands masculinity.

During the discussions I held with the participants, as a response to the same question about what being a man means to them now, the complexity of traditional gender roles for an African male was voiced. For participants such as Sabelo (not his real name), who took part in the in-depth interviews, it is evident that Mfecane's (2018) conception that African masculinity is characterised by personhood is valid. Sabelo and the location where he grew up indicate the impact that physical factors of personhood have on African masculinity. As mentioned before, personhood is a traditional thought based on the idea that human beings are conceived of as having both physical and non-physical attributes. Our lived experiences contribute to who we are and how we see African masculinity.

Sabelo mentioned his experience of growing up in Pretoria in his late teenage years to early twenties without the influence and presence of his parents were away for a while for personal reasons. During this time frame of his life, he had to take care of his younger sister and himself and was thus having to play both a mother and father. Traditional gender roles in his case did not exist. Supporting the concept put forward by Mfecane (2018) that environment influences one's perception of masculinity, Sabelo said despite his biological identity, his living situation impacted how he had to conceive of his masculinity and how he and his sister perceived him. This confirms that one's environment and one's interactions with this environment and the people in it, can influence one's perception of masculinity and chosen method and spaces of asserting this identity.

It is therefore important to note the context as well as nature and nurture when understanding masculinity from an African perspective. Furthermore, the role of race and capitalism is also to be noted when understanding masculinity from an African perspective. Situations such as Sabelo's in South Africa are not unusual and therefore African perceptions of masculinity may vary from individual to individual as a result of physical or non-physical elements which can include social, economic and political determinants. Traditional gender roles were highlighted and further discussed when women were the topic of conversation, and yet another notion that was understood as a Western concept was male leadership.

A significant number of participants, when discussing their developmental years and their view on masculinity during that stage, did not mention women as much as I, a woman, would have anticipated. Women were brought up as influences in their lives later as they either lose male figures in their lives such as fathers or they see how their sisters and mothers are treated

and behave towards males. Therefore, certain life events are what usually bring up significant feminine presence in their lives. Despite this omission to mention women, it is important to remember that regardless of the female presence in their lives growing up, who contributed to a certain degree to how they perceive manhood, their fathers and father figures were their main influences and representations of being a man.

This vindicated the differences in our bodies; under the colonial concept of gender we are not perceived equally and therefore, a Westernised hierarchy structure exists (Oyěwùmí, 1997b). The role of women and how the participants saw themselves as becoming 'providers' in relation to women shows the correlation between genders and the concept of racial capitalism. As mentioned by Matlon (2016), men of all ages question their positioning, particularly when they do not have formal employment or finances. They see themselves as providers for their families as well as women. Men struggle to see themselves as masculine without financial positioning. This supports the view that men see themselves as leaders and superior, both financially and as breadwinners for their families.

This conception of masculinity varies, as we evolve and gender roles become less common, the concept of men being the 'breadwinners' and family heads evolves with modern times. For example, in my community, there are many women in the urban areas of Pretoria, who are the breadwinners of their families for various reasons. This is common in my own family and networks. This may pose a challenge to the men in the families particularly when reverting to the argument Malton (2016) makes regarding traditional provider norms of masculinity sustaining the domination of hegemonic masculinities in the economy. However, in my observations, perhaps due to my relationship with women who occupy the same spaces as me or who are around my age, the challenges faced by men have not been loudly enough expressed to have become evident to me. In matriarchal homes the common hierarchical structure is thus challenged and so are gender norms.

The way hierarchy operates is patriarchal and thus contradicts pre-colonial forms of society. Pre-colonialism, some African societies were led by women and therefore the influences of women on society and on maleness and masculinity still exist. These influences that women have on society and maleness can be through culture as well as religion. Ratele (2014) discusses the male's religious location and how perceptions of the ideal man and masculinity, also known as hegemonic masculinity, can be represented in religious views. Religion was a theme that resurfaced in multiple conversations, particularly in the second focus group.

The participants believed that religion is a key influence on how they perceive themselves as men. What was interesting for me was the significance of religion in their lives despite them not having attended religious academic institutions.

The role of religion in the participants' lives was introduced to them by family and taken more seriously as they matured. Religion continued to have a significant impact on the construction and development of masculinity, as Burchardt (2018: 4) says "(Pentecostalism) produces subjective dispositions towards radical personal change that may foster gender transformations". This means that the influence of Pentecostal Christianity on masculinity in South Africa and its potential to foster gender transformations in line with liberal masculinity while simultaneously reinforcing traditional masculinity. He addresses the lack of attention paid to masculinities in existing sociological studies on gender and religion, particularly in African contexts. This once again highlights the complex negotiations of masculinity in religious contexts and emphasises the complex interplay between religion and gender norms.

Meyer (2020) interrogates the correlation between masculinity and religiosity/spirituality in postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa to understand how South African men perceive their masculine roles in specific religious/spiritual contexts and their potential impact on social dynamics and gender relations. The study emphasises the importance of practical theology in addressing social justice and gender equality, particularly in the African context. The findings of this study are that South African men perceive their masculine roles within specific religious/spiritual contexts. This confirms that religion is integral to an understanding of masculinity from an African perspective. It also validates the question posed by Ratele (2014) which asks if African masculinity can still be considered a legitimate concept if it is significantly shaped by Western influences such as gender and religion, This question is particularly important when we think of how fluid and complex the concept of masculinity is for African males that have moved from rural areas to urban areas such as Pretoria.

5.5 Fluidity of masculinity

When I asked the participants about masculinity in the second focus group discussion, one of them said:

My definition of a man is someone who has a responsibility to become like the best version of himself, like in every aspect of... yeah, in basically in every aspect, you know financially, mentally, physically, everything.

This response to what it means to be a man was mentioned without consciously realising that he was alluding to the notion of fluid masculinity: the ability to transition from one phase to another while still aiming for a standardised version of manhood. To understand the fluidity that exists in African masculinity, performativity in masculinity should be acknowledged. African males take on a variety of roles and responsibilities that can differ according to multiple aspects (socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, health, etc) and therefore, in each environment, they perform accordingly. The transition from one role and responsibility to another shows that transitions take place and therefore, fluidity exists.

In the in-depth interview, Q mentioned how to him, masculinity can be seen as fluid due to modernity, his example of this was that as we become more urbanised, traditions and cultures are altered and so are gender roles. Q's perspective as well as the focus group participants' perspectives were further supported by Sam who mentioned that through performativity fluidity can exist. However, there may be limits (as seen with queerness) that require that certain behaviours and actions be confined to private rather than general spaces.

Nentwich and Morison (2018) describe gender identities by emphasising the fluidity of local and situated performances as part of the ongoing, becoming, making the performed nature of "person-ness" further validating the fluidity that masculinities navigate. This argument furthers Jewkes et al.'s (2015) argument that there are multiple versions of masculinity within hegemonic masculinity. Mfecane's (2018) take on the complexities of 'person-ness' highlights Western influence's take on the fluidity that exists in masculinity and how it excludes aspects such as the non-physical; the creation of masculinity happens through interactions with others and not in isolation.

According to Jewkes et al (2015) fluid, multiple and dynamic masculinities exist in hegemonic masculinity. Mfecane's (2018) conceptualisation of African masculinity assists us in understanding the multiplicities that exist within an African man. This allows us to accept that there is some level of interchange that happens when masculinity is considered**.** An example of this is in social interactions; in my participant observation, a change in social behaviour and discourse was noted between when the group of boys was alone versus when

young women were around. This shows the change in the individuals from being an individual that fits into a masculine environment through competing and discussions of women, to being socially acceptable and accommodating of women through actions such as changing the language used as well as how women are referred to.

Moolman (2017) describes how masculine identities are legitimised through various discourses and life events such as circumcision, fatherhood and marriage. The gaps in between these life-changing moments are where other masculine identities exist, therefore this is where transitions are formed, and flexibility exists. The aspect of personhood, referred to by Mfecane (2018) strengthens this point as it shows the multiplicity of a man and how it can co-exist in creating a desired identity. An identity that can accommodate all the responsibilities that an individual may face would be the ideal identity, but this standardised masculinity is not always achieved by everyone. Porter (2013) mentions that not all men achieve hegemonic masculinity. Men's actions and behaviours have shown how the desired masculine identity can change over time. The spaces in which flexibility and fluidity occur, are simultaneously areas in which complicit masculinities can be found, a form of masculinity that I realised many unconsciously subscribed to.

A participant from the first focus group brought up an African queer perspective on masculinity and the evolution of this. He mentioned how through his actions he performed various aspects that would be expected of the ideal man such as gaining interest in sports and not discussing any attraction to men. These actions and behaviours were done at home prior to him coming out. His behaviours and actions were restricted and had to be more male-presenting as he participated in masculine activities. This is an example of fluidity as well as a different type of masculinity, namely complicit masculinity.

Complicit masculinity is caused by the notion that African masculinity is accompanied by anti-homosexuality discourses rooted in unacceptable and unruly behaviours caused by women and men's desires (Ratele 2014). An article titled *Hegemonic African Masculinities and Men's Heterosexual Lives: Some Uses for Homophobia* by Kopano Ratele, explores the complex interplay between homophobia, masculinity, and sexuality in the African context. Ratele (2014) argues that homosexuality and non-heteronormative sexualities are a source of disturbance and a tool for the maintenance of hegemonic African men and masculinities. The author emphasises the psychosocial and sociopolitical aspects of homophobia, applying the concept of 'psychopolitics' to analyse the effects of psychological and political factors.

In this article Ratele (2014) also addresses the compulsion which African men have to embody heterosexuality, emphasising the uncertainty and anxiety underlying societal norms that lead to submitting to the embodiment of heterosexuality. Through this, we can analyse the insecurities and failures of upholding traditional forms of masculinity, particularly in the face of socio-economic changes and disparities that evolve at a rapid pace.

Ratele (2014) argues that the persecution and violence directed at gay and lesbian individuals in Africa are intertwined with the inadequacies of the ruling class and the discordances within hegemonic African masculinity. Challenges such as the lack of support for LGTBQIA+ communities, misconceptions of homosexual relationships as well as prejudice, are realities faced by gay and lesbian individuals in Africa, resulting in them being mistreated. The actions of society towards them indicate rejection, further marginalising them. Therefore, it is essential to note that when comprehending the representations of homosexual masculinities in South Africa, the legalities and policies around LGTBQIA+ relations as well as their treatment in various communities are essential to how they are represented and how they assert their masculinity. It highlights the complex relationship between tradition and modernity. According to Ratele (2015) the socially constructed and fluid nature of what we understand as 'traditional masculinity' is better known and more noticeable.

Wojnicka (2021) defines masculinity as embodying hegemonic masculinity. This type of masculinity continues through behaviours and practices that benefit men. Wojnicka (2021) explains the concept of 'complicit masculinities' and their role in sustaining hegemonic structures of masculinities. Wojnicka (2021) highlights the lack of in-depth analysis of complicit masculinities in scholarly literature, despite being a contributor towards upholding the dominance of hegemonic masculinity. The author examines the invisibility that comes with complicit masculinities and the role of this within contemporary gender and masculinity debates.

As stated earlier by Malton (2016) who argues that there is intersectionality between masculinity and other factors such as race and capitalism. Furthermore, the challenges that are embedded in complicit masculinities are discussed such as issues of accessibility to assist in asserting masculine identities and the roles they play, particularly in challenging economies. However, these masculinities are faced with the challenge of being poorly acknowledged. Based on how complicit masculinities are established and asserted, Wojnicka

(2021) critiques the marginalisation of complicit masculinities in scholarly reflection and emphasises the need for a better understanding of the interactions between different forms of masculinities in sustaining the existence of hegemonic forms. This is essential as complicit masculinities actively contribute to defining and legitimising other types of masculinities, such as marginalised and subordinated masculinities.

It is important to note that when understanding masculinity, we consider the masculinities that fall neither under marginalised nor subordinated masculinities but do however, assist in legitimising the two categories as types of masculinity that exist and receive benefits associated with manhood. These masculinities adhere to how society expects men to behave therefore legitimising the fact that there is a correct manner in masculine behaviour and further validating an ideal portrait of a man. Complicit individuals benefit from these actions. Equally, we should consider how the masculinities which are neither hegemonic nor marginalised legitimise these types of masculinities through maintaining power structures, particularly in the context of racial and ethnic diversity.

This translates to African masculinity, and in this context, we have established that influences on African masculinity originate from Western theologies; African hegemonic masculinity would therefore suggest that the male is heterosexual. Furthermore, this implies that complicit masculinity would then be exercised and that the benefits of hegemonic masculinity through behaving as heterosexual males were being attained. However, as time evolves, African masculinity is expected to change as well, but the absence of change has led to the masculinity crisis in Africa which does not acknowledge multiple masculine identities.

Ammann and Staudacher (2021) challenge the simplistic and negative portrayals of African men by highlighting the diverse and complex experiences of masculinities on the continent. The authors argue that the discourse on the 'crisis of masculinity' in Africa fails to capture the multifaceted nature of men's identities and experiences. They emphasise the need for a deeper understanding of masculinities, considering factors such as age, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, as well as the historical, geographical, and cultural diversities within African countries. In a nutshell, Ammann and Staudacher (2021) challenge the stereotypical depiction of 'the African man' by highlighting the negative connotations often associated with this image, including violence, domination, and irresponsibility. Instead, the article stresses the importance of considering how masculinities are shaped by various factors and

advocates for a more equitable approach to knowledge production in the field. They also emphasise the impact of neoliberal structural reforms on men's roles and identities, particularly in relation to economic and social changes.

Ammann and Staudacher (2021) call for us to note the need for a shift in knowledge production on men and masculinities in Africa, advocating for a more Africa-cantered approach that challenges the power imbalances in global knowledge production. The importance of contextually grounding an understanding of masculinities in time and space is emphasised as is the need for more attention to be paid to how masculinities change throughout life.

The dynamic nature of masculinity is illustrated through one participant's narrative of how his university experience transformed his conception of manhood. Through transitioning to adult life and university, the participant admits that he has changed and has been able to 'come out' (the process of openly stating your sexuality as an individual that resonates with the LGBTQIA+ community) and express himself in various ways that he could not before. His queerness hinders his ability to reach the ultimate masculine ideal of hegemonic masculinity. This was a response he had given to a follow-up question regarding how he navigates manhood as a queer male. The change in his actions and behaviours during university and early adulthood highlights fluidity and the various ways in which masculinity can exist such as in the LGTBQIA+ community.

The impact of not being able to reach hegemonic masculinity can be seen because of the marginalisation of certain masculinities. The marginalised masculinities are excluded due to the hierarchical structures that rank masculinity and have set a standardised masculinity for men in society to achieve. The consequence of this is the rejection or lack of knowledge on the possibility of more than one type of masculinity.

5.6 Hierarchy and masculinity: the power relations that exist

In in-depth discussions I held with the participants, the theme of hierarchies emerged in various ways. Sam and Q, as a response to how masculinity was asserted and taught at home, mentioned how hierarchies at home can exist due to tradition and how back at home (the village where his grandparents currently live) respect and superiority are given according to age instead of gender. Therefore, despite your gender, in his village, anyone can be seen as

a leader or a head of a household based on their age. Hierarchy is therefore not gender-based as much as it is age-based.

As a young girl navigating puberty, an observation that always stuck with me was how boys who were perceived as more attractive and those who received the most female attention were seen as superior. This was also mentioned by Sabelo (not his real name) who stated that in his high school days the boys who were seen as the highest standard were those who were most desired by the girls. For the boys, this was seen as a harmless way of climbing the patriarchal ladder at the time, but as I recall, these situations sometimes ended up in some of us, girls, caught in rumours about relationships or intimate moments with people that were fabricated. These were harmful to us and perpetuated a form of subjectivity over us. It influenced how we think about ourselves as young women; we have to get over feelings of being less than because of rumours and how boys speak about us. The behaviour of the boys validated what I had read about in books and heard from older women – that men treat women like trophies and can dispose of them afterward, like children with new toys. We were seen as objects to be conquered to reach the next level of manhood.

This outlook highlights the subordination of women at a young age and how it can signify a confirmation of masculinity for young South African men. It is further supported by a response by a participant in the second focus group in which through the language used, a sense of inferiority is placed on how young girls/women are perceived. Words and phrases that are used to refer to women can be degrading and therefore highlight women in a negative light. The participant, B (not his real name), poses the following question during a discussion about romantic relationships and companions: "It's not like am promiscuous? But then why do you have a lot of girls who want to change once they grow old, but then have been ran through?" This question addresses how women who are sexually liberated are judged by men once they decide to settle down. B (not his real name) validates that sexual liberation is a trait that is still perceived as something only a man can exercise, and women are to remain inaccessible. The term 'ran through' in this context indicates the inferiority placed on the woman in question as she is objectified as something that can be depleted. As such, it is essential to note that the objectification of women still continues. This is another example of language being used for masculinities to benefit from patriarchy by positioning themselves as superior and pure while women are tainted and to be achieved. These

examples confirm that masculinity is defined to some degree by the subjectification and objectivity of women; a concept that is rooted in patriarchal teachings.

Closson et al. (2020) argue that the impact of gender role conflict on the sexual health and relationship practices of young men is based on control. The concept of women carrying condoms and making their own decisions regarding family planning and sexual health is taboo in some African communities, and therefore decisions regarding family planning are seen as a male responsibility. This places the power of decision-making in the hands of the male thus allowing them to control not just their own sexual health but that of their partners too. Closson et al. (2020) found that higher gender role conflict scores were associated with increased relationship control, engagement in transactional sex, having multiple casual partners, and being a client of a sex worker. They also identified three sub-scales of gender role conflict: subordination to women, restrictive emotionality, and success, power, and competition – each of which had distinct associations with sexual health and relationship practices. Companionship both in the platonic and romantic sense is therefore identified as a key contributor to understanding manhood.

The second focus group discussion that I conducted supports an argument presented by Clossen et al. (2020) as participants agreed that women are perceived as having a goal to establish superiority in high school, as Sabelo (not his real name) stated earlier. This perception held prior to university changed with maturity and now the standard is based on other variables such as money and morals. One of the participants from the second focus group stated: " In high school, once you have many girls, you're the top dog, you're finishing them (innuendo) Like, as you grow older, you realize, that okay, this thing firstly like, is stress financially it also kills you."

Dharani, Vergo and April (2020) identify themes such as the significance of rites of passage, the role of elders, and male companionship in influencing hegemonic masculinities and internal hegemony. The authors argue that male companionship in this context is just as significant as a girlfriend but not particularly marriage. For the African child, rites of passage, roles of elders and male companionship may be different compared to the Western child. As Malton (2016) argues, how black men navigate economic participation and assert their identities can be influenced by the impacts of colonialism on tradition and race. This is particularly evident for those who are in urbanised and semi-urban areas where tradition is not as prevalent and there is a rise in modernity. This supports Wojnicka's (2021) argument

regarding masculinity being an embodiment of efforts to reach standardised masculinity – hegemonic masculinity – through behaviours and practices because of the benefits related to sustaining hegemonic masculinity.

Furthermore, the data from the focus group discussions validate the fluidity and complexities that men experience but also highlight a concept discussed by Langa (2020) who mentions public performance and how when men are younger many feel pressured to prove their virility and thus can end up performing by fabricating stories to align with the image of standard of masculinity. Langa (2020) in the book *Becoming Men* analyses the life of 32 boys from Alexandra, one of Johannesburg's largest townships. Over this period, they negotiate manhood and masculinity while Langa documents it and helps readers understand what it means to be a young black man in contemporary South Africa. The range of topics highlighted in this book are: the impact of absent fathers, relationships with mothers, siblings and girls, school violence, academic performance, homophobia, gangsterism, unemployment and, in one case, prison life. These are all significant life events and relationships that alter the boys' perspectives of their masculine identity and behaviours.

Langa (2020) discusses the difficulties of negotiating multiple forms of masculinity, especially in reducing high-risk behaviours generally associated with hegemonic masculinity. Langa further argues that the fluidity and complexities that men experience are multifaceted results of social determinants and how life is structured for each individual. These public performances shield the boys from scrutiny and policing by each other and instead offer them respect; a sign of power. Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017) confirm the importance of social contexts in shaping masculine identities and behaviours.

Moolman (2017) discusses the complexities of social identities and masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa. The intersectionality that exists between understanding the reproduction and production of social power and identities is integral in the complexities of African masculinity as it highlights the ability of social identities to change and how one can accumulate power through their social identity, for example how a white male has more power than a black male due to their race and how this positions them in the societal hierarchy that exists in South Africa. Moolman (2017) takes a deeper look into the impact of macro-social processes, legislative changes, economic policies, and feminist activism on the dynamics of gendered power and gendered transition in South Africa. The research highlights the role of race, class, ethnicity/culture, sexuality, and gender in shaping the lived

experiences and practices of masculinities. For example, growing up in South Africa, there are 12 official languages (with South African sign language being an addition as of May 2023). However, various regions have their own local slang used by the youth but are understood by locals of various ages. In Pretoria, the local slang is called *spitori* – a combination of words derived from other languages that are part of the culture in the area. One of the terms that is often used, and I have heard since I was a child here is the term 'grootman' which directly translates to 'big man'. In my younger days, my understanding of the term was literal as I saw the term used as a greeting from young boys to those older than them, their seniors. However, I later realised that the term goes beyond being literal and can refer not just to men who are biologically older or bigger than the speaker but those who are considered superior for various reasons. An example of this was seen during my participant observation where a friend of the group of young men who were being observed entered the room and was greeted as 'grootman'.

This supports the insight that there is a hierarchy amongst men themselves. In this context 'grootman' refers to someone who is seen as not just a peer but has reached a certain level of masculinity based on their assets and behaviours and is therefore addressed with a level of respect that an older individual would receive. This for me confirmed that masculinity is performative and there are power relations behind it, the performativity behind masculinity creates hierarchies and power relations not just between them and women but amongst themselves as well. Language is used as a performative act and power tool. Through participant observation, I gained deeper insight into how these terms were understood and used within their cultural context, following Geertz's (2008) interpretive anthropological approach. The value in small details such as colloquial linguistics stresses the importance of the complexities of social discourse and meaning. It is important that with this concept we realise that interpretive anthropology evolves but it is concretely grounded in the realities of human experiences (Geertz, 2008). This observation also highlights the role of language in asserting gendered identities such as masculinity. Menegatti and Rubini (2017) argue that language can reproduce the societal asymmetries of status and power in favour of men. Choice of terminology can affect the attributions of the receiver in a way that is consistent with stereotypical beliefs. In the above context, the stereotypical belief would be that the man is superior and thus more respected.

Hierarchies have existed since pre-colonial times and continue to do so to the present day. Oyěwùmí (1997b) mentions that hierarchies in Africa were based on seniority rather than gender before colonialism. However, now they are largely gender-based meaning that men are higher in the social hierarchy than women. This is due to the bodies they occupy and the benefits that these bodies carry as discussed by Bernau (2007) when looking at body politics. Body politics is defined as the conscious and subconscious responsibilities and behaviours that are imposed on bodies (male and female). This highlights the importance that biology has had on maleness and masculinity (Bernau, 2007) as well as the responsibilities that are associated with the male body. Therefore, these bodies, because of how they look, are subject to acting and carrying out specific tasks for them to acquire the acknowledgement of being either a woman or a man. For the participants, these hierarchies and their positionings varied slightly from high school to university and were also influenced by social contexts.

The above perceptions on hierarchies and masculinities highlight the argument that in the presence of hegemonic masculinity, there is also the possibility of having more than one hegemonic masculinity in a society (Jewkes et al, 2015). This is evident as according to the data, the basis on which these hierarchies are built evolves as one matures. It is important to note that various aspects such as morality and the ability to take care of one's family or culture contribute to how these hierarchies are structured. According to the aspect that the hierarchies may be based on, there is a standardised version of male social identity, as already mentioned. It is the overall aim and falls under the hegemonic masculinity that men believe to aspire to and may do so unconsciously therefore posing as complicit masculinities.

5.7 Violence in masculinity

During our in-depth interview, about whether there had been changes in how he and his friends behaved in high school compared to how they conduct themselves now versus when they were in high school As well as what influenced the possible behaviour change, whether it be maturity and growth or simply performing responsibilities linked to gender, Q agreed that performativity of responsibilities such as taking care of your family came into play.

How performativity is done is based on how one believes one is being perceived by one's peers. When Q was younger, the more emotive an individual was, the less manly they were, and he gave me an example of one of his peers in high school who was an emotional individual and thus looked at by the other boys as less manly and more as a 'soft' individual.

However, he mentions that now, in his twenties, he perceives that the hierarchy is based on one's morals and values as well as whether or not one is able to take care of one's family. The in-depth interviews showed another example of how hierarchies have existed in masculinity for African male youth but how they can also manifest in violence in a variety of ways such as through violence towards each other.

The article by Hoosen et al (2022) titled *Youth and Adolescents' Perceptions of Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Systematic Review of the Literature* provides an argument that focuses on various perceptions of violence among youth and adolescents in post-apartheid South Africa. The study identifies three themes, namely exposure to violence, gender and sexual-based violence, and interpersonal and school violence. Hoosen et al (2022) show the relationship between violence in school environments and interpersonal violence and how this creates a basis for violence in the broader community. The link between violence and school violence is a complex issue, as evidenced by the findings from various studies in the document. Hoosen et al. (2022) highlight that exposure to violence in the broader community, including witnessing or experiencing violence in the home, neighbourhood, and among peers, has been shown in broader studies to have a significant impact on the prevalence of school violence. Studies have highlighted that exposure to various forms of violence experienced in the various environments in academic institutions, such as bullying, vandalism, gangsterism, and corporal punishment, contributes to a culture of violence within schools.

Hoosen et al. (2022) emphasise that school violence is influenced by broader social and contextual factors, including community social dysfunction, family dynamics, and intergenerational transmission of violence. The legacy of apartheid which further highlights the current consequences of colonialism and the structural violence it engendered have also been identified as contributing factors to the prevalence of violence in schools. Furthermore, it highlights the gendered nature of school violence, with male learners often identified as the primary perpetrators of aggressive incidents. Overall, the link between violence and school violence is evident in how exposure to violence in various environments contributes to the perpetuation of violence within educational settings.

Sabelo (not his real name) provided a deeper insight into this as he discussed that now, in his twenties, amongst his peers, the more a man provides and pays for things in a relationship (particularly romantic relationships) or at home, the more other peers perceive him as being

'the man' (the standard to be reached). This is due to the belief that men are providers as well as the impact and influence of social media. Social media platforms have played a role in the manner in which the two genders interact and what they expect from each other. Men on these platforms are seen showing off money and luxurious items as a sign of having reached a particular standard. This positions them as an influence for others and indicates that they can afford and have access to provide; a key aspect in manhood and the responsibilities that align with it in African masculinity.

Sabelo (not his real name) and Q's points of view in this instance have shown a way in which violence can manifest in masculine identities, particularly in the social context. It furthermore challenges Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya's (2017) article about how many young men aspire for traditional masculinity which is less violent in nature and more economic in urban informal settlements. In this area of Pretoria, which is considered an urban settlement area, the participants aspire more to a type of masculinity that embraces economic provision and social dominance. Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya emphasise the challenges faced by young men in these settings, particularly those who come from urban informal settlements, where high levels of unemployment, poverty, and gender inequalities contribute to risky sexual behaviour, violence against women, and the HIV epidemic.

Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017) also argue that the material-political context that is provided by stakeholder institutions such as government, academic and religious institutions, creates opportunities for men to increase their earnings, but the high levels of unemployment and limited job opportunities hinder their ability to establish a different relationship with the economy. When analysed from the perspective of the participants' personal networks, their main partners and family were supportive of change, whereas their peers acted as a barrier. This dynamic led to male participants experiencing both ridicule and resistance from their peers. While multiple expressions of masculinity were theoretically available to these men, the particular form of masculinity performed by young Black African men demonstrated notable resistance to change, creating a tension between potential alternatives and established practices.

Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017) continue to argue that while the interventions by their networks enabled some men to become more gender equitable and less controlling in their relationships, it did not engender a radical transformation of masculine identities. Therefore, it is essential to note that when understanding masculinity one has to understand that social

contexts in informal settlements may cause limitations to the possibilities for forms of change, constraining men to adopt limited and socially approved identities. There is a broader need that requires addressing the wider structural factors, such as economic marginalisation and gender inequalities, to achieve more transformative change in relationships, to reduce violence. It is also important to note that those who reside in Pretoria, where this study was conducted, may still be traditionally centred as the area is occupied from students from around the continent, some of whom come from traditional homes where rituals and other traditional practices are prominent. Therefore, their behaviours may be changing and thus their masculine identities are in a phase of transition because of the change in settlement and social context. This aligns with the argument made Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017).

As I have argued above, gender is a confirmation of masculinity, and it continues to be a confirmation of violence as well as argued by Hoosen et al. (2022). Hoosen et al. (2022) further justify the argument and relation between gender and violence. The article emphasises the role of cultural and social norms in perpetuating male hegemonic authoritarianism, which contributes to the normalisation and acceptance of violence against women. The legacy of apartheid and the erosion of traditional concepts of Black African masculinity due to various reasons that we have touched on in this paper have also been identified as factors contributing to the prevalence of gender-based violence. Furthermore, it highlights the intergenerational transmission of violence and the impact of societal structures on the perpetuation of violence, particularly within relationships.

The role of gender in violence highlights an underlying assumption and manifestation of a patriarchal society and how this can result in intimate partner violence. This encourages us to note that gender-based violence is often spoken about in the same breath as South African masculinity due to the high gender-based violence rates in the country as well as the manifestations of the patriarchal society. In summary, the link between gender and violence in the context of South Africa is characterised by the pervasive nature of gender-based violence, the impact of cultural and social norms, and the need for comprehensive interventions to address the root causes of violence and promote gender equality.

The narrative on gender-based violence is prominent, particularly in current times in many societies. Conversations around gender are linked to violence characterising women as

victims of gender-based violence and men as the perpetrators no matter the context. For example, in the beginning stages of my research proposal in the ethics stage a challenge that I was posed with was how I was going to keep safe during this data gathering process. As I initially filled out my ethics form, this question did not occur to me as I suppose I had a naïve outlook on being in spaces outside of my comfort zone and the dangers involved. These dangers are real and led me to not just solve the problem at hand but to also be more cautious in the world around me when I leave the house. I realised the extent of how cautious we are as women in South Africa when I was travelling in Europe in 2023 and could do activities such as walking at night at a comfortable pace with my bag and cell phone in my hand and not worry about being attacked.

Our mothers constantly worry when we leave our houses and head out in South Africa and warn us to be careful. In the last few years, these warnings have gotten more serious but have of course led to fatigue from constantly being on guard. We cannot however overlook the realities. Mpako and Ndoma (2023) reported second-quarter crime statistics for 2023/2024, and according to Police Minister Bheki Cele South Africa in this period recorded 10,516 rapes, 1,514 cases of attempted murder, and 14,401 assaults against female victims in July, August, and September. In the same period, 881 women were murdered. As long as gender-based violence statistics increase and the epidemic continues, gender and violence in South Africa will continue to be characterised by gender-based violence.

To understand masculinity and violence amongst the youth it is important to consider the need for comprehensive research and strategies that focus on addressing the multifaceted and deeply rooted causes of youth violence in South Africa. There is also a need to highlight the importance of engaging directly with young people to gather objective data for a more comprehensive understanding of how they negotiate, make sense of, and construct their understanding of violence and the role that masculinity plays in this.

Gibbs, Jewkes and Sikweyiya (2017) support Boonzaier, Huysamen and Niekerk (2020) who describe men and masculinities in the context of intimate partner violence (IPV) from feminist, decolonial, and intersectional perspectives. The authors emphasise the lack of attention paid by academics to theorising about men's violence in the context of intimate heterosexual relationships, especially concerning black masculinities. They argue that the theorising about men, masculinities, and IPV should reflect experiences from the global South and move beyond global Northern perspectives. Boonzaier, Huysamen and Niekerk

(2020) discuss the contribution that historical and contemporary contexts in South Africa make, examining how the country's violent history of colonisation, slavery, and apartheid have shaped gendered and masculine subjectivities, particularly for black men. For example, many traditions that were taught by our elders in the black community are still carried on in communities today. This includes traditions such as *ilobola* or *magadi*, the process of men paying a bridal price for the women whom they choose to marry. This is a tradition that many still continue to practice even in urban areas therefore showing that traditions do still have a place in the African household but may however be conducted differently to accommodate changes.

The saying "*Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokhodo*" loosely translated as "you strike a woman, you strike a rock", is used in reference to the strength of women in general and in their intimate relationships. This means that women have the strength to tackle all life challenges. To understand this saying correctly requires that it is translated from its language. From the Nguni languages, *imbokodo* means a grindstone, a mortar, used to produce food while the rock is *idwala*. Secondly, *ukuthinta* must also be understood in context because among the Nguni languages, the meaning of most words is determined by the context they are used in. While *ukuthinta* means to touch, in this context it means to temper with. This explanation of *imbokodo* and *ukuthiwa* allows us to interpret this saying from its context. So, when it is said "*wathinta abafazi wathinta imbokodo*" the reference is that to temper with a grindstone, a mortar is tempering with the grinding vessel, the economy because it is used during the production of food. This saying therefore reflects the role of women from an African perspective that they are understood as the cornerstone of the economy and livelihood of a society. Women are thus not to be tempered with, to ensure the wellbeing of a society. The abuse of women is thus not inherent in the cultures of the Nguni-speaking people when we factor this saying as part of their culture.

However, in the context of gender-based violence in South Africa, this saying has been associated with the "physical strength" of women that they can withstand any challenges. This communicates a wrong message that women should persevere even when they are abused because they are strong. Phrases like this and the incorrect interpretation attached to them have unfortunately resulted in the silence of women who experience intimate partner violence. Instances like the one mentioned earlier by Q about a school pupil who was more emotive than his peers and for this had received negativity, teach boys not to express their

emotions and that this is not a part of how they express themselves. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why I was unable to gather any data on intimate relationships beyond the discussions held with the second focus group regarding what women expect and what men can provide. It is however noteworthy that in this conversation two of the participants, CJ and B (not their real names) mentioned the significance of trust in a romantic relationship and that the presence of trust determines how they behave and react towards their partners.

Paying attention to the language is important because it enables us to assess the impact of colonialism on the understanding of masculinity. The example provided above shows how using the Western lens to interpret our cultures corrupts African cultures and permeates unacceptable behaviours. The violence that Boonzaier, Huysamen and Niekerk (2020) talk about which is about the apartheid state is then used to interpret cultures. This is important in understating masculinity from an African perspective. In addition to this, the explanation of the saying "*wathinta abafazi wathinta imbokodo*" shows a different understanding of the role of women. It shows that women's dependence on men is not inherent in all cultures but is a result of the colonial past. This view supports Oyěwùmí (1997a)'s argument that the understanding of gender is not universal. It is important therefore to contextualise concepts. It is in this context that Mfecane (2019) calls for decolonisation of the production of knowledge to allow for the understanding of African knowledge from an African perspective.

Boonzaier, Huysamen and Niekerk (2020) discuss the importance of understanding men's violence in the broader contexts of structural power and intersecting oppressions such as race, class, gender, history, and location. They highlight the complexities of men's lives and histories, advocating for a more holistic approach that considers the socio-cultural contexts in which men are located. They also address the challenges in shifting gendered relations and patriarchal, violent masculinities towards progressive, non-violent, pro-feminist masculinities, particularly in the South African context. The authors underscore the necessity of intersectional thinking when addressing issues of intimate partner violence, emphasising the interconnected nature of gender, race, class, and coloniality in shaping men's behaviours and experiences.

Moreover, Boonzaier, Huysamen and Niekerk (2020) reflect on the implications of colonialism and the coloniality of gender in understanding men's violence, particularly in

the context of South Africa. It underscores the need to comprehend how gender hierarchy continues to operate through racial inferior behaviour and subordination, leading to the dehumanisation of women and the perpetuation of violence. The authors draw upon feminist decolonial theories to advance critical scholarship on men, masculinities, and intimate partner violence.

Graaff and Heinecken (2017) support the argument regarding the relationship between societal expectations of masculinity and gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa. Their study focuses on the impact of the One Man Can (OMC) intervention, facilitated by Sonke Gender Justice, on participants' understanding of violence and masculinities. The OMC is a campaign by Sonke Gender Justice that was rolled out in November 2006 in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, it marked the beginning of the annual 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign. The OMC intervention campaign aims to encourage men to become increasingly proactive in advocating for gender equality, preventing gender-based violence (GBV), and responding to HIV and AIDS. The findings by Graaff and Heinecken (2017) suggest that while the OMC intervention encourages discussion around harmful expectations of masculinities and creates a space for participants to consider alternatives, it primarily targets specific behaviours and does not significantly shift the underlying attitudes that encourage those behaviours. The study also highlights the societal factors that contribute to GBV in South Africa, such as apartheid, income inequality, militarisation, and gender inequality, which shape men's prescribed gender roles and contribute to the perpetuation of violence.

When discussing social contexts and gender inequality, it is essential for us to also remember that masculinity is defined by companionship and the role that this can have on violent behaviours. Closson et al. (2020) as mentioned earlier, argue that gender-transformative work at both individual and structural levels to reform the gender role strain experienced by young men in urban informal settlements can contribute towards reducing the high levels of intimate partner violence in the country.

Graaff and Heinecken (2017) emphasise the need for further research to develop more effective interventions that can address the underlying attitudes and beliefs contributing to GBV. They also discuss the importance of creating spaces where men are encouraged to consider alternative versions of masculinity and the potential impact of these interventions

on creating new gender norms in communities. For example, a participant from the second focus group provided an alternative perception of hierarchies as a young Xhosa male. He stated that hierarchies and power relations also exist between males and in hierarchies that exist amongst themselves. The participant was open enough to give us limited insight into one of the amaXhosa male traditions. He mentioned that in his isiXhosa culture, a male who has not been circumcised is perceived as less of a man compared to a male who has gone through the traditional procedure in the mountains to get circumcised. This is supported by Mfecane (2016: 209) who argues that "Within *ulwaluko* discourse, being *indoda* represents hegemony since it is the most honoured way of being a man."

The notion of being a provider which has been identified as a key theme during this research and being there for loved ones especially financially, is a concept brought up by many of the participants. Therefore, it can be concluded that financial support is a key aspect of being a man in the 2020s and what he should have or what hegemonic masculinity is perceived to be. This highlights a slight change in men from the 60s and 70s and how in each era they aim to reach as many of the hegemonic qualities of the era as possible therefore, subconsciously marginalising and placing those that do not at a lower point in the social hierarchy.

Jewkes et al. (2015) further emphasise that a man's understanding of gender and gender practices is shaped significantly by societal influences. These societal norms affect how men perceive themselves, dictate their behaviours, and guide their interactions with women and other men. Thus, society plays a crucial role in the formation of male identity. Although not all men achieve the ideal of 'hegemonic' masculinity, literature from the 1970s and 1980s, as noted by Porter (2013), suggests that masculinity is fluid and can evolve. While not all men embody hegemonic masculinity, many aspire to meet this standard, resulting in a hierarchical ranking among men that often leads to the marginalisation of those who do not conform to these ideals. The marginalisation that occurs can be identified as its own type of violence through oppression and censorship.

An example of this was described by two queer participants whose masculinities and are seen as 'not man enough' and that their perception of what it takes to be a man is similar to that of their heterosexual peers and does not only rely on sexuality. Thus, arguing against Langa's (2020) statement which states that "all the boys mentioned the fear of being seen as gay as a major concern" and that this is perceived as "subtle and somewhat contradictory

power that gay masculinity holds in relation to straight masculinity". In the case of the two participants, them being seen as not man enough takes away their power and attributes it to those who believe they are man enough (the heterosexual counterpart). This marginalises and gay masculine identity.

Beyond social contexts, religious and cultural institutions were also discussed in the first and second focus groups. In the second focus group, the role of religion played a key role as many participants indicated this to be one of the key influences on how they perceive manhood. Religion thus plays a role in social dynamics and gender relations. Meyers (2020) further argues that the high levels of violence against women and children in South Africa, as well as the prevalence of religiously justified abuse and discrimination, is caused by the patriarchal culture that exists within South Africa which is similar to the patriarchal culture that exists in traditions and cultural groups.

The second focus group highlighted patriarchy in cultures and the impact this has. An isiXhosa individual commented on his experience in the community and how this can foster violence in African masculinity. The violence in this instance is between men themselves through the behaviour towards amaXhosa young men who have not been to the mountains for rituals such as circumcision. The changes in behaviours and violence are perpetuated by those who have been onto those who have not been. Although I was unable to gather more insight on this, from what was mentioned, these individuals experienced violence in the form of bullying and harassment from their peers for not having been part of this tradition.

Everitt-Penhale and Ratele (2015) challenge the conventional understanding of 'traditional masculinity' and its associations with hegemonic masculinity. They critique the use of 'traditional masculinity' and 'hegemonic masculinity 'and emphasise their social construction, multiplicity, and diverse ideological functions. They argue that 'traditional masculinity' should not be equated with hegemonic masculinity and caution against accepting its representations without critical examination. They highlight the complex relationship between tradition and modernity, showing the socially constructed and fluid nature of 'traditional masculinity'. Furthermore, Everitt-Penhale and Ratele (2015) argue that there should be a more critical understanding of 'traditional masculinity', aligned with the frameworks of critical gender studies and social constructionist perspectives. They

emphasise the importance of navigating the discursive functions of 'traditional masculinity' recognising its multiplicity and avoiding uncritical equating with hegemonic masculinity.

The process of initiation, which involves seclusion, ritual circumcision, and instruction about manhood, marks the transition of Xhosa males from boyhood to manhood, allowing the new men the opportunity to access specific cultural privileges associated with manhood. In this context, the African perspective of masculinity is related to blackness and the traditions that the ethnic group upholds. The violence that occurs between those who are circumcised and those who are not thus exists because of their conception of masculinity and manhood in their culture. This violence is perpetuated through hierarchy and results in the mistreatment of those who are unable to reach the standardised African masculinity through this tradition.

Ratele (2014) discusses the Western definition and conceptualisation of masculinity, and observes that the ways in which masculinity is presented depend on influences on the construction of masculinity in other parts of the world such as in Western areas. This type of masculinity is considered dominant and embedded masculinity. Mfecane (2019) in an article titled *In my opinion: Decolonise Men and Masculinity Studies to end Gender-Based Violence*, agrees with Porter (2013) in the sense that African masculinities are categorised as marginalised based on the way they are represented in Western literature and hegemonic masculinities. Mfecane's (2019) argument agrees with Ratele's (2014) argument that masculinity from the African perspective is understood through Eurocentric studies and Western definitions and conceptualisations being used to localise the studies for an African audience. Using the Western lens to understand the African experience, close up the possibilities to find better ways to address challenges such as gender-based violence. Understandably, Africa has limited resources to develop knowledge and theories from an African perspective.

We need to consider the limitation of resources on African men and masculinity and that the reason for this is not just because of the Western influence on indigenous knowledge but how masculinity from an African perspective is written. Masculinity in South Africa is confirmed to be understood through violence and because of continuous media reporting, brutality and gender-based violence statistics in the country, this narrative overwrites other aspects of masculinity such as the complexities therein that may have resulted in violent behaviours. This speaks to broader politics of representation of the marginalised groups.

Marginal here does not refer to minority vs majority but to the domineering cultures that marginalise other cultures.

Mfecane (2019) calls for the decolonisation of knowledge production to centre African knowledge produced by African scholars as an effort to counter-narrative of masculinities. Mfecane (2019) advocates for the decolonisation of concepts of masculinity and detaching it from the Global North to co-create new forms of knowledge and teaching methods informed by the philosophies and histories of indigenous populations. It is necessary to create an authentic African understanding based on ethnographic evidence and African ontologies and epistemologies, to make sure that it reflects the realities and lived experiences of the majority of African populations as well as how these challenges affect constructions of masculinity (Mfecane 2019). The same dynamics and social dialects and behaviours affect girls as well and result in them being in similar situations as I was in high school. Society perceives and treats boys and girls differently and affects not only the boys but girls as well. Ethnographic evidence such as how boys behave around themselves versus others, the language used in these settings as well as influences that the youth experience as they grow up, result in a more accurate reflection of the realities of African populations and the challenges masculinity faces.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented insights into masculinity among young males in South Africa, Pretoria. It has revealed that young men and their understanding of masculinity is influenced by Western theories as indicated in the role that concepts like gender and patriarchy, derived from Western knowledge, are implemented in the current society through social discourse and societal structures. The narratives revealed the complexity that comes with being a young African male. Masculinity for these individuals indicates aspects such as traditional cultural values and the pervasive impact of Western ideas and how they shape the participants' perceptions of their expressions of masculinity. The participants' struggles to reconcile traditional norms with modern expectations reflect broader societal tensions influenced by globalised notions of manhood. This has led to an inability of African males to achieve hegemonic masculinity. However, their actions and behaviours show change and fluidity in being a male in the African context. The need for African masculinity to be understood as a concept detached from Western theories is also evident in this chapter as we

highlight the complexities of being a man in South Africa in relation to various determinants such as economic, social, racial, gender, sexuality, violence, religious, and cultural factors.

We need to understand masculinity in South Africa through this lens as without this the South African male's reality and experiences are overlooked and the Western experience is perpetuated as standardised masculinity. This research not only contributes valuable insights to the discourse on masculinity but also aligns with the argument that masculinity is mostly understood through Eurocentric studies and theories such as gender that are derived from these studies. This validates the need for more research and a context-specific approach to understanding and redefining masculinity within the African context. This research thus contributes to a deeper understanding of South African masculinity and its implications for gender relations and social behaviour.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by providing a summary of the dissertation by emphasising the important points discussed in different chapters. If further provides insights derived from the study to pave the way for conclusions to be drawn. The insights highlight the significance of the study which attempted to understand the construction of masculinities in communities and to show the experiences and pressures of ordinary people in their environment. The chapter concludes by showing research gaps that require attention in order to address the challenges that result from toxic masculinity.

6.2 Summary of the study

Chapter 1 of the thesis began by discussing the background of the study to show the context in which masculinity exists. It was important to highlight the need to expand the discussion on masculinity in South Africa beyond Western perspectives and to recognise the complexity shaped by various influences like traditions, poverty, environment, and generational differences. The chapter then presented the problem statement to argue that the study is timely given the challenges faced by women because of hegemonic masculinity. To achieve this, the chapter then discussed the objectives of the study and the theories that frame it to ensure that they contribute to a better understanding of masculinity in the country.

Chapter 2 discussed the literature that informed the themes for the research. In this chapter, I took a deeper look into the research question through literature. The investigation analyses how Western and African views shape masculinity and points out the complex mix of culture, history, and society that creates perceptions of how men see themselves. This literature assisted in opening my dialogue with the research and creating an understanding of masculinity in the South African context in the 2020s. The Western outlook, influenced by a history of colonialism and changing gender norms, showcases how masculinity can sometimes be seen as a standard to achieve, referred to as hegemonic masculinity. On the contrary, the African perspective is more complex, tied to cultural traditions, community values, and a key factor of the non-physical; an individual's inner-self. This review of existing literature created awareness of the complexity of colonialism in South Africa and its aftermath which has lasting results embedded in communal values and economic and

social factors. The chapter provides insights that were useful in analysing the fieldwork discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

Chapter 3 discussed the methodology that was used to collect the data. In this part of the journey to understand how Western and African perspectives shape masculinity in South Africa, qualitative research methods were employed. The study used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. The in-depth interviews allowed for more personal stories and individual takes on masculinity. Participant observation was like stepping into the shoes of the young black men as I immersed myself in their community during leisure time. This hands-on approach helped me understand the social interactions shaping their views on masculinity in a more natural and detailed way.

Chapter 4 presented the findings gathered from the field. It served as the foundation for the more intrinsic explanations that are explored in the next chapter. The findings presented here, gathered through hands-on research methods and guided by key questions, contributed to my understanding of the research problem. The authenticity of the research methods allowed me to capture the complexities involved in shaping African masculinity. The findings were refined and put into context as I conducted a more thorough literature review and made sense of the findings and the answers they provided. Developing themes that emerged from the field was the key tool that I used in this chapter. It assisted in sorting through the treasure of collected data from focus groups, interviews, and observations. This helped me to identify recurring themes and patterns, make sense of the information and ensure a structured interpretation of how Western and African perspectives influence masculinity.

Chapter 5 analyses the data. I used literature to interpret and understand the Western influences on African perspectives of masculinity in South Africa. By aligning my qualitative findings with what is already known, I began to identify patterns, make comparisons, and figure out where Western and African ideas of masculinity overlap with Western perspectives of masculinity. This chapter went beyond presenting what was found; it set the stage for a deeper exploration that connects real-life experiences with theoretical frameworks. Overall, the chapter lays the foundation for a richer understanding of African masculinity and how it compares to Western ideas.

6.3 Conclusions drawn

As I look back at what I found in my research and listen to the stories shared by the participants, it is clear that the data matches what Ratele (2014) says about there not being a definition of African masculinity. The findings also support Mfecane's (2019) argument to encourage the detachment of African, and South African masculinity from the West. Our exploration into masculinity among young black males in Pretoria, South Africa, showed the significant influence of Western ideas on how they perceive manhood. Their stories revealed a mix of traditional values and a strong impact of Western concepts, shaping how they understand and express their masculinity.

The struggles the participants faced, trying to balance old traditions with modern expectations, reflect the social tension influenced by global ideas of manhood. It highlights the complexities that are to be understood when conceptualising African masculinity and differentiating it from Western masculinity. A lack of understanding of the interplay of the complexities results in marginalisation of African masculinity. As argued by Porter (2013), African men may not fit into the usual idea of what is considered typically masculine, but their actions and behaviours show that being a man in Africa is changing and flexible.

The conclusions drawn from the findings of the study are:

1. The legacy of colonialism and Western influences still inform hegemonic masculinity: colonialism disrupted various traditions, leaving a lasting impact on how masculinity is perceived and expressed in Africa. Furthermore, the foundation of understanding masculinity often stems from Western theories of gender, including gender roles and behaviours.

2. Understanding masculinity requires an intersectional approach: The intersection of masculinity, race, and capitalism creates a complex web that influences the dynamics of manhood. Therefore, it is essential to note that culture, environment, race, and social categories significantly shape hegemonic masculinities, contributing to the complexities of masculinity in South African society.

3. Institutions such as schools influence the construction of masculinity: institutions, especially religious ones, play a crucial role in shaping the development of masculinity.

4. There are diverse masculinities: various types of masculinities coexist, supporting both the thriving and standardisation of hegemonic masculinities.

6.4 Contribution of this study

The research conducted not only gives us valuable insights into masculinity but also supports the assumption that Western ideas play a big role in how masculinity is understood in the South African context. This emphasises the need for more research and a context-specific approach to truly grasp and redefine masculinity in the African setting.

Furthermore, the research indicated several areas that need further exploration and attention:

1. Gender and religion: There is a lack of resources in studies on the correlation between gender and religion in African contexts.

2. Intersectionality and activism: Understanding the complexities of gendered power and social identities requires considering intersectionality, macro-social processes, and feminist and LGBTI activism in the post-apartheid era. This also requires a deeper understanding of factors and social structures in urban and rural settlements to comprehend their impact on men and their potential for change.

3. Crisis of black masculinity: Deeper exploration is needed into the crisis of black masculinity within the context of racial capitalism and colonial legacies, considering economic participation, masculine identity, and the impact of historical and contemporary power structures. This creates a need to investigate the impact of other aspects that contribute to the crisis of black masculinity such as macro-social processes, legislative changes, economic policies, and feminist activism on gendered power dynamics and transitions in South Africa as well as the influence of race, class, ethnicity/culture, sexuality, and gender on masculinities.

4. Legitimisation of various types of masculinities, not just the hegemonic type: There is a need to recognise and study masculinities that fall outside marginalised or subordinated categories and to understand how they legitimise existing categories and receive associated benefits.

The outcome of this study is that there is a significant amount of work to be done in the discipline of understanding African masculinity. The legacy of colonialism and Western influences on African theoretical frameworks need to be more deeply investigated. African masculinity today, according to the data that I have collected, and the literature reviewed, is based largely on Western influences, and therefore the abovementioned recommendations and insights would assist in achieving an African standard of masculinity that can be

achievable for African men of all ages without them feeling marginalised and subordinate to those in incomparable circumstances.

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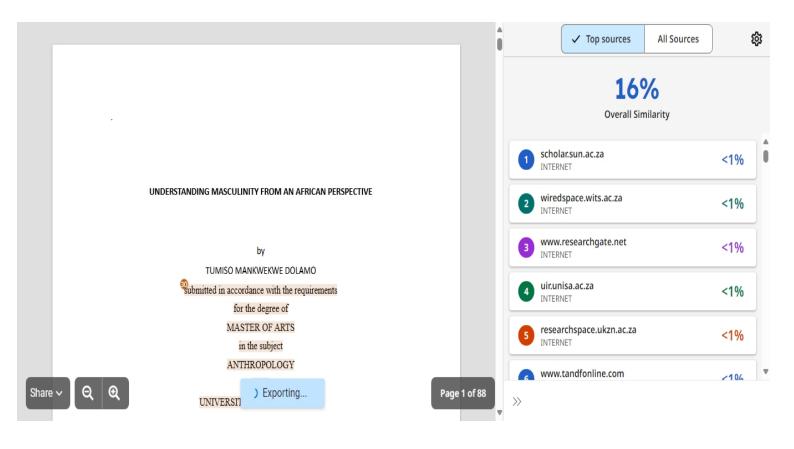Dirk, N.B. (1992). *Colonialism and culture*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

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APPENDIX A: TURNITIN REPORT

UNDERSTANDING MASCULINITY FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

by

TUMISO MANKWEKWE DOLAMO

submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

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APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

07 June 2023

Dear Ms Tumiso Mankwekwe Dolamo

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
14794055_CREC_CHS_2023

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 07 June 2023
to 07 June 2024

Researcher(s): Name: Ms. T. M. Dolamo
Contact details: 14794055@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Dr. N. Z. Radebe
Contact details: radebnz@unisa.ac.za

Title: Understanding masculinity from an African perspective: A case study of young African men in the city of Pretoria

Degree Purpose: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The *medium risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the

University of South Africa

confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(07 June 2024)**. Submission of a completed research ethics pro gress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 14794055_CREC_CHS_202 3 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature:

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP

Prof ZZ Nkosi
Acting Executive Dean: CHS
E-mail: nkosizz@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 6758

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research title: 'Understanding Masculinity from An African Perspective'

Researcher: Tumiso Dolamo

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the

person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings but, that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise stated.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant name and surname:

Date:

Researcher name and Surname:

Date:

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

August 2023: Participant selection and sending out consent forms as well as participant forms for the 5 individuals I will be doing case studies on will be sent through email.

First interview with participants

- Get to know them

- How many siblings, parental structure

- Have they always grown up in the area?

- Where are the parents from?

- What do they understand when they hear the term "being a man"

Second interview with participants

- How was school social set up (were boys always with boys etc)?

- Is there a difference in what they thought a man was when they were younger compared to now?

- Is being a man all about actions (performativity)?

Third interview with participants

- Do women influence what they think being a man is all about?

- How are their relationships with women structured?

APPENDIX E: PROOFREAD LETTER

EDITORIAL

CERTIFICATE

Author: Tumiso Mankwekwe Dolamo

Document title: UNDERSTANDING MASCULINITY FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Date issued: 24/11/2024

This document certifies that the above manuscript was proofread and edited by
Prof Gift Mheta (PhD, Linguistics).

The document was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall style. The editor endeavoured to ensure that the author's intended meaning was not altered during the review. All amendments were tracked with the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" feature. Therefore, the author had the option to reject or accept each change individually.

Kind regards

Prof Gift Mheta (Cell: 073 954 8913)

APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Transcripts of
interviews.docx