Constructions of Masculinity within Single-Sex Residences at the University of Cape Town

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Word count

Abstract: [230]

Main Body: [7965]

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PSY4000W: Research Project

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Abstract

Global and local literature on men and masculinities illustrate the ways in which young men are largely the victims and perpetrators of interpersonal violence, and in particular, gender-based violence against women, while masculinity norms that enforce sexism and patriarchy are particularly shown to be prevalent in men-only occupied spaces, such as university student accommodations. There is a lack of research concerning how young men in student university accommodations understand ideas around manhood and masculinity, especially how it is shaped by the racial, cultural and class diversity relevant to the South African context. We aimed to understand how young heterosexual men, residing in single-sex residences at the University of Cape Town, construct their masculinity. Through a thematic decomposition analysis, the findings highlighted various ways in which young men constructed their masculinities within residence spaces, through themes related to the culture of heteronormativity fostered in residences; the hegemonic masculine 'ideal' enforced through collective masculine practices; as well as their pre-existing beliefs about masculinity as they transition into manhood. This was done through fourteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews with young men between the ages of 18 and 25 years, residing in the 4 single-sex residences at UCT. This study was able to explore how the social and cultural conditions prevalent in these residences shape young men's beliefs and talk about masculinity and the implications of these beliefs for the broader campus community and women.

Keywords: masculinity, single-sex university residences, heterosexual, young men

Introduction

Research globally shows how young men are both perpetrators and victims of violence in society (Reed, Raj, Miller, & Silverman, 2010; Hong, 2000). South African society follows this global pattern, as studies show that young men commit different forms of violence, including sexual assaults, and gender-based violence (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003; Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell, & Dunkle, 2010), and university campuses and student accommodations are shown to be spaces where these forms of violence are likely to occur (Breitenbecher, 2000; Gouws & Kritzinger, 1995). Research on the way young men construct their masculinities in these university spaces indicates that more progressive masculinities need to be formed to counter the destructive forms of masculinity that contribute to a number of social problems (Anderson, 2008; McClure, 2006). This is particular to all-male environments, such as student accommodations, as masculine identities and performances are often said to be homosocially constructed (Flood, 2008; Grazian, 2007). Research indicates that observing the discourses related to masculinity may be an avenue for understanding how these constructions of masculinity emerge (Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Reed, 1999). This study aims to highlight the importance of research on masculinity in all-male student accommodations in South Africa, as well as the gaps in research that are present on this topic.

South African masculinities, violence, and dominance

South African boys and men are implicated in a number of social problems including violence. A large portion of this violence specifically targets women in the form of physical and sexual assaults, to name a few (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003; Reed et al., 2010). Research indicates that beliefs about masculinities that encourage control over women are

formed early in men's lives (Gupta et al., 2008; Jewkes et al., 2010). This indicates that young South African men represent a demographic vulnerable to becoming offenders of various forms of violence against women.

The way men construct and understand being a man shapes their performances of masculinity and beliefs related to the perpetration of violence against men and women (Kalichman et al., 2007; Messerschmidt, 2000). A study on men in a township in Cape Town indicated that men who reported to have committed instances of sexual assaults would often construct their masculinity around attributes such as a high sex drive, aloofness, and viewing women as domestic 'servants' (Kalichman et al., 2007). Alternate constructions of masculine identities may help to combat the consequences of these problematic masculine identities (McGuire, Berhanu, Davis, & Harper, 2014; Ratele, 2015).

A multitude of masculinities with various salient attributes exist, however some are more dominant than others. Hegemonic masculinity is a term used to describe masculinities that are the most salient in a given setting (Messerschmidt, 2012). These masculinities, constructed as the powerful masculine 'ideal' are positioned relative to other subordinated and marginalised masculinities, as well as relative to women (Messerschmidt, 2012). In the South African context, literature has shown the ways in which men find themselves fluctuating between different positions of power relative to women and other men. For instance, Mager (1998) indicates that the 'ideal' Xhosa masculinities are shaped by attributes such as leadership, courage, and eloquence, while these dominant masculinities marginalise masculinities that do not display these characteristics in this cultural setting. However, in the South African political sphere, the dominant masculinity that emerges emphasises heterosexuality, and encourages male sexual entitlement (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger,

2012). In this context, this type of masculinity exerts dominance over both women and more subordinate forms of masculinity (Morrell et al., 2012).

Research on the constructions of masculinities present in South Africa indicate how they both contribute to a number of forms of violence, and work to the exclusion of and dominance over both women and subordinated masculinities (Kalichman, et al., 2007; Messerschmidt, 2012; Morrell et al., 2012). However, local research requires some development in terms of interrogating how spaces occupied by young men – such as the university and student accommodations – may be sites in which masculine identities and young men's performances of masculinities are shaped. The importance of all-male spaces is highlighted in the suggestion that masculine constructions and performances are processes enabled by men and performed primarily for a male audience (Flood, 2008).

Student accommodation and the construction of masculinity

Both internationally and in the South African context, university campuses are sites where gendered violence occurs, perpetrated by young men (Breitenbecher, 2000; Gouws & Kritzinger, 1995). The way young men construct their masculinities is suggested to contribute to such forms of violence. Research indicates that student accommodations are sites in which masculinity is constructed (Anderson, 2008; Martin & Hummer, 1989). An understanding of the way in which young men construct their masculinity in student accommodation in South Africa would therefore be useful especially single sex accommodations which are popular.

Literature suggests that student accommodations within universities guide the

construction of masculinity among its students (Anderson, 2008; Martin & Hummer, 1989). Boswell and Spade (1996) conducted a study to observe how young men's masculine identities and practices were shaped by the student accommodation they were staying in. The study looked at four all-male fraternities at an American university. The data was collected in multiple ways including observations, interviews, and impromptu conversations (Boswell & Spade, 1996). Students at the university were largely from affluent families. It aimed to distinguish fraternity parties from public social settings such as bars. The study observed that fraternity parties more often provided a space where men engaged in conversation and performances that aimed to disparage women (Boswell & Spade, 1996). Young men were also more likely to engage in crude, non-consensual sexual behaviour directed towards women in this setting (Boswell & Spade, 1996). This study highlighted how particular masculine behaviours and attitudes were only undertaken in the presence of other young men (Boswell & Spade, 1996). Another study suggests that this latter act may be attributed to men's views of women in fraternity social interactions. In these settings, men view themselves as sexually entitled to women due to their affiliation with the fraternity (Martin & Hummer, 1989). This highlights how perceived masculine norms of misogyny and hyper-sexuality might inform young men's beliefs and practices of masculinity. However, both studies used an American population where they did not provide information related to race or cultural demographics, and with homogeneous class identities.

Critical studies on men and masculinities, especially that emerging from feminist scholarship, highlights to the importance of understanding men and masculinities at the intersection of race, class, and sexual identities, to name a few (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Mager, 1998; McGuire, et al., 2014). McClure (2006) conducted a study on the construction

of African-American masculinities in all-male fraternities at a historically black[1] fraternity.

Participants were largely from upper to middle-class families. The results revealed the

presence of two rival masculinities (McClure, 2006). The first is focused on individual

success and is characterised by competitiveness, with social class as a salient identity and

shaped by systems that promote individualism and capitalism (McClure, 2006). The second

prioritizes community prosperity over individual success (McClure, 2006). This type of

masculinity places 'race' as the salient identity during its construction, and therefore leads to

an Afrocentric masculine identity (McClure, 2006). Although the participants shared the

same racial and gender identities, they were shown to develop rival masculine identities along

the lines of 'class', as well as in relation to their fraternity environment (McClure, 2006).

This study emphasises the role of both racial and class identities in constructions of

masculinity in all-male student accommodation, where previous studies do not, and therefore

points to the need for further research of this kind in other similar contexts.

In summary, young men in South Africa are implicated in a number of social ills

including high rates of violence (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003; Jewkes et al., 2010). The way

in which men construct their masculinities contributes to the behaviours men undertake

(Hong, 2000; Messerschmidt, 2000). Destructive masculine identities are suggested to

encourage men to perpetuate these social ills (Hong, 2000). University campuses are sites

that mirror the sexual violence present in the world (Breitenbecher, 2000; Gouws &

Kritzinger, 1995). Student accommodations specifically at universities represent sites for the

construction of these destructive masculinities (Anderson, 2008; Martin & Hummer, 1989).

International research indicates that the formation of progressive masculinities is possible in

these spaces (Anderson, 2008). However, there is a lack of research in student

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[1] The term 'black' is used to describe people of African descent as classified by the Apartheid regime in South Africa

accommodations at university, specifically looking at single-sex residences, that adequately addresses the racial, cultural and class diversity relevant to the South African context with regards to the construction of masculine identities.

Aims and objectives

Aims

The aim of this research study was to understand how young heterosexual men students, residing in all-male residences at the University of Cape Town, construct their masculinity. The research explored how the social and cultural conditions prevalent in the male residences shape young men's beliefs and talk about masculinity and the implications of these beliefs for the broader campus community and women. Furthermore, the study aimed to understand how their personal and collective identities are shaped through their membership at the residence.

Main Research Question:

How do young heterosexual men in all-male residences construct their masculinity?

Sub-Questions:

- How do young men understand and talk about their masculinities?
- How does their environment contribute to their constructions of masculinity?
- What are the implications of their respective constructions of masculinity?
- How do the different social, racial and class identities of these young men influence their constructions of their masculinity?

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

Feminist poststructuralism was employed as a theoretical framework for the study. A central tenet of feminist theory is to critique the differing amounts of power men and women possess in society (Alcoff, 1988). The concept of hegemonic masculinity is indicative of the varying positions of power that masculinities may take up. Feminist theory is therefore a useful tool in understanding this gendered distribution of power between genders, and amongst men, as well as the way in which young men negotiate positions of power across different masculinities.

The post-structural feminist perspective recognises that language contributes to the construction of subjective realities (Aitchison, 2000). This emphasis on language is appropriate as research indicates that social categories such as gender, including masculine identities, are constructed by language and the discourses individuals engage in (Burcar, 2013; Furman, 2003).

This framework notes the importance of multiple subjectivities, rather than the existence of a single universal truth (St. Pierre, 2000). This allows for the evaluation of how men deal with their masculinity and the various identities that may deviate from the hegemonic masculine norm. However, the dominant form of masculinity varies depending both on the context and its intersection with race, class and sexuality. The hegemony of different forms of masculinity is shown to be context dependent (Donaldson, 1993). For instance, many sub-Saharan contexts incorporate heterosexuality as well as the performance of traditional gender roles as aspects that make up the dominant forms of masculinity (Shefer, Stevens, & Clowes, 2010). Particularly in urban settings, these contexts may also marginalize

masculinities characterised by educational achievement (Langa, 2010). This may be contrasted to western professional contexts. In these spaces, sexuality and gender relations are made less prominent, while aspects such as professional knowledge and skills characterise the dominant forms of masculinities. In this way, the construction of masculinities is relational and rooted in subjectivities, rather than absolute.

Lastly, this framework perceives the construction of identities as a result of a negotiated relationship between the structures acting upon an individual, and the agency possessed by an individual within these structures (Davies, 1991). Boys and men's constructions of masculinities are shaped in different spaces, such as schools, universities as well as by through broader social and cultural norms (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Jordan, 1995). However, men may not be passive agents of these constructions, but instead may act in ways to resist and form their own masculinities (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). This framework allows for the acknowledgment of the negotiated nature of the construction of masculinity.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design and made use of a discursive approach for data collection and a thematic decomposition analysis. A thematic decomposition analysis was adopted to analyse the data according to Stenner's work (1993). This approach has been employed to analyse the discourses that have been found in past literature and to investigate them in comparison to the way the participants in this study addressed them (Burman, & Parker, 1993). This qualitative approach allows for us to gain insight into these young men's constructions of masculinity through their own rich descriptions and subjective experiences (Burman, & Parker, 1993). This discursive approach will allow for language and meaning to be critically analysed by the researchers and draw on

how the environment of a single-sex residence influences their masculinities (Burman, & Parker, 1993).

Participants

A purposive sampling method was employed in order to recruit participants that met the specific criteria needed for this research (Struwig, Struwig & Stead, 2001). This assisted the researchers with the recruitment of participants that could provide in-depth, rich descriptions and knowledge on the specific topic under investigation.

Fourteen heterosexual, cisgender young men from 4 residences at The University of Cape Town (UCT) where only male students reside. Male students were eligible to participate if they are in their undergraduate years of study and between the ages of 18 – 25 years. Participants were recruited through advertisements that were placed in the residences' reception areas as well as broadcasted via email through the facilitation of their house committees. The advertisement outlined the aims of the study and the criteria for participation (See Appendix A). We further used social media accounts to share the advertisement and received a few more responses. Due to slow responses, we then entered residences, approaching residents and residence leaders regarding this study. The responses from this approach then allowed us to snowball sample a greater number our participants. This method makes use of participants' social relationships to find willing participants – especially useful for populations that are difficult to reach (Browne, 2005). However, due to the lack of response from residents and residence leaders, we expanded our criteria to include undergraduate UCT students who had lived in an all-male residence during 2017. These individuals made up the remainder of our participants.

Data Collection Tools and Procedure

Once ethics approval was granted from the Department of Psychology and the Department of Student Affairs (Appendix B), the recruitment and data collection procedures began. One-on-one interviews were conducted with participants. This may have been more appropriate for our study as focus groups place importance on the interactions between participants within the space to gain knowledge (Kitzinger, 1995) whereas our interest was in the perspectives of the individual. Focus groups also have the potential to limit participant contribution due to the social presence of others (Kitzinger, 1995). Conversely, one-on-one interviews may encourage participants to expand in depth on their perspectives (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This study has two researchers who each interviewed half the sample group individually; 7 young men each. The interviews were semi-structured in nature to allow the interviewee space to speak about their personal experiences of masculinity while being guided by a set of questions (See Appendix C). The open ended questions allowed for flexibility and for the interviewers to prompt the participants in directions of interests to the study while they shared (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The semi-structured interviewing process aims to mitigate the power dynamics present in the researchers' subjectivities (Low, 2013). This form of interviewing allows participants to guide researchers, and therefore providing a degree of autonomy over the information researchers receive (Low, 2013). This is a less structured and formal approach to interviewing with a more conversational development of information from participants and less distinctions between the two interviewers and their respective interviewees (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The interviews were conducted during students' breaks, thus were limited to between 45 and 60 minutes.

The interviews were audio recorded by the interviewers and brief field notes were

made after interviews to evaluate what issues came up that may be explored or avoided with other participants (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The interviews were conducted privately, in a reserved room in the psychology building on UCT campus which was easily accessible for all students that live in residence.

Data Analysis

Once all fourteen interviews were transcribed, we made use of a thematic decomposition to analyse the data. This form of analysis allows for the identification of distinct themes present within the data collected (Stenner, 1993). Fundamental to this approach is the emphasis on meaning as a construction of discourses, as opposed to discourses conveying an already constructed meaning (Stenner, 1993). This analysis is appropriate for poststructuralist research as it focuses on the social construction of meaning, placing emphasis on power dynamics, language, and multiple subjectivities (Stenner, 1993; van Niekerk, 2018).

Themes were identified and developed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step guide for thematic analysis, together with Stenner's (1993) thematic decomposition approach. According to Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, coding followed the transcription process. Themes were then identified and continuously clarified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A poststructuralist perspective was then employed to analyse the data by foregrounding the participants' subjectivities and the power present in discourses (Stenner, 1993).

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

The participants were firstly briefed on the topic of the interview and were handed a consent form to read and sign with the interviewer. They were then asked whether any part of the form was unclear to them so that it may be clarified before commencing the interview.

Participants then signed a separate passage on the consent form that allowed for the recording of the interview (See Appendix D). Once the interview was concluded, participants were debriefed and given a form with referral contact details of organizations they may approach had any part of the interview experience discomforted them (Appendix E).

The informed consent form listed in detail the expectations of the participant. Each interviewer read through it and had gone over the harms and benefits with the participant ensuring they understood that they were permitted to end the interview at any point they felt uncomfortable, as participation was voluntary. The audio recording of the interview was discussed after the informed consent, and a separate passage of the same consent form was signed to ensure understanding of the additional permission requested.

The confidentiality of participants was respected to ensure anonymity while participating in the study (Rocha, 2004). The recordings were transcribed by the interviewers, and once completed, the recordings were kept on a password protected computer (Rocha, 2004). Pseudonyms were used while transcribing and discretion was taken by researchers, who removed identifiable traits of participants.

Harm and Benefits to Subjects

There was no physical harm or danger that could affect students' well-being. The interview process asked young men to voluntarily participate and they were allowed to stop the process at any point. Although interview questions did not focus on traumatic experiences, a debriefing form with organizations that could assist were given to them to contact, had the interview unknowingly caused distress once they left the interview space.

There were some benefits in this study for participants which included contributing to the research gap on masculinities among young men, as well as using the interview space as a form of catharsis to discuss their personal experiences and perspectives.

Limitations of Study

A limitation of this research is the small sample size of 14 participants. The group may not be representative of all young heterosexual men in university residences in South Africa. However, the qualitative approach is so that it is not trying to find statistics representative of the population but of in depth, distinctive stories of these specific individuals (Bhattacharya, 2012). A second limitation was the time constraints of this research project. The projected had to be completed within our honours year, as a result we could not conduct research for longer than this period.

Reflexivity

Researchers are subjective, and are not neutral when collecting research (Shaw, 2010). These subjectivities influence the research process and contribute to the emergence of the type of knowledge research produces (Shaw, 2010). Reflexivity refers to the acknowledgement of these subjectivities and influences in an attempt to mitigate their effects on research (Shaw, 2010). As two researchers with different social identities, we had to be especially cognisant of the possible influences these may have had on the research.

The barriers below created limitations in the study. As researchers we have to be conscious of our biases while going through the data collection and analysing processes of the study. It is the researchers' responsibility to ensure that the work produced reflects the participants' personal experiences and not our own assumptions however, the personal experience of the researchers will be reflected on in the final product (Krefting, 1991).

Firstly, as a coloured[2] woman there were many obstacles when trying to interview heterosexual men about masculinity. Gender was a barrier when trying to have an open dialogue with participants as they censored their responses to questions about their interactions with women, specifically sexual encounters. Some men felt it was disrespectful to disclose details about their dating life or were uncomfortable discussing how other men in their residences acted towards women. The men still used more appropriate synonyms to describe how they interacted with women to avoid being vulgar in my presence. My research partner did not have the same issue with his participants who were open about such topics due to being male. Hence my interviews were stunted in comparison as it took longer to create a rapport with participants.

My identity as a black heterosexual man in a research position may have impacted the research process in multiple ways. The gender identity of the interviewer influences the responses participants offer during the interviewing process, this is especially salient in cases where the interview is comprised of topics related to gender (Padfield & Procter, 1996). Although, perhaps due to the research environment, some participants were hesitant to speak openly on some of their experiences, being a male interviewer seemed to aid my process overall. In addition to the perceived relatability that occurs in same-gender interview spaces on gender (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001), I had an actual relatability through my experience at an all-male residence. This allowed me to draw on these understandings to further the interview process and the participants seemed to find it easier to both explain certain experiences and trust me to be understanding of them. However, in some male spaces there is often a pressure to perform a heteronormative masculinity (Spaaij, 2008). As a result, discouraged traits of this form of masculinity such as emotional vulnerability may have been censored. Masculinity is an identity linked to other aspects of identity such as race and

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[2] The term 'coloured' is used to describe people who are mixed race as classified by the Apartheid Regime in South Africa

culture (Hopkins & Noble, 2009). Being a black South African, cultural understandings of masculinity may have been communicated with me more easily than with my partner. Possibly as a result, discussions around experiences specific to this aspect of masculinity were relatively unjagged.

The interview dynamics seemed to have differed between researchers, primarily due to gender differences and occasionally cultural differences. The interview process seemed to be aided through the same-gender rapport that allowed certain aspects of masculinity to be freely expressed. However, marginal characteristics of heteronormative masculinities may have allowed other aspects to emerge in the cross-gender interviews.

Analysis and Discussion

Young men's constructions of masculinity in single-sex residence spaces were divided into 3 primary themes, those being *Brotherhood*; *Ideals and Expectations of Men; Transitions to Manhood*. The first theme of *Brotherhood* focused on the collective identities cultivated within residences. The following theme, *Ideals and Expectations of Men*, dealt with young men's understandings of the roles they perceived were expected of them in residence and in society. Lastly, *Transitions to Manhood*, focused on young men's distinctions between boyhood and manhood. These constructions were often informed by participants' backgrounds as well masculine perspectives offered by the residences.

Brotherhood:

The young men often made reference to the idea of a brotherhood being central to how they formed their masculine identities within the residence space. Brotherhood was constructed as a performance of group identity as well as shared behaviours that cultivated this idea of brotherhood.

Young men often spoke to the importance of a group identity. This included a mutual respect or acknowledgement of fellow residents that fostered a communal atmosphere. The first extract indicates how Keshav identified this shared residence identity as it was used to construct an inclusive and welcoming brotherhood.

Extract 1

Keshav: we did have [a brotherhood], like if you saw someone who was in [Residence 1], regardless of if you spoke to them or not – even 'til today, if I see someone who I used to see a lot, I don't even know their name, but I know they're from [Residence 1] I'll say hi to them, or I'll ask them how they're doing or something. So there was a sense of community, and there was a sense of brotherhood (21 years old, Interview 14)

Extract 2

Rick: "Strength through unity and unity through pride". It (the motto) tied into my background [...] my energy was already channelled into that comradery because it was similar to my high school (all-boys high school), I still felt it, it was like a rejuvenation of that feeling" (23 years old, Interview 7)

Rick however, highlights particular characteristics that inform the collective identity in his residence, those being "strength" and "pride" that lead to this brotherhood or "unity". Rick indicates his compliance with these characteristics as they are an amplification of the values present in his all-boys high school. The creation of a brotherhood through uniform characteristics is a common practice in masculine construction undertaken by groups of men such as all-male fraternities and all-male sports contexts (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Spaaij,

2008). Although this practice may be viewed as innocuous or entirely communal, as alluded

to by Keshav, the adoption of the traits of strength and pride represent the dominant

masculine identity within the residences as constructed, firstly, in relation to other forms of

masculinity, and secondly in relation to femininity. Both strength and pride are associated

with heteronormative masculine traits (Anderson, McCormack, & Lee, 2012; Bitar, Kimball,

Gee, & Bermúdez, 2008). These serve to position men as both physically and mentally

superior to women, and marginalises men within heteronormative spaces who do not possess

these traits by equating them with femininity (Anderson, McCormack, & Lee, 2012). The

young men expressed particular processes undergone to create this collective identity.

This brotherhood and collective identity was cultivated in two main ways expressed

by the young men. The first seemed to focus on emphasising group bonds through various

initiation ceremonies. In the following extract, Buhle speaks on war-cry initiations and how

they contribute to inclusion and comfort within the residences.

> *Extract 3*
>
> *Buhle: you know those war cries, they're not songs per say, but they're about just*
>
> *trying to lift… or making someone comfortable. It just boosts your confidence, you*
>
> *know. (18 years old, Interview 4)*

Buhle highlights how such initiations are used to foster this brotherhood through an

increase in "confidence" taken on by young men through these practices. Group chanting and

other initiation practices, however, often increases the confidence of those participating by

establishing dominance over the subjects of the chants or practices (Chiweshe, 2014; Jones,

2008). In the following passages, both Bruce and Rick unpack the dynamics of these war

cries and their understanding of how power emerges:

Extract 4

Bruce: I know at that time we would sing these war cries that were very rude. I say that now but when I was in first year I was really enjoying it singing these war cries. They were very rude and had swear words and like a lot of bad things about women. Funny enough though, in first year I didn't have a problem with it at all until like towards the end of my second year. (22 years old, Interview 1)

Extract 5

Rick: the war cries are easy to sing in a group of 40 boys but not so much alone in front of a girl res [...] I think it's sort of that herd mentality that gives you confidence. (23 years old, Interview 7)

Both Bruce and Rick indicate how this brotherhood – through the war cry initiations – was constructed adjacent to women. The initiation practices appear to have encouraged norms of vulgar language, rudeness and the disrespect of women. Both participants appear to construct their masculinities in this environment where these practices are fostered by this group identity. Initiation ceremonies have a number of purposes including the communication of group values and norms through shared behaviour, as well as fostering group unity (Anderson, McCormack, & Lee, 2012). The encouragement of dominance over women suggests that these young men were predominantly offered heteronormative masculine identities by the residence spaces. These residences not only permitted misogyny and vulgar language against women, but it is suggested that they often encouraged it.

The second means of cultivating brotherhood communicated by the young men emphasized group bonds through differentiation from other residences. This appeared

through various forms of competition and rivalry that the men represented as vehicles for the promotion of particular masculine ideals. In the following extract, Mpume highlights how inter-residence competition plays out to subjugate women.

Extract 6

Mpume: ...and [Residence 2] isn't just a rivalry between the reses[3]; it's a rivalry between the guys in the reses saying – cause you'll find at the forefront of the rivalry is how many chicks go to [Residence 2], how many chicks go to [Residence 3]. Not if [Residence 2] men are more superior to [Residence 3] men. The parameter that's used is how many women can go to these reses. That's the problem I have with it (22 years old, Interview 5)

The above extract shows how Mpume identifies all-male residences as jostling for "superiority" amongst themselves. However, in pursuit of this dominant masculine group identity, these residences appear to marginalise women. Competition has been found to be used in all-male residence spaces to exert dominance over rival residences (Martin & Hummer, 1989). Men participating in competition with each other often attempt to exert power over rivals and therefore be perceived as the model of masculinity (Bird, 1996). Heteronormative masculine construction often involves men using women as tools to form their masculine identities (Bird, 1996; Martin & Hummer, 1989). This extract from Mpume therefore suggests that young men form their masculinities within this brotherhood that residences create through rivalry and competition that is founded upon placement of women as 'currency' within this masculine competition and construction. Mpume's expression of his

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[3] This is a colloquial term used by students for Residences

problem with these practices, however, represents masculine constructions as a process whereby the young men are able to exhibit resistance to the ideals the residence space offers them. The men often expressed their negotiation of the ideals and expectations placed on the construction of their masculine identities.

Ideals and Expectations of Men

The young men constructed their masculine identities collectively, in relation to the group identities made prominent in the residences they formed part of. They spoke about the emergence of ideals and expectations of masculine practices they felt they had to adhere to. These expectations often took the form of heteronormative archetypes involving young men's sexual prowess and objectification of women, their physical strength, and a refrain from emotional vulnerability.

The young men often expressed that there was an expectation placed upon them to pursue women as a means to elevate their social status. The following passages highlight this social pressure.

Extract 7

J*ohn: nah, you know sometimes when you want to fit in. I actually felt that in a way. Always that part of me that said like there's always that feeling inside of me… technically, you had to chow. You had to have girls in your life. (18 years old, Interview 2)*

Extract 8

Tom: um, well, you are respected if you're talking to a lot of girls, or like, have good relationships with girls, if you're seeing girls a lot. And [Residence 2 men] like talking about girls, 'cause it's all males and guys like thinking about girls. They like to talk about girls. (22 years old, Interview 10)

In the extract, John communicates the internalised pressure of having to "chow" or pursue women sexually as a means of gaining or retaining group membership within the residence. Tom particularly highlights how interactions with girls garner respect from other men within the residence. Within heteronormative masculine spaces women are often portrayed as passive "tools" used by men to enhance dominant masculine identities and marginalise non-heteronormative masculine identities (Martin & Hummer, 1989). Beyond merely interacting with women, heterosexual sexual proficiency is also alluded to by John as an expectation placed upon him within the residence space. Sexual proficiency is a masculine discourse that serves to subjugate women through objectification, as well as other sexual orientations through heterosexual emphasis (Anderson, 2008). These extracts suggest that within this space both John and Tom acknowledge an expectation within the residence space to construct their masculinities in a manner that emphasizes their heterosexuality. Heteronormative masculinities emphasize distance between femininity through a number of ways including emotional expression.

Young men also expressed the expectations surrounding their emotional expression and how this was linked to their masculine identities. In the following passages, both Ed and Brick describe the limited emotional vulnerability they have witnessed from other men in their lives relative to women.

Extract 9

Ed: "males never speak about their feelings. Speaking about mental illness is even harder. I have had females come up to me and say that they are struggling or are depressed. But I have not had a male in my res do that. And they don't promote it, they had mental illness talks once after someone at Residence 1 committed suicide. Other than that no." (21 years old, Interview 3)

Extract 10

Brick: "I used to not want to cry in front of anyone. I got over it now, I think its fun to cry in front of people. I guess it is because I never saw my father cry. Ever. Till today, he always was the stable and composed one. Maybe it is because he had to because my mother isn't." (23 years old, Interview)

Ed mentions the constraints around male emotional expression within the residence space in regard to mental illness. He suggests this lack of emotion is not only upheld by the practices of male residents, but that the residence itself is complicit in this. Brick's understanding of his own emotional expressions mirror Ed's as he highlights his initial inhibition towards vulnerability due to the normative masculine practices surrounding him. It has been found that emotional expression, within discourses of heteronormative masculinity, is often equated to femininity (Bird, 1996; Clowes, Ratele, & Shefer, 2013). In these discourses, emotion is portrayed as irrational and uncontrolled; women are handed these labels by extension (Bird, 1996). In contrast to this, men and their emotional detachment are equated to rationality, logic and level-headedness, and in this way heteronormative masculinity attempts to establish its dominance by creating distance between masculinity and

femininity (Bird, 1996). The emotional responses of men and women are juxtaposed in both passages. Brick's description of his emotionally "stable & composed" father relative to his mother further highlight this dominance within discourse. However, Brick does express a movement towards emotional vulnerability. This is in spite of him still yet to witness his dad express his own emotions. This suggests that these young men are not passive recipients of the masculine ideals their environments offer them, but are able to negotiate and oppose them. This negotiation is most apparent in the way these young men construct their masculinities in their transitions from boyhood to manhood.

Transition to Manhood

The young men often spoke about their masculinities in a transitional manner, drawing a stark distinction between what may encompass the identity of 'boy' and the characteristics that make them a 'man'. In the two preceding themes it appeared as if the young men's understandings were influenced both by the identities offered by the residence to which they belonged as well as by normative society as a whole. However, this transition focused on the young men's subjective understandings of masculinity often informed by their backgrounds, and influenced by the degree to which the residence space would allow them to hold and practice these understandings.

The independent and responsible man; a mediated identity. Young men often equated their transition into manhood as the uptake of both responsibility and independence. This was in specific regard to their own health, finances, and administration as well as the occurrences in their lives.

Extract 11

Ed: if you're a kid you are dependent on your mum or your parents or your siblings but when you go into manhood you don't actually depend on those people. Life is more of you do stuff for yourself and you take your own advice but you don't really speak about stuff like that. You don't really seek advice, you deal with that in your own (21 years old, Interview 3)

Extract 12

Tom: 'Cause I've had to deal with a lot of things I never thought… I had to deal with a lot of things I never had to before. And these are things that, how I saw – these are things I always saw a man had to deal with. So the fact that I'm dealing with these things makes me feel like a man […] like opening an account, dealing with money in a real sense, like managing money. Um… sorting things out on an official level, like getting IDs and visas and driver's licence, and passports and things. (22 years old, Interview 10)

These passages indicate how these young men construct their masculinities within the discourses of masculinity as independent of others and men as responsible (Smith, Braunack-Mayer, Wittert, & Warin, 2007; Riley, 2003). Independence is often ascribed to men in relation to hegemonic masculine discourses, to juxtapose the practice of femininity as reliant on and existing adjacent to men (Möller-Leimkühler, 2003; Nobis & Sandén, 2008). Responsibility is often attributed to men under the larger discourse of men as reputable that is often used to establish men as competent, especially in comparison to women (Bowleg, Heckert, Brown, & Massie, 2015; van Niekerk, 2018). The adoption of these ideals therefore

suggests that these young men might be pursuing a hegemonic masculine identity in these cases. Furthermore, the above extracts indicate how young men living in residences, away from their families and home environments, cultivate a sense of independence that involved the process of transitioning into 'adulthood'. This masculine ideal was not necessarily shaped by the identity and culture of the residences as noted above, but rather due to the men being away from home.

The following extract further emphasizes how young men construct masculinity as rooted in heteronormative ideals, this time regarding responsibility in the familial sense and making use of discourses of the patriarchal figure as both provider and protector (Riley, 2003).

Extract 13

Tom: my mom always raised me to be a breadwinner. To be… be a breadwinner, have a good loving wife, be respectable, be respected. Have a lot of accomplishments, have a great job. Have a good name bruh, like people can respect. (22 years old, Interview 10)

Extract 14

Bruce: to me, […] being a father of a house or having a family to be protective over; that is the difference between a man and a boy. As a man you have to look after. That's what being a man means. (22 years old, Interview 1)

Young men therefore do not only regard the residence spaces they inhabit as informants of their masculine identities, but draw on aspects of their background which are represented as containing heteronormative characteristics.

Contested identities. These transitions, however, did not all fall into acceptable ideals as young men's constructions of masculinities often appeared more a contestation or negotiation within the spaces they inhabited, rather than the space mediating this transition. The first extract highlights how this participant felt his transition from boy to man was impeded due to the limited interaction he was able to have with girls.

Extract 15

Tom: [residence delayed my movement towards manhood because]... I was surrounded by males. So I was really in the sense of thinking like a male cause I was surrounded by them..[...] be co-ed, bruh. None of this bullshit where it's just all boys or all girls. you don't always want to have a distant view of things (22 years old, Interview 10)

Tom's transition towards manhood appears to contain an imagination of both men and women's involvement that differs from the hegemonic ideals. The single-sex male residence contests this transition, and ultimately his construction of his ideal masculinity, as it does not offer the integration he seems to desire to attain manhood. Hegemonic masculine ideals are rooted in aspects of brotherhood and collective male spaces (Clawson, 1989). In cases where women are placed within the heteronormative discourses surrounding masculine construction, especially in residence spaces, they are often sexualised (Martin & Hummer, 1989).

Culture represented another way in which transnational masculinities had to be negotiated in the residence space.

Extract 16

Usiphile: […] For example, I'm Zulu, and if at home you're doing things this way, then I'm also gonna bring that approach to residence. And since I'm also in house comm, and house comm has to lead by example, so if I'm going to do things Zulu and other people are not, so there's gonna be now a clash, whereby it clashes with others as well. So, such as for example, through use of language, at home I can call "sho, sho, boy", it's a common thing in Soweto. But when you come to Cape Town and you encounter Xhosa boys, you can't say "boy", they somehow feel offended because they went through initiations. (20 years old, Interview 8)

The above extract is an example of how Xhosa boys' transition to manhood (through initiation) can be contested, particularly due to the multi-cultural space of residence and the unequal power allocated to different forms of masculinities. African masculinities in the past have often been forced to adapt or be placed on the margins when in contact with institutions where other cultures possess more power (Morrell, 1998). Usiphile highlights how he as a leader in the institution attempts to accommodate this African masculinity but admits the initial contestation that exists through multicultural norms that undermine this form of masculinity.

The young men in residences constructed their masculinities as transitional. This involved the adoption of responsibility and independence, largely rooted in heteronormative

discourses around manhood. These constructions however, were not informed by the residence spaces alone, but were influenced significantly by the home environments and cultural environments the young men had come from.

Summary and Conclusion

In this study, three main themes emerged in our data that participants emphasized when speaking about constructions of their masculinity whilst living in a single-sex residence: *Brotherhood, Ideals and Expectations of Men, and the Transition to Manhood*. *Brotherhood* was integral to these young men's constructions of their masculinity within the single-sex residence they resided in. It focused on an identity that they collectively complied to. The young men consistently drew on heteronormative masculine discourses of strength and pride to characterise this brotherhood within residences. Specific traditions and rites of passage were offered to these young men in order to foster this brotherhood. The young men expressed initiations and inter-residence rivalries as vehicles for this collective identity. War cries were an activity that the young men participated in and performed publically. This activity was interesting as it showed the power dynamics that emerged among single-sex residences to establish their dominance over other men and over women. Furthermore, these ceremonies were used to socialise residents into the often heteronormative masculine norms established within these residences. The young men, however, represented the masculine ideals promoted within the residences spaces as an occasional burden as they were constructed around the pursuit of women and the lack of emotional availability.

Women were represented as instrumental in the pursuit for power amongst young men. Their behaviour to elevate their social status among other men includes the subjugation of women through sexualising and objecting them. It becomes part of the *Ideals and*

Expectations of Men to then adopt practices that highlight their sexual prowess and to objectify women. Furthermore, young men were seemingly expected to show their dominant status through physical strength and their distance from emotional vulnerability. Young men expressed an internalised pressure to conform to these heteronormative ideals, as nonconformity would result in negative consequences regarding their social status.

The men did appear to be influenced by heteronormative practices prevalent in their environment and spoke about how they formed their 'manhood' within this space and context. However, they additionally expressed that they are not passive recipients hence they can and did negotiate and at times, opposed these dominant norms. This was all part of the *Transition to Manhood* that all the participants were undergoing, with many admitting to still undergoing the process. Each participant had a subjective understanding of their masculinity and how they constructed that was informed partly by their backgrounds and influenced partly by their experiences in this single-sex residence space where they practice their understandings of being a man. It was shown that their cultural and socioeconomic background did help men navigate the residence space while away from home however, it was dependent on the individual on how much impact it had. The young men emphasized the need to be responsible and independent when describing the transition and part of that was how they dealt with finances and their own needs by themselves. The running theme of heteronormative discourses were further emphasised in this last theme with the discourses of men as providers and protectors signifying patriarchal beliefs. However, some men did contest this view of being a man and subsequently, showed how certain individuals negotiated within this space and came to form their own personal outlook while transitioning to a man. Rather than the residence space being mediating this transition. This study was able to investigate how young men navigate between the ideals and expectations and they are on subjective experience to construct their masculinity. While the single-sex space has been

shown to perpetuate hegemonic qualities of being a man, these men have shown that sometimes they do resist, and other times are complicit. However, overall, they are aware and acknowledge that they are always constructing their masculinity relative to the ideal given to them.

This study set out to understand a number of aspects influencing masculine construction, one of those being the intersections of identity. In a diverse social context such as South Africa, this is of particular interest as multiple masculinities contest for dominance across racial, cultural, and class identities. However, this intersectional aspect was perhaps not adequately attended to in the analysis. Perhaps a more detailed line of questioning regarding the young men's identities may be more appropriate in future.

In addition, this research may be expanded further. The social nature of masculine construction has been highlighted within the literature (Flood, 2008). It may be appropriate to explore this social construction through focus groups in addition to the one on one interviews. In this way, the social discourses and interactions that construct masculinities may be observed together with the individual perspectives

The study is significant as it contributes to knowledge production around South African university spaces and the conceptions of masculinity that exist in these spaces, particularly regarding all-male residences. A greater understanding of such masculine constructions may be used to inform more progressive masculinities.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to:

Our participants who were willing to volunteer and take time out of their schedules to let us interview them.

A huge thank you to our supervisor, Taryn van Niekerk for her guidance and support throughout this process.

Lastly, thank you to our parents for their continued support and love throughout our studies.

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van Niekerk, T. (2018). Respectability and reputation: Tracing intersections of race, class and gender in news discourses of violence against women. *Psychology in Society, 56*, 1-22.

Appendices

Appendix A

Advertisement Text:

Dear students

We are conducting an Honours Research Project in the Department of Psychology and we invite you to volunteer to take part in this study:

The study is about beliefs around <u>Masculinity: amongst young men in all-male university residence.</u> The interview will be 60-90 minutes long and will be conducted in the Department of Psychology. PD Hahn Building on Upper campus at a convenient time for both student and researcher

IF you meet this criteria, you are eligible to participate:

- Between the ages of 18- 25 years

- Identify as a cisgender heterosexual man

- Live in an all-male residence

Please contact us for further questions on what the study entails and/or to volunteer: Lwazi Shwala on email SHWLWA001@myuct.ac.za **OR** Virusha Pather on email PTHVIR001@myuct.ac.za

OR Chair of the Ethics Committee: Rosalind Adams on 021 650 3417 or email at Rosalind.Adams@uct.ac.za

We appreciate your help and support in this study!

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town Rondebosch 7701 South Africa
Telephone (021) 650 3417
Fax No. (021) 650 4104

06 June 2018

Virusha Pather and Lwazi Shwala
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch 7701

Dear Virusha and Lwazi

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been given by an Ethics
Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your study, *Young men's
constructions of masculinity in all-male university residences.* The reference number
is PSY2018-033.

I wish you all the best for your study.

Yours sincerely

University of Cape Town
ΨPSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT
Upper Campus
Rondebosch

Lauren Wild (PhD)
Associate Professor
Chair: Ethics Review Committee

Appendix C

Interview Schedule:

- How has your experience of living in this residence been so far?

  o What was the orientation week like for you?

  o How did your Residence's house com introduce "freshers" to res life?

  o What were the events offered? Did you participate?

- What does being a man mean to you?
- How do you experience being a man in this residence

  o How do you view other men staying in your residence?

  o How does your residence interact with other all-male residences?

- How has your background affected how you view yourself and your manhood?
- How do your peers in your residence speak about women?

  o How do you feel about this?

  o How do you view or interact with women?

· Are there any instances where your residence interacts /hosts events with female residences? (dining hall and res events)

  o If so, what are these interactions (/events) like?

- Is there a brotherhood or culture at your residence that is promoted?

  o Do you feel like you have formed part of it?

  o If so, what does this brotherhood or culture promote?

Appendix D

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Department of Psychology

<u>Young men's constructions of masculinity in all-male university residences</u>

1. **Invitation and purpose**

   You are invited to take part in a research study about how young men in university residences explain and understand their masculinity. I am a Honours student from the Department of Psychology at University of Cape Town.

2. **Procedures**

   If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to do one face-to-face interview with me. The interviews will be focused on your stories about your identity and experiences in residence and campus. The interview should take no longer than 60-90 minutes.

3. **Inconveniences**

   If at any point during the interviews you feel anxious or distressed, you can choose to stop without any negative consequences. The interviews will be conducted at UCT upper campus in a quiet room in the Psychology Building. The most convenient time for you and the researcher will be arranged.

4. **Benefits**

   You are given an opportunity to share your views and experiences and your information will contribute to the larger purpose of understanding how ideas about manhood might frame experiences at university residences.

5. **Risks**

   There are minimal risks to you as the participant during the interview process however since you are speaking about yourself and your personal experiences, if you start sharing something sensitive or traumatic the researcher will ask if you want to keep sharing. However, during debriefing the researcher will ask how you feel and give you a form with contact details for organizations that you can talk to if certain discussions brought up cause you any sort of discomfort

6. **Privacy and confidentiality**

The interviews will be tape-recorded. The researcher will take strict precautions to safeguard your personal information throughout the study. Your information will be kept in a locked file cabinet without your name and other personal identifiers.

While this research will be used for educational purposes, there is a chance that this work might be published in an academic journal. In this case, your identity will still be kept confidential.

Interviews will be conducted in a private room to ensure confidentiality.

7. **Contact details**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the study, please contact the **Researchers:** Lwazi Shwala on email SHWLWA001@myuct.ac.za **OR** Virusha Pather on email PTHVIR001@myuct.ac.za **OR Chair of the Ethics Committee:** Rosalind Adams on 021 650 3417 or email at Rosalind.Adams@uct.ac.za

8. **Signatures**

(Participant's name)_____has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures described above including any risks involved in it performance. He/she has been given time to ask any questions and these questions have been answered to the best of the researcher's ability.

_____

Researcher's Signature   Date

I have been informed about this research study and understand its purpose, possible benefits, risks, and inconveniences. I agree to take part in this research as a participant. I know that I am free to withdraw this consent and quit this project at any time, and that doing so will not cause me any penalty.

_____

Participant's Signature   Date

PERMISSION TO TAPE-RECORD INTERVIEWS

I understand that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that the researcher will take strict precautions to safeguard my personal information throughout the study.

_____

Participant's Signature

Appendix E

Debriefing Form

Referral List

Should you feel that you require counselling or support, below is a list of organizations which can be contacted.

LIFE LINE

Services:

- 24 hour telephone counselling service
- Rape counselling
- Trauma counselling
- Face to Face counselling
- HIV/Aids counselling

Payment

Services free of charge

Contact:

Office: (+27 21) 461-1113

Crisis: (+27 21) 461-1111

Email: info@lifelinewc.org.za

STUDENT WELLNESS

Services:

- Health services with the availability to see a medical practitioner or nurse
- Counselling services with a 24 hour care line or seeing a therapist to help with short-term counselling and psychotherapy

Payment:

There is a cost for all professional services rendered. The current rates are available from the Student Wellness receptionist.

Contact:

Health Service
Telephone: 021 650 1020
Email: Faranaz.murat@uct.ac.za

Counselling Service
Telephone: 021 650 1017
Email: lerushda.cheddie@uct.ac.za

SADAG UCT Student Careline: 0800 24 25 26

FAMSA

Services:

- Amongst other services FAMSA offers individual counselling to survivors of trauma and are equipped to counsel adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Payment:

Their services are charged at a sliding scale according to income.

Contact details:

Tel: 021 447 0174

Address : 9 Bowden Road, Observatory , 7925

E-Mail : famsa@famsawc.org.za