"Reformed" Men?

Positioning Masculinities in Alexandra Township

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing body of literature focusing on men and masculinity/ies, there is limited material that adequately explores the everyday experiences and specificities of being and living as a man in diverse social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, inadequate consideration is given to the unique ways in which men redefine, renegotiate and reconstruct their masculinities and multiple identities over time, or the challenges/limitations that they may experience during this process. More importantly, there is a lack of critical attention given to men's agentic roles in supporting a vision for gender equality and social change. Considering men's lived realities, subjectivities, the ways in which they redefine and reconstruct multiple masculinities and social identities across time and diverse social and cultural environments, has significant implications for studying and working with men in international human development contexts.

In this thesis, I consider these dimensions within the context of township living. Through daily interactions with men in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, South Africa, I explore their subjective interpretations of what it means to be a man in this context and the ways in which change, specifically political, social and economic change, is experienced through their daily lives, their sense of self and their social relationships. I demonstrate that as men reflect on change, they struggle to renegotiate the parameters of their masculinities within a patriarchal context that is steadfast in its expectations of traditional gendered norms, alongside an absence of alternative masculine blueprints for transforming masculinities.

Through self-reflection, peer group support and for some, access to gender-transformative workshops, some men are actively engaging with the change agenda and are exploring their lives and their future aspirations, and reconsidering what it means to be a man in the context of Alexandra township.

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As I write these acknowledgements, I am reminded of the words of the late, great Nelson Mandela: 'there is no easy walk to freedom'. While incomparable to his own 'road less travelled', this thesis has been no easy walk. The journey to its completion has taken me (along with my family and friends) on a lengthy adventure, down twisting, winding paths, major highways and long plateaus. It has accompanied me across four countries, spanning two continents and welcomed an addition to our family, my 'thesis child', who is already nearly six years old!

Any significant undertaking is only possible with the support, encouragement, input, patience, sweat and tears of many individuals that one encounters along the way.

I begin by thanking my 'boss' Dr. Colm Regan, without who there may never have been a walk. I am indebted to him for his consistent encouragement, inspiration and 'gentle' motivation to press on. The words 'just do it' (from the Nike logo) forever imprinted on my brain! I also thank the Board of 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World for the financial jump-start to the PhD process.

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1.1   Introduction

In this thesis I explore the everyday lives of a group of men living in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, South Africa. Specifically, I investigate the ways in which men (re)define and (re)negotiate change alongside traditional social and cultural contexts, which remain embedded in patriarchal ideologies. I consider this by mapping out those aspects of context that the men refer to as they reflect on their masculine identities. Despite the growing body of literature on men, masculinities and manhood, there is limited information that adequately maps out the ways in which men define and live out their masculine identities within and beyond the traditional social norms and ideals of what is a socially acceptable masculinity.

Masculinities can, and do, change. I therefore argue that in Alexandra township there are multiple and diverse ways in which men (re)define, (re)negotiate and (re)construct their masculine identities within various contexts and social situations, which coexist and perhaps conflict with an accepted hegemonic township norm. Also, critical for those men who are actively engaged in a process of renegotiating the terms and conditions of their masculinity, is the absence of a clear strategy for transforming masculinities or establishing what alternatives may look like.

1.2   Rationale for a study on township masculinities

Nearly 20 years ago, I worked on a community-based project aimed at empowering Irish Traveller women in West County Dublin, in Ireland. During intensive training on human rights and basic life skills, I became aware of the hazards of extracting a socially, economically, politically and domestically marginalised and oppressed group of women, raising their awareness – and their expectations – of their rights as

women in Irish society, then reinstating them into an unchanged environment. After being directly challenged by the Traveller men in that community, I realised that empowering women alone is unproductive without engaging men in their process of change. I also realised that before I could do that, I needed to understand the wider contextual realities of the lives of marginalised men and the ways in which they subjectively interpret and manage their masculine space.

Exploring men's issues is precarious terrain (Dowd 2010). I was reminded of this during the field research in 2012, where I was invited to a meeting of the South African branch of an international women's organisation to outline my research. During my presentation, I was reproached by one of the women in attendance who claimed that by focusing on men, I was undermining the feminist agenda and overshadowing the voices of women who had fought so hard to be heard. This, she declared, would reinforce the realities of male patriarchy and privilege and create a space in which men, rather than women, were viewed as victims and, as a consequence, already scarce funding would be diverted towards a male agenda. There may indeed be some validity in concerns about the shift in attention and funding towards a programme of focusing on men (Pini and Pease 2013). In the last decade, there has been a growing trend in international human development policy, programming and practice of 'including' men in working towards women's empowerment and human rights. The UNWOMEN 'HeforShe' campaign is one prominent example of this. The increased attention to men can also be seen within academia and in both mass and social media, which are exploding with opinions, definitions and debates about men, masculinities and manhood, their vulnerabilities, emotional contributions (or lack thereof), behaviours, crises, propensity to violence and so on (Whitehead and Barrett 2001).

However, men are only more recently being viewed as potentially part of the *solution* in effecting gender equality. Yet, much of this heightened interest continues

to stereotype and categorise men within rigid social definitions of binary sexual categories, masculine norms/roles and outward displays of 'hegemonic' (Connell 2005), 'hypermasculine' (Jewkes et al 2015), or 'toxic' behaviours (Kupers 2005). 'Men' as a group are regarded as a "single, oppositional category" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994:1), linked by their negative relationship to an identified social problem and their social positions of power (patriarchy) in the continued oppression of women and other subordinate groups. These essentialist perspectives view men as gender neutral (Chant 2000, Chant and Gutmann 2002), "an unmarked universal category to stand for humanity in general" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994:1) and who profit in various contexts from a patriarchal dividend, a material advantage based on men's hierarchical positioning in the gender order (Connell 2005). But precisely how they do this, and to what extent, is unclear and generically assumed (Hearn and Morgan 1990). For example, conventional scrutiny of masculine power, authority, violence and sexual risk behaviours in relation to men and HIV and AIDS (Epprecht 2008, Morrell and Swart 2005, Shefer et al 2010) does not highlight the unique experiences and complexities of the impact of the virus on the everyday lives of men and can contribute to the 'invisibility' of men (Franklin and Boyd-Franklin 2000, Glynn 2014) in a gendered analysis of human development. Through a 'masculine lens' therefore, we can observe the impact of men's and boy's experiences of human rights violations such as human trafficking or migration, sexual and gender-based violence, male on male violence, which is often neglected in the literature (Allais 2013, Harris 2000, Peacock et al, 2009).

In South Africa, changes in political, social and economic structures since the country's transition to democracy in 1994 has put men, their masculinity/ies and their behaviours under public and scholarly scrutiny. This attention has generally focused on the links between masculinity, change and violence in attempts to understand the widespread levels of sexual violence throughout the country (Britton

2006, Hamber 2010, Jewkes and Morrell 2010, Morrell 2001, Morrell et al 2013, Posel 2005, Reid and Walker 2005). A 'hegemonic' or 'hyper' masculinity has been linked to high-risk behaviours including violent crime, sexual and gender-based violence, alcohol and drug abuse and unprotected sex with multiple partners (Barker and Ricardo 2005, Connell 2005, Jewkes et al 2003, 2006, 2010, Pleck 1995, Reid and Walker 2005, Salo 2007, Shefer et al 2010, Wood and Jewkes 2001).

Widely referenced statistics from a study conducted among men in the provinces of Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, found that 27.6 percent of men questioned in the research admitted to having forced sex on an unwilling woman/girl 'at least once', and nearly half of those disclosed to have done so multiple times (Jewkes et al. 2011). Some 2.9 percent have reportedly raped a man/boy. A staggering 42 percent of the respondents reported having carried out 'physical or sexual violence' against a female partner (ibid.). Some suggest that these figures could be much higher, due to underreporting linked to social stigma (Hunter 2010). The most cited motivation for perpetrating rape was the men's perceived 'sense of sexual entitlement', which some claim confirms the "accentuated gender hierarchy" (Jewkes et al 2011:30) implicit within a society that continues to sanction and maintain patriarchy. Research by Deborah Posel (2005) on the phenomenon of 'baby' and 'infant' rape demonstrates the historicity of the endemic nature of sexual violence within South Africa. This is compounded by the secrecy and repression of sexuality, which had been contained under apartheid along with the taboo nature of revealing and/or discussing all things sexual, and which contrasts starkly with the visibility of sexuality post-1994 (Walker 2005).

In post-1994 South Africa, progressive and inclusive equality legislation institutionalised through the Constitution of South Africa (1996) and enacted through the Bill of Rights have been linked to uncertainties around identity, sexuality, relationships, home life and the division of labour by both women and men.

Legislative and policy changes favouring gender equality since the democratic political transition are claimed to have been interpreted by men as favouring the rights of women and girls over those of men and boys (Bhana et al 2008, Hamber 2010, Neihaus 2005, Walker 2005). The ways in which men have managed and responded to these changes in both public and private spheres have been of interest to researchers (Jewkes et al 2009, Morrell 2001, Reid and Walker 2005, Silberschmidt 2001) and have fed into popular perceptions of a 'crisis of masculinity' (Horrocks 1994, Sideris 2005, Walker 2005). The crisis discourse in South Africa has been heightened by a public moral panic in response to the rising incidences and severity of sexual violence throughout the country as perpetrated by men and boys across the generations (Jewkes et al 2010, 2011, 2012, Morrell 2001, Niehaus 2005, Posel 2005, Reid and Walker 2005).

It can be difficult to reflect on the complexity of issues surrounding masculinities in a country that is dominated by reports (across a spectrum of sources), studies and statistics that back-up claims of male violence. However, if we reconsider the statistics above, we can determine that more than 70 percent of men did not disclose to having forced sex on a female and 58 percent did not associate with having committed gender-based violence. This suggests that not all men are violent perpetrators. If the collective starting point in engaging with men is their relationship with violence, we need to reconsider the impact of the essentialist perpetrator/oppressor view on men's lives and the ways in which this may influence on how they define, construct and maintain their masculinities. Critical, and perhaps fundamental to this study, is the recognition and support for those men who are actively engaged in a process of renegotiating alternative ways of constructing and living out their masculine identities.

While not ignoring the gendered realities of violence in South Africa and in particular, the unrelenting widespread incidences of sexual violence, which is

claimed to be amongst the highest in the world, this thesis contributes to the continuing discourse on masculinities by exploring beyond essentialist views of men and engages with the transitional dimensions of masculinity. Despite the growing body of literature on men, we still know very little about their day-to-day lives, their subjectivities or their coping mechanisms in diverse contexts and how these might influence their behaviour, relationships and their identities as men. This has implications for the ways in which we approach and respond to researching men or in human development policy, planning and programming.

In this thesis, I consider the interconnecting influences, challenges and implications of the wider contextual factors at play within men's lives, which have been less debated in the masculinities discourse. These include men's experiences of the intersections of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, class, politics, religion, poverty, social relationships, geography, economics and social space, all of which shape the ways in which men navigate and live out their masculine identities and consider their sense of self. These intersections are important not only in exploring the individual and collective lives of men and the factors that drive the diverse and multiple ways in which they construct their masculinities, but also in recognising men's agency and the potential for change.

To begin to understand and support men in South Africa therefore, we need to recognise the historicity, fluidity, diversity, complexity, multiplicity and transformative capacity of masculinities. It is critical to consider the daily contextual realities of Alexandra township through the men's subjective interpretations of what it is to be a man, along with the associated challenges that they internalise in their attempts to transform their masculinities.

This research enquiry was explored in-depth by engaging with a sample of participants who were living in Alexandra township at the time of the research and were in some way linked with the local community based organisation ADAPT.

1.3   Research aim and guiding questions

The aim of this research is to critically explore how men in Alexandra township subjectively define and interpret their masculinities and the ways in which they continue to redefine and reconstruct multiple masculine identities in the context of evolving contemporary change in diverse situational contexts.

The following three key questions guided this objective:

> What do men in Alexandra township perceive to be the defining characteristics of a socially anticipated township masculinity?

> In what ways do men struggle to align their subjective interpretations of a dominant township masculinity and its associated socio-cultural and behavioural expectations, which may contrast with their individual masculine identities?

> How do men experience and engage with change, in various social and personal contexts, that perhaps conflict with understandings and expectations of traditional gender ideologies and norms?

The questions are interrelated and are therefore considered throughout the thesis. They structure an analysis of the ways in which men subjectively interpret and internalise traditional, cultural and social definitions of what is acceptable manhood in Alexandra township, how they define and construct their masculinities in relation to this, and how they live out and perform their masculine identities in various life contexts. An awareness of South Africa's historical and political experience is critical in understanding the ways in which masculinities have been moulded over time and continues to characterise contemporary interpretations. The first question seeks to explore the masculine qualities that subjectively define dominant interpretations of manhood in Alexandra township. The ways in which South Africa's historical legacy,

traditions, cultures, social expectations, gender norms and township living shape these subjectivities are considered in chapters 2, 4, and 6, and in greater depth in chapter 7. Through the second question, I seek to illuminate the ways in which interpretations of the dominant township masculinity determines the expectations and experiences of manhood and the stresses that this places on some men as they endeavour to align to this perceived norm. This is explored through chapters 2, 6 and 7. The final question considers what this all means for men who reflect on their masculine identities and actively engage in a process of redefining and renegotiating who they are as men in Alexandra township and reconsider alternative ways of living as men in their communities. This is the focus of chapter 8.

1.4   Outline of the structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises a total of nine chapters. In chapter 2, the conceptual framework of the study is presented and some of the key theoretical contributions in the study of men and masculinities are discussed, primarily as they relate to South Africa. R. W. Connell's (2005) conceptualisation of hegemonic and multiple masculinities facilitates an exploration of dominant models of masculinity in Alexandra township, while at the same time revealing the multi-layered hierarchy of masculinities, which are in constant flux. P. J. Wilson's (1969) framework of the social values of reputation and respectability facilitates a structural interpretation of the social, traditional and cultural characteristics, expectations and obligations of these anticipated dominant models of masculinity. It also supports an analysis of the struggles, pressures and limitations for men as they attempt to align to and maintain these standards. A multiple identities approach to critically exploring subjectivities and masculinities facilitates a space to reflect on the complexities and specificities of men's lives in diverse contexts. Considering masculinities as fluid, multiple and changing (Connell 2005) reveals the fragmented, intersecting and situational nature

of the ways in which men (re)interpret, (re)negotiate and (re)construct who they are as men in their attempts to transition and perhaps transform their identities.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. In this chapter I introduce and explore the research location, the research participants and the methodology that underpins the study. I outline the fieldwork data gathering methods that reflects an interpretive, constructionist approach, which is rooted in gender justice (Connell 2005). Also discussed is the importance of flexibility, space, time and reciprocity of information in the research design and data gathering process. The chapter concludes with a reflection on data gathering methods.

In chapter 4, I briefly contextualise the research location. I begin by situating South Africa in terms of its current human development positioning. I then take a step back and explore the country's complex and animated political and social history as it relates to the experiences of race oppression. Racial classification became a distinguishing and determining feature of life for South African's, which for many, dictated everyday life – and death. I am therefore acutely aware of the associations linked to referencing race categories as they relate to South Africa, so in using the term 'black' throughout this thesis, I consult the official racial categories – black, coloured (mixed race), white and later Asian – as classified by the Population Registration Act 1950 during apartheid, and which continue to be used in South Africa today. In this chapter I also explore the ways in which masculinities have been mapped out through time and context, as cultures and societies respond to the implications of men's migration for work and its link with wages, hostel living, township dwelling, state subjugation, the liberation struggle, generational conflicts and gang 'culture' for example.

Chapters 5-8 present a discussion of the empirical findings of this research. In chapter 5, I introduce the key participants in the research who contributed a significant amount of their time and support to the research, and to the researcher. I

draw extensively from the life histories of the eleven men presented in this chapter. The concentrated interactions with these men enabled the exposure of a diversity of experiences and evidence about their lives covering stories of their childhood, important milestones and challenges, struggles and stresses, hopes and aspirations for their future. Their life narratives were critical to developing and defending the main findings of the research.

In chapter 6, I provide a contextual analysis of Alexandra township from the subjective interpretations of the men who live there, along with my own initial impressions of the township as I embarked on the research. My objective in this chapter is to supplement the literature review in chapter 4, by illuminating this history through men's subjective interpretations of Alexandra life. I do this by referring to the stories, perceptions, beliefs, definitions, experiences, observations and struggles of the men who live there. This enabled me to explore the subjectivities that have shaped and continue to shape, masculinities in Alexandra township.

In chapter 7, I further explore the key masculine norms and traits that are socially and culturally defined and expected of men in Alexandra township and which respond to men's key social values of respectability and reputation. Also considered are the complexities that surround men's capacity to measure up to and sustain these ideals.

In chapter 8 I discuss masculinities in transition, demonstrating how some men are actively engaging in a process of renegotiating their masculine identities and are reflecting on the boundaries in which they feel free to express this. I explore some of the challenges that these men are experiencing as they struggle to redefine alternative ways to construct and live out new masculinities which, in the meantime, co-exist alongside (and perhaps in the shadows of) traditional definitions of manhood in Alexandra township. During this change process, some of these men

access support services such as counselling, attend gender transformative workshops and trainings, join men's groups, etc., to discuss their life journeys and explore their futures as men in a changing society. The evidence suggests that as men attempt to renegotiate and reconstruct their masculinities along the lines of gender equality there is no safe space, no supportive socially or culturally welcoming environment that understands or appreciates a deviation from the masculine norm. There is no script, blueprint or benchmark for what alternative masculinities may look like in a contemporary township context.

In the concluding chapter (chapter 9) I consolidate the key empirical and theoretical findings discussed throughout the thesis and link these to the research questions, and emphasise any implications for human development policy, planning and programming.

CHAPTER 2   CONCEPTUALISING MASCULINITIES IN TRANSITION

2.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the conceptual framework that underpins this study. I begin by reviewing some of the extensive literature on men and masculinity/ies, including a discussion on the debate surrounding a 'crisis' of masculinity that has been linked to socioeconomic shifts in contemporary societies and the ways in which men are seen to respond to the challenges posed by change. In this context, I contend that while change invariably triggers an unsettling of the status quo for men, a crisis-led approach to exploring men's transitional experiences overlooks the contextual realities, subjectivities, multiple social identities and transformations that are taking place for men (and women) in contemporary societies. It also ignores the capacity of men's agency to challenge, question or reflect on their masculinity/ies and to (re)negotiate alternative masculine identities and ways of living out their individual expressions of manhood.

In conceptualising transitional masculinity/ies, men's subjectivities and the ways in which they (re)define, (re)negotiate and (re)construct their identities across diverse situational contexts, I critically engage with the theoretical contributions of R. W. Connell (2005). Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is useful in exploring the various ways in which men perceive and align their identities to what is collectively considered an ideal, normative masculinity in diverse social and cultural contexts. For example, across Latin America the 'macho man' is a socially recognised and anticipated dominant masculine norm associated with the characteristics of aggression, virility and anti-social behaviour (Fleming et al 2013). In the context of Alexandra township, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is a

useful tool to explore men's subjective interpretations of a dominant masculine norm that continues to be anticipated, promoted and sustained. In identifying the specific traits, social values and challenges that are associated with this prevailing township masculinity, I utilise the theoretical framework of 'reputation' and 'respectability' as proposed by anthropologist P.J. Wilson (1969).

A critical contribution of Connell's theorising is her concept of 'multiple masculinities'. Connell emphasises that masculinity is not static. Rather, there are many versions of diverse masculinities that differ across cultural and social contexts and can change over time. There are multiple and diverse ways in which men engage with and live out their masculinities through an ongoing and gradual process of (re)defining, (re)negotiating, (re)constructing and perhaps transforming their masculine identities. The multiplicity of masculinities reveals the 'dividual' nature (Helle-Valle 2004) of men's capacity to define and perform different masculinities depending on their situational context. The ways in which men understand their lived experiences and their contextual environment, defines their subjective interpretations of their masculinities and the ways in which they construct their identities across diverse settings.

I begin this chapter by examining the contemporary debate around a 'crisis of masculinity' that has dominated theoretical reflections on men and masculinities and the impact of socioeconomic change in contemporary societies. I then explore the concept of hegemonic masculinity and how this relates to understandings of masculinity/ies in the South African context. The popularity of the concept and the reductionist way in which it has been applied in relation to male violence in South Africa is also considered, alongside the increasing visibility of the diversity of multiple masculinities within township living and men's receptiveness to reconsidering alternative masculine identities.

2.2   Why a focus on 'men' - a contemporary 'crisis'?

The contemporary focus on men has been prompted by a widespread sense that masculinity is in 'crisis' and that this negatively impacts not only men, but on the wider society. In this section, I review this debate and the evidence for it. I briefly review the argument surrounding a crisis more broadly and then in the South African context specifically.

The widespread view that masculinity is in crisis is rooted in the political and socioeconomic changes that have been occurring throughout the modern world and it is the impact of these changes and the ways in which men are seen to respond to change that feeds into the crisis debate. Warren Farrell (2014: introduction) for example, argues that the three distinctive ways in which men have traditionally defined their 'sense of purpose' - through the 'warrior' role (protector), the 'breadwinner' (provider) and 'fatherhood' (provider-protector) – are today under threat. Changes to established male social roles are said to challenge both the traditional, cultural and social expectations of manhood (McDowell 2000, Silberschmidt 1992, 2001) and established gender hierarchies, which impact on gender relations and men's capacity or volition to change (Bly 2001, Connell 2005, Dowsett 2002, Faludi 1999, Farrell 2014, Frosh et al 2002, hooks 2004, Moore and Gillette 1992, Morrell 2001, Silberschmidt 2001, Tolson 1977, Walker 2005).

In the Western world the crisis of masculinity discourse has revealed that "...the masculine character is becoming highly volatile and insecure" (Tolson 1977:9). This view identifies men's anxieties and their increasingly fragile sense of their male social identities (Connell 2005, Hartley 1959, Reid and Walker 2005, Whitehead 2005). For some, these anxieties have impacted on men's psychological experiences and has intensified their feelings of "emptiness; impotence; rage" (Horrocks 1994:1), raising concerns about the need to understand these internal

conflicts (ibid.). Scholars have employed various indicators in attempts to reinforce claims of a crisis of masculinity: increasing numbers of boys failing in their education in comparison to girls (Epstein et al 1999); the comparatively high and rising male suicide rates (Möller-Leimkühler 2003); increasing use of alcohol and drugs (Jewkes et al 2012); increase in numbers of men hurt in serious accidents (such as on building sites) (Seedat et al 2009); high rates of conflict/war related casualties and war trauma (Loughran 2013); tendency towards engaging in high-risk behaviours (Flisher et al 2007, Gaffoor et al, 2013), higher rates of incarceration as compared to women (Harris 2000); earlier death compared to women (Perls et al 2006); men being less likely to access external medical and support services (Connell 2005, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994, Jewkes 2006, 2010, Leichliter et al 2011a, Segal 1990, Steinberg 2008).

The impact of women's participation in the workforce and greater access to education for girls, alongside increasing industrialisation, significant technological advancements, rising unemployment and urbanisation have resulted in the need for the restructuring of men's (and women's) traditional social, economic and gender roles (Frosh et al 2002). Women's perceived progression in contemporary societies is said to be destabilising men's patriarchal power within the gender hierarchy and threatening their traditional social roles and responsibilities, which are increasingly becoming unclear (Connell 2005, Dowsett 2002, Farrell 1994, Messner 1998, Morrell 2001, Silberschmidt 1992, 2001, Sweetman 1997, Tolson 1977, Walker 2005). Some claim that men's crisis responses to these challenges are externalised through anger and/or as they attempt to reassert their masculinity (Assari and Lankarani 2016, Brownhill and Wilhelm 2005, Harris 2000, hooks 2004, Jewkes and Morrell 2010, Jewkes et al 2010, Messner 1998, Silberschmidt 2001, Walker 2005, Wetherell and Edley 1999). For others, men are confused in their interpretations of what it means to be a modern man alongside the persistent traditional, social and

cultural expectations of a hegemonic masculinity, which adds pressure to their lives (Hartley 1959, Lemon 1995). The issue of power, and men's perceived loss of it, is central to understandings of a crisis discourse, both within the public (work) and private (domestic) spheres of men's lives. Some however, argue that the concept of patriarchal power risks overlooking men's vulnerabilities and supersedes any progressive contributions that men make towards gender equality (Seidler 2006). Others react to the focus on men's power privilege and refute it as a 'myth' (Farrell 1994), claiming that the oppression of the male gender role has forced men into conflicting directions and in effect has rendered them powerless. Others find that men are victims of the overbearing male social roles and expectations (Connell 2005, Horrocks 1997) and are disgruntled that this situation is not receiving the necessary critical attention (Biddulph 2004, Bly 2001, Farrell 1994, Goldberg 2009).

Men's vulnerabilities and sense of powerlessness in response to socioeconomic change, along with men's perceived challenges from second wave feminism (the 'women's movement' during the period of the 1960s and 1970s throughout the world, that sought the empowerment of women in all spheres of their lives. See Nicholson 1997), encouraged a men's liberation movement that supported a feminist agenda (Connell 2005, hooks 2004, Messner 1998, Segal 2001, Tolson 1977) or conversely, celebrated traditional masculinity, male bonding and the re-energising of male privilege (Bly 2001, Faludi 1999, Farrell 1994, Messner 1998, Tolson 1977). This was evidenced by the popularity and support for various men's movements and networks (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Flood et al 2007, Tolson 1977) such as the mythopoetic men's movement promoted by Robert Bly (2001) that encouraged men to reconnect with their warrior masculinity, or the Christian men's organisation Promise Keepers and the Nation of Islam and its 'Million Man March' led by Louis Farrakhan. Alternatively, some men who supported the women's movement were given the label 'profeminist' men (hooks 2004, Tolson

1977) or 'antisexist' men (Messner 1998). Yet, even this posed a crisis as Andrew Tolson claims, reflecting on his own profeminist journey and work with men's groups during the 1970s in the UK. His findings highlight the paradoxes and ambiguities of masculinity, the impact of patriarchy on men's lives and the restrictions in their capacity to adapt to the equality that feminism envisaged (1977:143):

> "Between all our practical activities, we faced an immediate contradiction. As men, as the agents of a patriarchal culture, we remained the dominant gender…the very notion of 'men's politics' was paradoxical. We had no experience of sexual oppression, violence, jokes at our expense. There were no issues to unite us – no basis for action against a system that already operates in our favour… Above all, we had not 'come out' – we remained heterosexual, embarrassed at being thought gay, typical liberal men".

Research in East Africa finds that contemporary socioeconomic change is impacting on traditional masculine social roles, which are becoming "…unclear and contradictory" (Silberschmidt 2001:657). This is said to contribute to men's loss of "social value" and feelings of "disempowerment" which, it is claimed, results in their pursuit of alternative 'risky' behaviours to reassert their masculine social identities (ibid.). As changing socioeconomic contexts open up opportunities for women in the workplace, they are increasingly challenging economic hardship and inequality. In response, it is claimed, men's sense of their traditional, cultural and socially sanctioned position of "honour, reputation and masculinity" (Silberschmidt 2011:104) is under threat. However, at the same time, the socially endorsed and maintained gender roles and patriarchal ideologies that preserve men's dominant positions in society, for example 'provider', 'protector' and 'head of the household', continue to be considered the exclusive responsibility of men and remain unchallenged by both men and women. This is also experienced in the context of South Africa (Morrell 2001, Posel and Rudwick 2014).

Much of the literature in South Africa focused on the broader implications of a crisis of masculinity refers to the widespread violence and more specifically sexual violence, that has been inextricably linked to masculinity across the generations, and has continued in the post-apartheid era. South Africa reportedly has one of the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence for a country not at war (Dunkle et al. 2006, Jewkes et al. 2009), where definitions of manhood are steeped in historical, cultural, political and socioeconomic contexts that continue to define contemporary expressions of masculinity (Morrell 2001, Reid and Walker 2005). The political transition to democracy since 1994 is viewed as having challenged the established and entrenched definitions of manhood constructed through colonial and apartheid contexts, particularly for black African men. In a democratic South Africa, men are being presented with liberal, constitutional directives to become a 'new man', while at the same time expected to remain immersed in the continuing traditional and cultural norms that defined masculinities of the past. This is challenging both men and women to renegotiate and reshape their gender identities and sexualities (Morrell 2001, Sideris 2005, Walker 2005). For some, an equality agenda promoted through democracy in post-apartheid South Africa is challenging traditional gender roles and social norms, which is contributing to men's "loss of meaning" (Praeg and Baillie 2011:260) and 'social value' (Silberschmidt 2001), or as Lemon claims "a crisis of legitimacy", rather than a crisis of masculinity (Lemon 1995:68).

Men's violence has been interpreted as attempts to reinstate their sense of the masculine self (Andersson et al 1998, Harris 2000, Jewkes et al 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Kandirikirira 2002, Moffett 2006, Morrell 2001, Praeg and Baillie 2011, Reid and Walker 2005, Seedat et al 2009, Sigsworth 2009, Wood and Jewkes 2001, Xaba 2001). For some, this is evidenced through extreme forms of sexual violence, such as infant and gang rape, which dominated the headlines in South Africa during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Posel 2005, Praeg and Baillie 2011). Angela Harris

(2000) explains how the systematic use of rape by men and boys is used as "regenerative violence" for patriarchy to sustain itself (Harris 2000:258). Here, masculinity is seen to be normalised through violence, restored and then repeated through attempts to resuscitate a sense of the masculine (Niehaus 2005, Sideris 2005). Other men and boys are claimed to align with violence to lessen the realities of the structural deprivations inherent within their situations of poverty that is often experienced with township living. In doing so, they can be seen to be attempting to meet the ideals of masculinity in the context of socioeconomic hardships (Cooper and Foster 2008, McDowell 2000). This feeds into uncertainties around identity, sexuality and gender roles (Decoteau 2013, Walker 2005).

Not all however, align with a model that views masculinity as in crisis. Some caution about the limitations of a crisis discourse which, when analysed from a gender perspective, leads to the homogenisation or normalising of men's experiences and behaviours (Hearn and Whitehead 2006). For example, where would men who do not define themselves through violence or dominant masculine norms be positioned in a crisis model? Some claim that categorising men as a group as being in crisis, neglects issues of power in diverse gendered relationships and marginalises the effects of sexuality (Connell 2005, Posel 2005, Sideris 2005, Walker 2005). Critically, others find that socioeconomic changes in contemporary societies and men's responses to them should not be viewed as a cause and effect of women's progression. The entrenched, structural patriarchal ideologies that sanction women's subordination remain in place (McDowell 2000) and men continue to have relative advantage in society (Tolson 1977). Also, some claim that a spotlight on men's vulnerabilities and their crisis of masculinity risks diverting attention from the core issue of women's subordination and oppression that primarily results from patriarchal power (Macleod 2007). Others warn that a specific focus on men risks the potential for a subsequent diversion of necessary funding from supporting and

empowering women to supporting men (Braidotti, 1994, Chant 2000, Connell 2005, hooks 2004, Ratele 2008, Reid and Walker 2005, Segal 2001, Shefer et al 2010, Silberschmidt 2011).

In South Africa, the realities and historicity of sexual violence are "highly complex" (Walker 2005:166) and are facilitated by social, psychological and structural influences. Walker, therefore, warns against a crisis discourse that links the widespread levels of violence across South Africa to men's behavioural responses. She argues that the increased attention to sexual violence and the intensified public reaction to it, is but one dimension of the wider crisis in post-apartheid South Africa. She maintains that men's violence should be viewed as "a barometer" of a potential crisis and the extent to which masculinities are in disarray, but not in crisis (ibid.).

From a theoretical perspective, a crisis of masculinity assumes a rationality and logic that depends on the outcome of a disaster which, as Connell argues (2005) is discordant with the concept of masculinity that allows for flexibility and is open to renegotiation, reconstruction and transformation. She warns against categorising masculinity as being in crisis, advocating that change must be viewed in terms of the tensions that are placed on a wider social structure of gender *relations*, alongside (Segal 1991) individual men's experiences of change. Men's subjectivities, the ways in which these are structured and influence on how they navigate their masculine identities are considered in terms of men's lived experiences, emotional interests (Roper 2005) and their "fantasy" (Tosh and Roper 1991:14) that is, their perceptions, interpretations and aspirations of these experiences. These feed into the subjective ways in which men experience, define and connect with gendered relationships and determine their behaviours. Considering men's subjectivities provides the analytical space to reflect on the ways in which men *sense* that their masculinities and social identities may be under threat and how they relate their behaviour accordingly. Masculinity is constantly changing

and reconstructing itself and as Connell warns "the process and paths of becoming male are complex and involve tensions and ambiguities" (Connell 2005:6). Rapid political, social, economic and technological transformations in recent years has resulted in significant shifts in the gender order. Whether this amounts to a crisis is subject to continuing debate. What is critical to recognise is that men react differently to change in diverse social and political contexts, life experiences and social positioning that intersect with race, class, geography, history, etc. Power shifts in the gender hierarchy in response to the wider contextual changes in societies cannot be explained as simply a crisis of masculinity.

Change can also be a positive experience, which provides men with an opportunity to reassess and perhaps redefine their masculine identities (Hunter 2003, Morrell 2001, Posel 2005, Sideris 2005, Walker 2005), although this is not an easy process. The confines of socially ascribed masculine norms set 'limits' to masculinity (Tolson 1977) and to how men can anticipate, contemplate and respond to change. The ways in which a particular society defines and demands these limits is critical to understanding men's experiences of masculinity. In the next section, I consider the various theoretical contributions to conceptualising men and masculinity/ies, and with the ways in which these have been interpreted in the South African context.

2.3   Towards conceptualising masculinity/ies

The crisis discourse in recent years, has intensified the need to understand men and define masculinity/ies as an object of knowledge. To date, Connell (2005) remains the most widely referenced theorist in conceptualising masculinities. Her proposed and much debated (Anderson 2010, Demetriou 2001, Moller 2007, Wetherell and Edley 1999) conceptual framework offers a critical, political dimension to the theorising of masculinity in "…praxis, the doing of politics" (Morrell 2007:16) that incorporates diversity, social action, agency and change. In this

section, I explore attempts to conceptualise masculinity/ies, drawing extensively from the work of Connell (2005), specifically her concepts of 'hegemonic' and 'multiple' masculinities.

2.3.1   Masculinity as embodied

Theorising men, masculinity/ies, manhood, men's bodies, sexuality/ies and behaviours is complex and continues to dominate debates among those studying men and masculinity/ies (Beasley 2005, Clatterbaugh 1998, Connell 2005, Hearn and Morgan 1990). For some, there is no need to use labels such as 'masculinity', when men are the subject of analysis (Clatterbaugh 1998). But as Connell says, "why would we talk about men in the first place?" if not to explore their masculinities (Connell 2000:16). Theoretical interpretations focused on the biological determination of sex categories (Archer 1996, Money and Ehrhardt 1972, Nathan 2011, Udry 1994) associate masculinity with a binary sexual category, generally assumed as those assigned with male bodies (Connell 2005). This view was conceptualised and promoted through sex-role theories, popular in the 1950s and 1960s, which provided an alternative to biological theoretical perspectives (Messner 1998). Sex-role theories present gender as socially established and link biological sex divisions with normative, socially defined expectations for men and women (girls and boys). The appropriate gender roles and norms generally assigned to each biological category is constructed through unique characteristics that are valued by a specific culture or society, which enforces the appropriate gender behaviour and stereotype (Connell 1985, Demetriou 2001, Fausto-Sterling 2000, Hofstede 1986, Money and Ehrhardt 1972, West and Zimmerman 1987). For example, women's anticipated domestic and caring roles reflect their secondary status aligned within the domestic sphere, which is contrasted with men's economic role that places them outside the home, while remaining firmly at the head of it. Ruth Hartley (1959), nearly six decades ago, revealed that the social conditioning of male roles and

norms begins earlier for boys than girls, and that boys are subject to much harsher and rigorous social policing and negative reinforcement and humiliation. Men's views or behaviour that does not conform to their ascribed sex category, whether by choice or limitation, are considered unmanly or less masculine by society (Connell 1993, Connell et al.,1993).

A critical limitation of sex role theories is that they overlook the diversity within and between gendered relations and the ways in which each relates to the other, in diverse contexts. They fail therefore, to explain gender "as a dialectic" (Connell 1985:263) that changes over time. Where, for example, would a profeminist man (or indeed a feminist woman) be socially positioned within definitions of traditional male social roles that continue to characterise masculinity today? Defining men as a biological category, with its associated social roles and norms does not consider the realties, complexities and multiplicity of issues, contexts and historical experiences that all interconnect within gendered lives and which change over time and context. Issues of gender inequality and the power dynamics within and between gendered relations are not considered (Connell 1985, 2005, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994, Firestone 1972, Kandiyoti 1994, Pease 2000, Segal 2001). Women's complicity in defining, maintaining and defending a dominant, traditional, patriarchal masculine position within society (Morrell and Jewkes 2010, Talbot and Quayle 2010) and their contribution to changing gender relations (Campbell 2014, Morrell et al 2013) are also omitted.

Some continue to view the relevance of the body alongside the social context in defining masculinity (Gilbert 2005). While emphasising masculinity as a social construct, Gilbert contends that it continues to be determined by and constrained within socially defined biological traits as dictated through culture, social interactions and "imagination" (Gilbert 2005:15). Some dispute this, questioning the need to assume that everything which is deemed distinctive about men must be classified

as masculinity, or that everything said about masculinity relates specifically to men (Sedgwick 1995). Both men and women can draw from and perform aspects of both femininity and masculinity within their preferred gender identities in different contexts. Eve Sedgwick explains that, "[a]s a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities… and, like men, I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities, and a performer of them" (1995:13). Similarly, Lynne Segal challenges the perceptions that label women who are alleged to display masculine characteristics such as "power, assertiveness, physical prowess, intellectual rigour, aggression… [as] performing masculinity" (Segal 2001:235), rather than displaying attributes of their femininity. Biological categories and sex roles have long been disputed with the development of wider understandings and definitions on intersex, transgender, 'queer' identities (Butler 1990), 'female' masculinities (Halberstam 1998) and multiple masculinities and the ways in which these relate to and with each other (Connell 2005).

Connell contends that masculinity can only exist in contrast to femininity and is "necessarily a social construction" (Connell 2000:29), which should be understood in terms of "gendered power *relations"* (ibid. Emphasis added). While not rejecting the relevance of the body in understandings of masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:851) stressed the need to reconsider the wider structure of social practices within gendered relationships rather than understanding it as a single entity: "It is important not only that masculinities be understood as embodied but also that the interweaving of embodiment and social context". They specify that masculinity is therefore best conceptualised in terms of 'configurations' or 'patterns' of practice that are structured within gender relations (ibid. See also Connell 1985, 2000, 2005) that is, by what men *do* in response to their *perceived* gender, rather than what is biologically expected of them. Importantly, not all men construct or live out their masculinities in the same way, which recognises the multiplicity and

diversity of masculinities (Connell 2005, Morrell, 2001, 2007). The concepts of hegemonic and multiple masculinities have, therefore, enabled considerable scope for studying men and masculinities across a variety of disciplines, with empirical studies continuing to expand and support definitions and understandings of the ways in which masculinities evolve and mutate in contemporary societies (Connell 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Morrell et al., 2012). In the next section, I outline my understandings of hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities as proposed by Connell (2005) and reflect on the ways in which these relate to masculinities in South Africa.

2.3.2   Masculinity/ies as hegemonic and multiple

Connell states that masculinity "is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity. It is also extended in the world, merged in organised social relations" (Connell 2005:29). The wider social, cultural and contextual realities and relationships within men's lived experiences stimulates their subjectivities and the ways in which they define masculinity and the associated masculine behaviours and traits. A critical contribution of Connell's conceptualising is in recognising the multiplicity, diversity, dynamism and fluidity of masculinities (and femininities), which interact at a variety of levels in different contexts and are therefore subject to change (Connell 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Harris 2000). This theoretical insight challenged the long-established notion of masculinity as homogenous, static and with fixed characteristics. Masculinities are constructed through time, across a variety of social and cultural experiences and relationships and are constantly being contested, (re)negotiated, protected, defended, mutated, evolved and (re)constructed (Morrell 2001). At pains to inform readers of the importance of the "historico-cultural" nature of masculinity (Demetriou 2001:340) and the social contexts in which masculinities are constructed, Connell affirmed the importance of defining masculinity with reference to its global, national, regional or local variations (Connell 2005). Within

these variations are intersections of race, class, culture, ethnicity, age and (inter)generation, religion, belief systems, historical context, environment, geographical location, sexual orientation, definitions, experiences and influences of power, which impact on how masculinities and men's subjectivities and masculine identities are understood, defined and (re)constructed (Connell 2005, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994, Morrell 2001, Ratele 2008, Uchendu 2008). An analysis of masculinities without reference to and reflection on these intersections, threatens that local trends may be universally interpreted as national generalisations or essentialises race within the context of oppression, despite evidence of the multiplicity of evolving masculinities (ibid.). For example, the stereotyping or normalising of black men in townships as violent, or through the common representations of black men, which continues to be plagued by echoes of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2007), first published in 1899, or Franz Fanon's (1986) negative imagery of black men's sexuality in his 1952 publication *Black Skin, White Masks*. This approach ignores the hierarchies and diversity within and between 'black' masculinities, including (but not limited to) gay black masculinities or African American black masculinities, rather than simply understanding black masculinities as an alternative to 'white' masculinities (Connell 2005).

Within this multiplicity of masculinities, a dominant "currently accepted" (Connell 2005:76-77) and socially defined masculine ideal emerges, that establishes a normative benchmark for manhood in a given society (Wetherell and Edley 1999:336). Borrowing from Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony within social relations, Connell developed the term 'hegemonic masculinity' as representing this socially anticipated masculine form that is culturally specific. In Western societies, a hegemonic masculinity is popularly represented as tough, heterosexual, homophobic, authoritative and successful (Demetriou 2001). As a theoretical concept, hegemonic masculinity supports an analysis of power within gendered

social relations, how power is perceived (real or otherwise), practised and legitimated not only between men and women, but also within and between men (Connell 2005, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994) in a hierarchy of masculinities. An idealistic hegemonic form is one that "preserves, legitimates and naturalises the interests of the powerful" (Wetherell and Edley 1999:234). It marginalises others deemed less powerful, such as women or other 'weaker' men, for example gay men (Connell 2005), referred to as the "despised 'Other'" (Wetherell and Edley 1999:336). The word naturalises is important in that it indicates an accepted state for the social ordering within the representations of a dominant masculinity, establishing it as a socially sanctioned norm. This then becomes "inherited" (Tolson 1977:141), replicated and perpetuated within men's lives, leading to its institutionalisation, in which it becomes embedded within the fabric of society.

A hegemonic masculine ideology is often promoted through the publicising and standardising of male stereotypes and essentialised gender norms, compounded by traditional rural ideologies, urban township living, the mass media and institutions, such as the church and education systems, which all relay messages of acceptable stereotypical notions of manhood and masculine behaviour. Women's subordination, and how this is acknowledged, practised and sustained, is embodied within, and central to, this ideological position (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Some argue that a preference for a dominant form of masculinity over others has persisted because of constructions of masculinity that protect and legitimate a 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 2005, Morrell 2001). This is defined as a material benefit that is associated with men's power positionality over women, for example, who continue to occupy a subordinate social space in the gender hierarchy. Men as a social group are assumed to benefit from this dividend, even if some men align to gender equality individually. But precisely how remains unclear and not all men are aware of, or have full control of their positions within society (Roper 2005). Those

who choose not to challenge the position of a hegemonic masculinity and continue to benefit from it are viewed by some as "complicit" in masculinity for "fear" (Demetriou 2001:342) of losing the patriarchal dividend (Praeg and Baille 2011), of becoming relegated to a subordinate status (Connell 2005, Demetriou 2001, Mfecane 2008) or subjected to social humiliation (Sideris 2005). This leads to further entrenched gender inequalities (Morrell et al 2013) as evidenced in the continuing global gender disparities experienced through women's lower employment remuneration, low representation in political and corporate structures (Connell 1996, Morrell 2001) or the feminisation of poverty (Chant 2007).

The levels of subordination within a hegemonic structure exposes that not all men have equal access in equal measures to the anticipated material benefits even in the most likely settings, as Connell (2005:77) explains:

> "That is *not* to say that the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful people… Individual holders of institutional power or great wealth may be far from the hegemonic pattern in their personal lives…hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual" (Connell 2005:77, emphasis added).

Not all men therefore, are aware that they have access to or benefit from a patriarchal dividend, and for some men, maintaining a power privilege may not equate to a "satisfying experience of life" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). Regardless of how men interpret or position themselves (or are seen to be positioned by society), they are constrained by the definitions of its expectations "and their *fantasy* in relation to it" (Segal 2001:239, emphasis in original).

Connell's conceptualising of masculinity/ies as rooted in social justice allows for the theorising of men as not only the oppressor, but also the target of skewed gender

systems. Andrew Tolson reported on this forty years ago, finding that the "… image of maleness, of masculinity… is frequently as limiting to the man as the image of femininity is to the woman" (Tolson 1977:8). Some men remain in the shadows of a hegemonic masculinity, a symbolism connected to power and control over what is considered weak or feminine, the feminine within the self (Segal 2001:239) and the failure to live up to its expectations (Connell 2005).

2.3.3   Contextualising masculinity/ies in South Africa

While the central focus of this thesis is not specifically about violence or violent men, it is important to (re)consider the contextual realities of day-to-day living for black South Africans. The volumes of research that link violence with masculinity, notably hegemonic, hyper and violent masculinities, cannot (and should not) be overlooked. The widespread violence throughout South Africa is gendered (Seedat et al. 2009) and has been described as "yoked together" with masculinity (Morrell 2001:12). The links between power, violence and masculinities are often connected in research with men's responses to the shifting gender order and their attempts to protect patriarchy. Exploring the relationship between power and gender in the South African context, Belinda Bozzoli reveals a "patchwork quilt" (1983:149) of patriarchies that simultaneously co-exist, and which continue to promote and sustain traditional and cultural sexist ideologies. She categorises these under "Afrikaner", "Black culture" and "English speaking" varieties (Bozzoli 1983:49).

Robert Morrell (2001) argues against the labelling of a single hegemonic masculine form, finding that within diverse, highly complex and contested societies such as South Africa, identifying a representative national masculinity is problematic, as contestations towards hegemony have historically been fought and challenged, most notably on race, class and ethnicity (Morrell et al, 2013:7). He suggests at least three masculinities that could be defined as having hegemonic status *within*

and between their specific areas of influence: i) 'white' (Afrikaans and English), ii) 'African' (rural masculinity and black) and, iii) 'urban' black masculinity (Morrell 1998). He illustrates the separation between black and white masculinities in the colonial and apartheid contexts, which signified a dominant form within the masculine hierarchy, where white masculinity dominated over black, and yet both masculinities converged in their unifying authority over women (Morrell 1998). In an urban township context, violence is viewed as a key marker in sustaining hegemony and reasserting manhood within repressive contextual experiences (Morrell 1998, Mathabane 1986, Praeg and Baillie 2011), or for affirming individual or collective masculinity to maintain a cultural ideal (Harris 2000). Within the confines of South Africa's historical political context, black South African masculinities have evolved, mutated and repositioned alongside a traditional patriarchal ideology that sustains a hegemonic form, and which continues to be engulfed in violence.

The concepts of multiple and hegemonic masculinity/ies provide a critical understanding of gendered power and inequality, where and how power is located and the structures that construct and maintain it (Morrell 2001). This has most notably concentrated on women's subordination and gendered relationships under colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid periods (Decoteau 2013, Morrell, 2001, Reid and Walker 2005, Xaba 2001). Understanding masculinities as multiple and fluid opens the potential for change and the shifting of masculinities within various contexts, which can challenge hegemonic masculine models and patriarchal ideologies (Morrell et al 2013:7). Multiple masculinities and the shifting power relations within these also enable a recognition of the diversity of masculinities within South African society. It supports a departure from the stereotype of a violent, black South African man and allows for a recognition of men's agency and the potential for change. For example, Thokozani Xaba (2001) reveals the changing nature of 'struggle' masculinity, which dominated masculinities in urban contexts

during the liberation struggle in South Africa. These mutated and co-existed alongside 'street' masculinities, which then conflicted with the more liberal 'post-struggle' masculinities that promoted an expression of alternative masculinities and were aligned with the ideals of gender equality and respectability that were ushered in with new liberal, democratic values (Reid and Walker 2005). Former South African President Nelson Mandela is an obvious example of this. Raymond Suttner (2014) discusses the masculinities of Mandela, which transcended violence and 'struggle' masculinities (Xaba 2001) to the promotion of more inclusive "soft" versions of masculinities in Mandela's later years (Suttner 2014:342). The liberality of South Africa's democratic constitution allowed for the expression of a "constitutional sexuality" (Walker 2005:161) in renegotiating new masculinities in line with its mission for gender equality.

For Morrell, the promotion of 'forgiveness' and 'acceptance' through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa encouraged new definitions and internalised understandings "of what it is to be a man" (Morrell 2001:30). Those in the "progressive" category, which he refers to as "emancipatory masculinities" (Morrell 2001:31), are at the forefront of challenging and responding to violence and working towards gender equality. The limited public resistance to an equality agenda introduced through democracy, including the promotion and enshrining of women's and gay rights, for example, is a clear demonstration of an 'accommodating' response to the gender changes that accompanied the democratic elections in 1994 (ibid.). However, as Morrell starkly reminds us, "misogyny and homophobia have far from disappeared" in South Africa (2001:31). In recent years, the election of Jacob Zuma as the President of South Africa and the rise of the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters through the party's leader, Julius Mulema, have resuscitated more traditional forms of hegemonic masculinities, further thwarting contemporary definitions of township masculinities. The symbolism of

Zuma's traditional warrior status, the promotion of Zulu culture and Julius Mulema's representation of militarism are promoting a return to dominant masculinities of the past.

2.3.4   Adapting understandings of hegemonic masculinity

The widespread use of Connell's concepts of hegemonic and multiple masculinities has generated critical engagement (Anderson 2010, Anderson and McGuire 2010, Demetriou 2001, Wetherell and Edley 1999) prompting Connell, along with James Messerschmidt (2005), to revisit, in particular, the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Critically, they re-emphasised that hegemonic masculinity is not "a fixed character type or an assemblage of toxic traits" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:854). They warned of its "ambiguities in usage" (ibid.) that facilitate a justification of men's violence or dominance as defining characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, interpreting masculinity as entrenched within the body or as a set of personality traits. This links violence as a natural element of masculinity and overlooks the "historicity" (ibid:838) of masculinity, ignoring its fluidity, instability and propensity to change. For some, the issue of violence is inclusive of broader contextual factors that are seen to justify violence as a necessary or normal "marker" of masculinity (Morrell et al 2013:15), which is why revisiting the concept required a further understanding of the various contexts and realities that are seen to continue to facilitate violence. This was understood through the demarcation of three situational levels or "realms" (ibid.:4) of hegemony where masculinity functions at global, national and local levels (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), and how these interrelate. This revealed how violence in one context may be tolerated and captured within a hegemonic masculinity, whereas in a different context it would not (Morrell et al 2013). It confines the diversity of men's experiences, responses and relationship with violence. For example, if we reflect once again on the masculinities of Nelson Mandela, we see a transformation from more violent masculinities to

gentler versions showing that masculinities can and do change, but also demonstrating the capacity to moderate or control violent responses. Mandela's displays of violent, 'struggle' (Xaba 2001) or 'heroic' (Unterhalter 2000) masculinities were consistent with the struggle under apartheid and in nation building, while expressions of a softer (Suttner 2005) new, (Morrell et al 2012) constitutional masculinity (Walker 2005) was facilitated under the political transition to democracy that also exposed men in South Africa to global, alternative interpretations of being a man and ways of experiencing manhood.

Wetherell and Edley (1999:353) have critiqued Connell's theorising of hegemonic masculinity as "sketchy", finding that the "exact content of the prescriptive social norms which make up hegemonic masculinity is left unclear" (ibid.:336). They claim that the specificities, which they define as "hegemonic forms of sense making" (ibid.), are missing in the conceptualising which, they argue, is ambiguous in explaining 'how' men can renegotiate their identities alongside a seemingly unattainable masculine norm. They ask critical questions about the ways in which male norms are defined, communicated and enacted in diverse contexts, along with the ways in which men construct their identities around these norms, or in how they interpret and perform their daily realities in relation to them. What are the processes of change for example, for men, and in what practical ways can they renegotiate their masculinities? What is the impact of changed masculinities on gender relations? Yet, before change is considered and perhaps responded to, in what ways can men explore their positionality as gendered beings and how do they make sense of their subjective interpretations of what it means to be a man. Moller (2007) builds on this criticism, claiming that Connell's conceptualising ignores the daily practises of what he terms the more "boring" masculinities (Moller 2007:265), men unaligned to a hegemonic norm approved by a society and who occupy an ambiguous masculine space alongside this norm. However, as Connell

demonstrates, such ambiguities can also be conceptualised within a hegemonic model. For example, traditional, cultural, social and political prescriptions and practices of an accepted (and expected) dominant masculinity are promoted as "models of admired masculine conduct" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:838) through institutions such as churches, the media, 'Hollywood', the state, etc., and can contribute to distorting the "the everyday realities of social practice" (ibid.) The critical argument is that masculinities are not always constructed as they directly relate to the everyday realities of men's lives, but respond to the "widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires", (ibid.) of a society in which hegemonic models of masculinity and prescribed behaviours are normalised. Connell and Messerschmidt call this "hegemony in the society-wide gender order as a whole" (ibid.).

For Raymond Suttner, using hegemonic masculinity as a conceptual tool in analysing South African masculinities does not allow for the incorporation of the issue of 'emasculation' (see also Hunter 2011, Kandirikirira 2002), where manhood has been denied under colonial and apartheid realities, or the corresponding meanings and actualities that men attach to their past (Motsemme 2007), and the ways in which they attempt to reclaim their manhood within these oppressive structures (Suttner 2005). One example of this experience is the emasculating, racially infused use, under apartheid and colonialism, of the social category 'boy' when referring to black men (Morrell 1998). Within their respective traditional and cultural societies, black men continued to be viewed as provider, protector and head of the household, yet their social positioning along with their emasculatory experience prevented them from responding to these social roles (Suttner 2005).

The critiques to Connell's theorising of masculinities reveals the need to critically define and understand the socially and culturally sanctioned and enforced gender norms that are characteristic of what is considered a real man in diverse contexts and which form a part of the fabric of the day-to-day realities for men. Alongside

this, an analysis should also include the ways in which these norms are subjectively defined, internalised and expressed by men individually and as a group, and the impact this has on gender relations. In the South African context, this needs to incorporate the historical and situational realities and experiences of marginalised and oppressed masculinities (Unterhalter 2000). Connell's conceptualising of masculinity/ies, does however, continue to be a key tool of enquiry for empirical research that explores our understandings of masculinity/ies as social constructions emphasising, as it does, the importance of gender relations and acknowledging that these are diverse, multiple, contradictory, variable, context specific, open to contestation and evolve through time (Connell 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994, Morrell 2001). These competing meanings and interpretations therefore, demonstrate that men construct multiple masculine identities in various situational contexts, which are neither consistent nor fixed. Recognising diversity and agency in definitions and expressions of manhood offers opportunities for new definitions of masculinities. Some men may resist change, others embrace it, but not without confusion and challenge to their masculine identities (Connell 2005, Tolson 1977). Connell's theorising shows that men's interpretations of their power positionality is central to understanding social relations between women and men, but also within and between men. The issue of power is, therefore, instrumental in contributing to the ways in which men construct their masculinities and in the sustainability of a hegemonic masculinity within various social and cultural contexts.

In the next section, I explore the subjective understandings of masculinities in the context of urban township living in contemporary South Africa. To do this, I draw on the work of Wilson (1969), who identifies the 'key social values' of reputation and respectability as markers or norms that influence the ways in which masculinities

are expected, endorsed, subjectively interpreted and constructed, and the social contexts in which identified norms could be considered hegemonic.

2.4   Defining markers of masculinity

"In life, every man has twin obligations – obligations to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children; and he has an obligation to his people, his community, his country. In a civil and humane society, each man is able to fulfil those obligations according to his own inclinations and abilities. But in a country like South Africa, it was almost impossible for a man of my birth and colour to fulfil both of those obligations. In South Africa, a man of colour who attempted to live as a human being was punished and isolated. In South Africa, a man who tried to fulfil his duty to his people was inevitably ripped from his family and his home and was forced to live a life apart, a twilight existence of secrecy and rebellion" (Mandela 1995:749).

Nelson Mandela's quote above demonstrates not only the specific nature of men's roles in South African society but also the structural obstacles of apartheid that prevented men from fulfilling their "obligations" (ibid.) to society. Social and cultural prescriptions of what are considered essential masculine characteristics and behaviours have a profound impact on the ways in which men construct their subjectivities and adapt their behaviours, both individually and as a group. Mandela's linking of men's' social responsibilities with the struggle on the street and that of liberation struggle is encapsulated through the role of protector and provider. In many contemporary societies, examples of acceptable hegemonic masculine traits continue to include heterosexuality, strength and virility, being the provider, protector and head of the family/homestead, all of which, by implication, necessitate expected social behaviours of the protector and head of the household through marriage and fatherhood (Beasley 2005, Connell 2005, Hunter 2010, Lemon 1995,

Morrell 1998, 2013, Pini and Pease 2013, Pleck 1981, Reid and Walker 2005, Richter and Morrell 2006, Segal 2001, Silberschmidt 1992, 2001, Tolson 1977, Unterhalter 2000).

The theoretical framework proposed by Wilson (1969) in his analysis of the organisation of social relations among men (and women) in Caribbean societies encapsulates these social features into a 'dual value system', which he terms 'reputation' and 'respectability'. Wilson demonstrates how men's identities in Caribbean societies were shaped, sustained and challenged, how communal social relations were managed and what the impact was of these value systems in society. Wilson's value system framework is a useful analytical tool in exploring and analysing the experiences and expectations of masculinity within Alexandra township. It supports and simplifies an identification of the dominant social norms/ideals that defines manhood in Alexandra society, which emerged during the course of the research. The dual, interconnected social value systems provide a structure for identifying and understanding the key social gendered norms, values and expectations that define manhood and set masculine standards within the township's social context and their impact on gender relations. The respected male social roles of 'provider' and 'protector' (Davies and Eagle 2007, Hunter 2010, Morrell 2006, Silberschmidt 2001) are entrenched within this social value system, which reinforces dominant positions of power over those assumed weak, needy, inferior, in need of protection or to be provided for (Morrell et al 2013). Wilson's framework also supports an identification and understanding of the fundamental stresses that men may experience in aspiring and attempting to live out these masculine value systems/norms. Importantly, identifying these restrictions can help to define the impact on men's capacity to challenge dominant norms and to renegotiate alternative models of masculinities.

A man's reputation amounts to his "honour… an absolute and relative measure of a man's worth" his social standing amassed in return for his "masculine activities" (Wilson 1969:73). Manhood, as it relates to reputation, is encapsulated by the term 'macho', which is widely used in describing a dominant Latin American masculinity, and the term 'big man', in the South African context. The big man is the one who is definitive in his heterosexual status and expresses manhood through strength, virility, sexual prowess, established fighting skills, a man who generally engages in high-risk behaviour and has a disregard for the law (Carton 2001, Carton and Morrell 2012, Hunter 2010, Jewkes et al 2010, Mandela 1995, Posel 2005, Reid and Walker 2005, Silberschmidt 2001). These displays of manhood are generally rewarded with respect: a man's reputation is encouraged and monitored by his peers and perceived as favoured by women. This socially defined masculinity becomes the 'normal' expected behaviour of men, and is "confirmed by the opinions and reactions of others with whom one lives" (Wilson 1969:73). According to Wilson, any behaviour outside of this is considered unmasculine and vulnerable to social stigma. Wilson finds, that as men mature, they align their behaviour to a social scrutiny based on respectability, such as becoming law-abiding or wanting to settle down and have a family.

Achieving respectability, means that men accomplish the societally sanctioned and audited masculine qualities that are dictated through tradition, culture and social belief systems. For Wilson, marriage is critical to this and is viewed as the "chief way in which respectability is affirmed" (Wilson 1969:78). For others, it is by establishing a successful homestead or becoming a 'warrior' within the Zulu tradition (Hunter 2010), 'going to the mountain' to be initiated into manhood for the Xhosa and the Pedi, ensuring the procurement of *lobola* (bridewealth) or *damages* (to reimburse the mother's family if she becomes pregnant outside of marriage), having children and becoming a father and being the head of household.

Wilson argues that the qualities needed to achieve respectability support social order and family values. He contrasts these with the qualities of reputation that link with social disorder and family disruption. However, he makes note of the intersection between the two value systems, where reputation adds "power" to respectability (Wilson 1969:78). Citing examples of 'older males' or a church 'preacher', he claims that both were at some stage in their masculine journey, subject to the social expectations and norms of reputation. This implies that a man who fulfils his social obligations of a masculinity based on reputation, will expect to evolve into a masculinity structured on respectability as he fulfils the required social values of an evolved masculinity.

Returning to Mandela's quote above, what is particularly noteworthy in his reflection are the multiplicity of ways in which men can interpret their masculinities "according to his own inclinations and abilities" (Mandela 1995:749). While the expectations of men's social identities are cast through key social values that are admired and anticipated in diverse contexts, the ways in which men navigate and respond to these roles is diverse, multiple and complex.

2.5   The challenge to change

Masculinities are social constructs that can and do change and are responded to in diverse ways (Connell 2005, Morrell 2001, 2005). Men may resist change (Connell 2005, Morrell 2001) or encourage it (Morrell 2001, hooks 2004, Sideris 2005, Tolson 1977). While some men (and women) may interpret traditional masculine roles as ideals to sustain rather than real characteristics of male traits (Davies and Eagle 2007), they may not attempt change for fear of social stigma or their perceived loss of the patriarchal dividend if they challenge socially anticipated masculine norms (Connell 2005, hooks 2004). Some men may "create a false self" (hooks 2004:138) to maintain a frontage despite their desire to be a different man. In the context of

Alexandra township, some men may continue to "reassert dominant versions of masculinity" (Morrell 2001:29) such as the 'provider role' or 'head of household' that they interpret as a necessary characteristic of a township masculinity.

The ways in which men navigate change is contingent on their subjective interpretations of their environment, that is, the ways in which they internalise and respond to the masculine codes and structures that are established as gender norms across social and cultural contexts (Roper 2005, Wetherell and Edley 1995). Reflecting on change and masculinity, Tolson (1977) suggests that there are 'limits' to masculinity and that the critical factor in effecting change lies in an 'awareness' of these limitations. He finds that men will struggle to challenge their masculinities because they remain the "subjects" of a patriarchal culture and continue to claim its benefits, even if unconsciously. He suggests that for men to respond to change will require a distancing from a hegemonic masculinity (Tolson 1977:135). Likewise, Wetherell and Edley (1999:351) argue that for men who do "not aspire to the most common definition of hegemonic masculinity", defining oneself as a man may require making the conscious effort to disassociate from the socially dominant, "winning style" (ibid.:336) masculinity.

For Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) opportunities for changing masculinities can be achieved through a conscious process of redefining and renegotiating alternative masculinities. This, they argue, is feasible for all masculinities including those considered marginalised and for those men living in socially and economically deprived contexts, across the generations:

> "Change over time, while certainly shaped by contradictions within masculinities, may also be intentional. Children as well as adults have a capacity to deconstruct gender binaries and criticize hegemonic masculinity" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:853).

As evolving political and socioeconomic developments present opportunities for women to increasingly challenge economic hardship and entrenched gender inequalities men, in response, are claimed to *sense* that their social positions of "honour, reputation and masculinity" (Silberschmidt 2011:104) are under threat. However, despite the potentially increasing opportunities for women, the structural patriarchal ideology that sanctions their continued subordination remains in place and is disempowering for both women and men. However, not all men are aware of the impact of the limitations of their masculinities on their lives, and continue to struggle to conform to socially and culturally defined gender roles, while living in an economic context that makes it increasingly difficult to meet the social ideals of masculinity. This is significant, since men's roles and expectations focus almost entirely on economic provision and their incapacity to fulfil these roles in economically challenged contexts, thus diminishes their "social value" (Silberschmidt 2001:665), leaving them "disempowered" and with feelings of "inadequacy and lack of self-esteem" (ibid.:657). Although women continue to occupy a subordinate status within the gender order, Silberschmidt finds that they have better adapted to socioeconomic change and have carved out new social roles that help them to survive economic hardships. This is contrasted with men who remain unsure of the contemporary changes in their social roles or how to respond to them, and have, as Morrell (1998:628) states, only "willy nilly accommodated themselves to the changes".

Within the multiplicity of masculinities in South Africa, men respond to change in diverse ways (Morrell 2001). Some for example may align with violence and patriarchal ideologies in order to sustain a patriarchal norm, some may be complicit with this but do not act out violently, others may oppose violence and oppressive gender relations and see alternative ways of defining and living out their masculinities within the confines of their social settings. For example, Crispin

Hemson (2001) demonstrates how, through their membership of Thekwini Surf Lifesaving Club, young Zulu men from Durban townships have been able to mutate and redefine a masculine identity that opposes violence and negative traditional expectations, while at the same time maintain some of the qualities of a traditional township masculinity. He claims that through the "valued qualities" (ibid:64-65) of "Ukuzithemba" (patient, forbearing, long suffering) or "Ukuzithemba" (trust in self, self-confidence) presented through lifesaving, young men can strive towards a respectable "*adult* masculinity" (ibid. Emphasis in original). Liz Walker shows how constitutional changes in South Africa have destabilised men's traditional roles in society, yet at the same time has opened up opportunities to create "new notions of manhood" (2005:180).

Tina Sideris shows how in rural South Africa, a group of men have reflected on their lives in the wake of the changing social, economic and political realities in South Africa. They are "redefining" and "reworking" (Sideris 2005:112) understandings of their masculinities alongside established gender norms and prevailing familial and community expectations of manhood and are seeking new ways of being a man. This group of men consider themselves 'different' as they contravene expected masculine norms and embrace the challenge of gender equality promoted within South Africa's democratic constitution. Yet, Sideris' work also reveals the volatility of men's motivations in responding to social change in a context devoid of alternative models of masculinity and within staunchly patriarchal contexts. While the men were aware that change was necessary and perhaps inevitable, Sideris found that the specificities of how this might happen remain unclear, along with men's confusion about their positionality within the gender hierarchy. There are no specific models that signpost alternative ways of behaving as a man, and therefore, men are left with "no tactics" (Silberschmidt 2001:664) to respond to change or a safe space to renegotiate and redefine what this means to them as men in an unchanged social

and cultural context. The ambiguities of change are demonstrated in men's commitment to an equality agenda and in defending changing gender practices, alongside their continued appeal to culture and Christian values to defend and reassert their male privilege and status, such as being head of the household. In the absence of positive role models or examples of 'successful' alternative masculinities, currently evolving masculinities are considered "indeterminate" or "deviant" (Sideris 2005:119, 133). Importantly, Sideris' research finds that the historicity of South Africa's political context and challenges of the post-apartheid transition are adding "pressure…under varying degrees of strain", to men's lives (ibid:119).

Despite continuing entrenched traditional male social values and the absence of agreed alternative masculine models, or scripts (Silberschmidt 2001), some men are responding to changes in the gender order and attempting to renavigate, reconsider, renegotiate or reconfigure their masculine identities and social positionality in relation to these. In South Africa, supporting this process is the inclusion of men in intervention efforts aimed at encouraging gender transformation, such as NGO work through the ADAPT men's forum, the Sonke Gender Justice *One Man Can* campaign, Engender Health Men as Partners Programme or the Promundo Project H, for example. These demonstrate men's receptiveness to engaging with issues of gender equality (Viitanen and Colvin 2015) and that men are open to change given support and a 'safe' space to reflect on their lives, their behaviour and their futures (Barker and Ricardo 2005, Dworkin et al 2012). Findings from a review of the Sonke Gender Justice *One Man Can* campaign showed that after participating in workshops men were open to challenging traditional beliefs and behaviours that were aligned to prevailing interpretations of hegemonic masculine norms. They could reflect on their experiences of the historical, political and socioeconomic changes in their society as it relates to the gender equality agenda,

gender power and division of labour in the household (Dworkin et al 2012). This at least, was successful at the level of discussion. However, what is not clear are men's behavioural responses to their new ways of thinking, if they have transitioned into alternative ways of defining who they are as men, or perhaps if they understood how to begin a process of transforming their identities. What happens to men therefore, after they have been 'included' in a process of reflecting on their masculinities within a framework of gender equality?

In a traditional social and cultural environment that continues to uphold and promote a patriarchal ideology, it is difficult for men to renegotiate alternative masculinities, particularly in the absence of masculine blueprints that frame what these may look like or indeed, the wider social support that encourages them. In traditional social structures with established and clearly defined roles and norms for men, where do those men who attempt to redefine and reconstruct their masculinities position themselves within society? What do alternative masculinities look like and how do they 'fit' into a context such as Alexandra? In what ways does a society view a man who no longer fits the standardised social norms of manhood? Are these men 'invisible' to a society that is unaccustomed to recognising alternative masculine forms? These are some of the questions raised within this thesis, which challenge not only men's capacity to change, but also the theoretical, policy and programmatic responses to them.

2.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the complexities associated with conceptualising masculinities in transition. I contend that in an evolving political, social and economic context like South Africa, traditional expectations of manhood remain embedded within a patriarchal ideology that continues to position men at the top of a hierarchical gendered structure within a given society. Achieving this

hegemonic masculine position is, for many men, fraught with tensions and pressures. Simultaneously, gender equality alongside increasing incidences of poverty, unemployment and changing socioeconomic realities impede men's capacity to fulfil their social obligations. This has contributed to a widespread discourse surrounding a crisis of masculinity and has highlighted the need for an awareness of the fundamental impact of change on men's lives and the ways in which this influences on gender relations and opportunities for transforming masculinity.

However, masculinities are fluid, diverse and can change over time and context. Research in South Africa demonstrates that men are indeed contemplating change, but are unsure of the processes or the specificities of what change means to their identities as men in the context of unchanging traditional patriarchal ideologies. I suggest, that as men (pro)actively begin to reflect on their experiences of change in their everyday lives and its implications for their masculinities, in the absence of masculine blueprints or social scripts, masculinities in the process of transition are therefore entering unchartered and indeterminate models of masculine identities.

Considering men's subjectivities as it relates to the ways in which men define masculinities and construct multiple identities, enables an understanding of men's capacity to co-exist alongside a hegemonic masculinity in different social, cultural and relational contexts. For example, in satisfying a reputational status, a man may drink and play hard with his social peers, yet at home aspire to respectability by demonstrating his capacity to be a caring and supportive husband, son or father. He may agree and aspire to the ideals of modern interpretations of the new man who embraces gender equality in one setting, yet ascribe to hegemonic requirement in another. While interventions which target men in a programme of gender equality are encouraging men to self-reflect on their positionality in relation to this, there is no support in a 'where to next' for those men who want to transform their identities.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the methodology designed to investigate

this research enquiry.

CHAPTER 3   METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I present the methodology that established and developed the empirical approach to the research. I discuss the methods that were used in generating the field data along with the data management and analysis system applied in interpreting the data. The specific nuances and challenges experienced in researching subaltern men in a township context and the ethical implications associated with this are considered. Critically, I emphasise the importance of presence, time, space and reciprocity as invaluable elements in developing and maintaining trust and continued participant engagement in the research.

3.2   Outlining the research methodology

3.2.1   Methodological foundation and justification

My view of the world, what there is to know about it and how I can contribute to knowledge is an important, initial grounding step to carrying out research and once established, this foundational view becomes rooted within that research. This is why Marsh and Furlong describe the research approach as analogous to "skin not a sweater" (2002:184). It becomes embedded in the fabric of the research and cannot easily be "taken off when the researcher sees fit" (ibid.). For this reason, deciding on the ontological and epistemological location of this research was an undertaking I procrastinated over for some time. I knew that this would impact on the ways in which I interpreted, and contributed to, knowledge and that these would influence not only the research design but also the ways in which I would approach the fieldwork and analyse the data (Marsh and Stoker 2002, Mason 2002).

In her classic book *The Second Sex,* originally published in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir revealed that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir 1997:295). While I appreciate that this quote has been extensively referenced over the years, it remains, for me, a crucially important discovery. De Beauvoir was at pains to recognise the 'human' in the *label* 'woman' and 'man', identifying that femininity was a social construct that reflected each individual's life experiences *within a society* and therefore, that femininity (and masculinity) are not universal, static characteristics. These social experiences are intersected by race, class, economics, culture, history, religion, politics, age, sexuality, geography, the media, etc., each contributing to shaping unique individual gender characteristics, subjectivities and identities, not simply as dictated by one's biological sex (Barker et al. 2007, Connell 2005, Morrell 2013). Aligning with this position, the research is located within a methodological context that views gender, and more specifically masculinity/ies, as socially constructed, lived out, maintained and (re)negotiated.

Ontologically and epistemologically this position is aligned within an anti-foundationalist, interpretivist/constructionist approach, that views reality as constructed through social interactions, which are given meaning through the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals within a society (Mason 2002). The social world exists within the meanings that individuals and communities attach to it and this world is constantly evolving. In a study of masculinity/ies, this implies that the contextual social world, men's subjective experiences and the ways in which they interpret these, influence how they define their identities; identities which are never fixed and therefore have the capacity to change. The diversity of experiences and evolving contexts infers a multiplicity of fluid masculinities, rather than a fixed masculine identity.

Making sense of the subjectivities of men's experiences and the ways in which these impact on how they interpret their masculinities, an anthropological emic

approach was used which enabled an understanding of how men experience and perceive their social context and the ways in which they themselves attach meaning to their lives and those around them. For a white, middle-class, middle-aged, foreign, 'feminist' woman to appreciate men's experiences, I needed to adjust my analytical lens to include a particular focus on the masculine. I was to remain cognisant and reflective of the unique experiences and diversities of men's contextual realities and encouraged to reflect on what Nancy Dowd refers to as asking the 'man question' in my analysis of gender. She supports asking, "[d]oes this apply to all boys and/or men, or only to some, or does it affect different men differently…" and how? (Dowd 2010:415). This supports an understanding of the wider implications of the definitions of masculinity in each experience (ibid.). Analysing gender issues, realities, experiences, subjectivities and identities from this perspective needs to consider not only the perceived privileges of men's dominance in each society but also the weaknesses, inequalities, subordinations and contextual influences that impact on both women *and* men and what these mean within the societies in which they live. Such a perspective enables the space to consider the multiplicity and intersections of issues that are largely assumed when focusing almost exclusively on men and masculinity (Dowd 2010). This wider gender perspective was central to maintaining an anti-essentialist standpoint (ibid.).

The research approach to data gathering most suited to this enquiry is qualitative in its design and interpretation. Importantly, since I am specifically interested in the ways in which men attach meaning to their life experiences, this approach provided the space to explore the multiplicity of perspectives, understandings, interpretations, contexts and subjectivities within men's lives. A qualitative approach to data gathering allowed for flexibility and, in particular, the space to consider and reflect on the specific and diverse contextual realities. It enabled the field research, where necessary and appropriate, to be data led (Braun and Clarke 2006, Mason 2002).

In the next section, I outline the research location, detail the choice of research methods utilised in accessing and gathering the data, and describe the selection process used for identifying the participants that engaged with the study.

3.2.2   Gathering the data – choice of research location

Alexandra township ('Alex' as it is colloquially known) in Johannesburg, South Africa was selected as the location for this research for several reasons. At the time of the research I was resident in the country and based in the administrative capital, Pretoria (officially renamed Tshwane after 1994, it continues to be popularly referred to be as Pretoria). I wanted to explore the lives of subaltern men in an urban context. In light of the security risks and warnings associated with township living, in particular for women, I chose not to live in the township, but since I wanted daily access to the research site, I selected a location within an appropriate daily commute from my home.

My initial contact with the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Sonke Gender Justice Network (Sonke), who were at the time, working with men in Alexandra township, facilitated my choice of research location. Sonke's engagement with men in Alexandra was facilitated through their One Man Can (OMC) campaign. The OMC, according to their promotional leaflet, "encourages men to become actively involved in advocating for gender equality, preventing gender-based violence (GBV), and responding to HIV and AIDS". At the time of the research, Sonke were conducting OMC gender-based violence and health sensitisation workshops with men living in Alexandra township in conjunction with the Alexandra-based community organisation Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT). I approached Sonke to request their support in accessing the township through an introduction to ADAPT, who then enabled my continued access to the men in Alexandra for the duration of the research. Founded in 1994, ADAPT was

formed initially to provide counselling services for female survivors of sexual and domestic abuse but has since expanded to include a portfolio of community education, research, advocacy and lobbying on behalf of all victims of abuse. While their core work remains concerned with women survivors of abuse, they are one of the pioneering organisations in South Africa who understood the need for the inclusion of men as key strategic partners in challenging violence against women and girls. In response, they established educational programmes, men's counselling services and a Men's Forum, targeting men in the Alexandra community, including those in prison. A full-time coordinator (who is also a qualified counsellor and social worker) and assistant coordinator support ADAPT's work with men. The Men's Forum assistant coordinator was instrumental in supporting the research through the continued mobilisation and access to men throughout Alexandra township.

The focal gathering point for the Sonke/ADAPT OMC sessions was 3-Square community sports facility on 13th Street, centrally located in the heart of Alexandra township. Funds from the FIFA World Cup in 2010 were reportedly set aside to renovate this facility, which is managed by the Johannesburg City Council (JCC). The venue hosts an outdoor soccer pitch, a basketball court and skatepark, all poorly maintained and underutilised. Upstairs in the main building there is a large room with a bar area, which is primarily used for meetings booked through JCC. The OMC workshops began in September 2011 and were to continue until March 2012, with a month-long break in December. By the time I had received in-country ethical clearance to begin the research in Alexandra, it was January 2012 and many of the men from the workshops had dispersed after the December holidays and it was proving difficult to encourage them to return. Sonke and ADAPT had anticipated that the men who had attended the OMC workshops would subsequently engage as members of a Community Action Team (CAT), for wider community education throughout the township. After attending some of the

workshops, it became apparent that this dimension had not been clearly communicated with the men. In one of the workshops, several of the men directly challenged calls for their engagement in CAT citing the lack of benefits being provided for what they considered to be a risky commitment. They explained that approaching men in taverns and local bars for example, to talk about gender equality was considered a hazardous assignment and refused to engage, especially as there were no material benefits for their efforts. Towards the end of January, the motivation and energy for the Sonke/ADAPT OMC workshops had waned among the men and the staff.

On the first day for the men to return for the OMC workshops after the December holidays, I remember sitting under a tree inside the compound of 3-Square waiting for Sonke and ADAPT staff to arrive. I was to meet with men who arrived for the workshop and was to introduce my research with the hope of some of them becoming interested in engaging with it. Very few men arrived on this morning and those that did show up were sent off to remobilise other men so that the workshops could recommence 2 days later. On this occasion, more than 20 men arrived at 3-Square. As they gathered, Sonke and ADAPT staff provided me with a platform to outline the research. Every Wednesday and Thursday for the next 3 weeks I would show up at 3-Square and wait for men to arrive, discuss the research and encourage their engagement. At the time, I did not anticipate that the research would become the focal point for men to gather, once Sonke were no longer facilitating the OMC workshops.

In March 2012, the funding for the OMC workshops had depleted and Sonke's involvement with men in Alexandra township officially concluded. They were unable to mobilise men for the CAT sensitisation and there was no more funding to continue to engage with them at another level. This also meant that ADAPT had no funding for their men's programme and, as a consequence, their training assistant

was made redundant. Yet, men continued to gather at 3-Square and I continued with my research agenda. However, one morning in early April, as the men and I arrived at 3-Square, we were met by the caretaker who informed us that we were no longer authorised to utilise the facility. We were asked to leave unless the terms of use and financial contributions for the meeting space were renegotiated directly with JCC. We all sat at the side of the football pitch at 3-Square to discuss our next steps. As members of the community, the men voiced their disappointment with JCC at how an underutilised community facility remained beyond the reach of the community. They expressed their anger and disappointment with JCC and others, such as NGOs, universities and researchers, that appeared to "take us for granted", feeling that they were "being used" to satisfy agendas that they did not directly benefit from. Since the cost of remaining at 3-Square was beyond my financial capacity, and the men were reluctant to engage with JCC, we relocated to 'Brown House' (Figure 1), the office space of the ADAPT Men's Forum assistant coordinator. Brown House is a small brick hut with a corrugated roof which was situated within the grounds of the Alexandra Health Centre and University Clinic on the corner of 1st Street and Arkwright Avenue.

Figure 1 Brown House

When available, we were able to utilise the boardroom within the grounds of the clinic, which provided a larger, though equally cluttered, meeting space. The location of the clinic was some distance from the centrality of 13th Street, which resulted in the loss of some men who had attended previous discussions. However, as time went on, some of these men would drop-in to Brown House and there were additional men who would join later.

Locating men in an urban township who would be interested in engaging with the research was critical in supporting the central enquiry of this thesis. I was concerned primarily in seeking and participating with men at two levels: with those generally, throughout the township and in various contexts, and with those who were prepared to engage at a deeper level in exploring their lives. I was conscious of the potential for bias that may be posed through the core group of men that I directly engaged with during the research who in one way or another were linked to ADAPT. For these reasons, I actively sought to engage with men at various levels and contexts throughout the township such as in taxis, shops, on the streets, at the 'men's clinic on 8th Street, in the park, guards at the train station, etc., to support and supplement the findings.

3.2.3   Accessing and gathering the data - research methods

In-depth knowledge of the social context of the research and its participants takes time. As I discovered, "it is almost impossible to over-estimate the heavy demand on researcher time that this creates" (Lewis 2008:563). I also experienced that field research rarely goes according to plan, regardless of the extensive organisation and time that has been put into it. Despite trying to, I could not force the process. While I was not new to 'African time', I had clearly not yet internalised it in my eagerness to gather the data. Fortunately, I realised very early on that time and presence were two essential tools that I needed in gathering the data. It was crucial that familiarity

and trust were formed between myself, those directly engaged with the research and those throughout the township. My regular presence and the time spent within and around Alexandra were essential to my continued access and support. Much of my time was spent talking to, walking with, eating with, and just 'being', with men. We cooked and ate together and travelled throughout the township together. I visited some of the men's families and introduced my own family to them, which I found was critical in the trust building process, both with the participants and my own family (I further discuss my positionality in section 3.4.1). The primary period of field research began in January 2012 and finished at the end of August 2012. After this time, I left South Africa and felt that I had gathered sufficient information to begin the data analysis and commence the initial write-up of the thesis. However, it was also my intention to take a break from the daily interactions with the men in Alexandra, but to return at a later stage to follow up with them, clarify data and observe any changes. I subsequently returned to Alexandra a year later for a period of five weeks, between July and August 2013.

In carrying out the research, a mix of research methods, consistent with qualitative enquiry, were utilised to gather the data for this study. These included focus group discussions with men, a focus group discussion with women who were ADAPT members, direct observation, life histories/stories and participatory methodologies, which involved an 'identity box' workshop (a participatory method used in community education), a 'vision board' and an attempt with the diary project (Plowman 2010).

The advantages of supporting a 'safe space' for men to reflect on, (re)discover and challenge their masculinities have been well documented (Dworkin et al 2012, Dworkin et al 2015, Peacock and Levack 2004, Viitanen and Colvin 2015). It was therefore, key to the data gathering process to provide a secure environment where the men felt relaxed and secure while critically reflecting on, discussing and

reconsidering their lives (Wilson and Neville 2014). For those men previously exposed to talk-based initiatives through Sonke and/or ADAPT, the experience of a safe environment with which to explore and reflect on their lives was not a new encounter. While this may have elicited preconceived expectations of the research and perhaps men's versing of the masculinities discourse, it further encouraged a freedom to expose the true self, without fear of humiliation, given the men's prior experience of talk-based initiatives.

At the beginning of the field research I employed a recent graduate of the Department of Development Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA) to support the data gathering. For gender balance, I employed a male assistant. My intention was that he could support by taking notes, clarifying questions and responses in a local language and translate as necessary, since I have no fluency in any of the 11 official local languages. Unfortunately, this did not work out as I had planned. His notetaking and paraphrasing were inaccurate. The young man was from Tembisa, a neighbouring township, who was clearly uncomfortable with being in Alexandra. Indeed, at times his township of origin and his youth was a source of ridicule amongst the other men. Sourcing research assistants with the necessary skills was difficult, despite my contacts in the Department of Development Studies at UNISA. However, since the interviews and focus group discussions could be conducted in English and I was able to manage the notetaking with a digital recorder, I felt that there was no need to continue to pursue a research assistant and any need for clarification/translation was supported by the other men. Only one of the men experienced language issues. He spoke what the other men described as a 'deep Zulu' and required the support of a translator. I explored whether there was a need to source an external translator or if he was comfortable with the other men translating. It was clear that his preference was for two specific men that he trusted in the group to translate during individual interviews and for anyone to

translate during general drop-in meetings and focus group discussions. Individual interviews in this instance were conducted in isiZulu. This was negotiated and agreed with the three men prior to each interview.

The various methods used in gathering the field data are outlined below.

i)   Focusing on the issues – focus group discussions

I began the field research in January 2012 by conducting focus group discussions with men in Alexandra township. Many of the men were mobilised through the ADAPT Men's Forum assistant coordinator, or by word of mouth through other men. On any given day, attendance for discussions varied. Some days there were up to 25 men, other days just two. I could never predict when or how many men would attend, when they would arrive, or for how long they would stay. Not all the same men attended every discussion. Some attended expecting a hot meal or small stipend, as Sonke had previously provided. Others saw no benefits or employment prospects in engaging with the research. I discussed this with ADAPT and some of the men who regularly attended meetings. This issue was later considered during a meeting of the Men's Forum, where commitment to the research, along with preferred days and times for gathering was mutually agreed. I subsequently increased the number of days that I visited Alexandra to allow for more flexibility. It took nearly a month before a core group of men were regularly attending the focus group discussions. The content of the discussions focused on the experiences of men in the township, men's ideas of manhood, perceptions of a dominant township masculinity, relationships, men's pressures, their vulnerabilities, change, tradition, social expectations, male gender roles, township living, socioeconomic change, politics, football, etc. I did not focus on issues of gender based violence unless the men specifically referred to it in their discussions.

It was my initial intention to interview the partners of the men who were engaged with the research. However, given that not all the men were in a stable intimate relationship and those that were married or in a relationship were financially and/or culturally unable to live together, this proved difficult (this is discussed in chapters 7 and 8). Yet, I was keen to engage at some level with women in the township and since one of the dominating themes for many of the focus group discussions was about relationships with women, this became critical. Since ADAPT worked primarily with women, I suggested a focus group discussion with some of the women who were members of the ADAPT women's programme. Organising this was much more difficult than I had anticipated. Towards the end of the first eight months of the research, in August 2012, I was finally able to meet with 12 women (two of whom were coordinators). Some of these women were long-term members of ADAPT, others more recent. Their ages ranged from early 30's to mid-50s. Some were professional women (such as the ADAPT coordinators and one administrative assistant), others were street hawkers, shop assistants or were home-based).

In preparation for the women's focus group discussion, I considered the need for a translator, although my previous experience with an outside translator had revealed some of the difficulties associated with this. I asked the coordinator of the women's group whether I should source an external translator or if they were comfortable with one of the men who supported with translation during focus group discussions with the men. The women's group coordinators agreed to one of the younger men from the Men's Forum who was well known to them and the women in the group through his community volunteering and outreach work through ADAPT. As it turned out, most of the women spoke English or where this was not the case, the other women interpreted their story in English. Where one woman spoke only in isiZulu, the other women translated. The young man was helpful in seeking clarification or in clarifying issues raised. The ADAPT women's group coordinators also supported this

dimension. Overall, what the women's focus group exposed were similar experiences, uncertainties and misunderstandings to those that the men had revealed in their focus group discussions.

By the end of June 2012, some 22 separate focus group discussions had been conducted with men in Alexandra and one discussion meeting with women.

ii)   In their own words – life histories

I was keen to encourage a group of men from the focus group discussions to provide their life stories, ensuring a diversity of ages, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, economic positions and marital status. Encouraging the men to participate at this level took time. Initially, they seemed reluctant to engage at a personal level, preferring to meet as a group, and yet I found that I was no longer gathering anything further from the focus groups. By the end of April 2012, I was becoming anxious to get started with this aspect of the data collection but none of the men had yet agreed to participate in these individual life story interviews. Finally, however, one of the men agreed for me to interview him. A question then arose about what to do with the men who continued to arrive for focus group discussions. The men enjoyed attending the focus groups, being together and the security that this provided and since many were not working or engaged in piecework, it was also a motivation to help them structure their day. This was mitigated with support from the ADAPT Men's Forum assistant coordinator who organised separate Men's Forum meetings. It then took for time for other men to agree to be individually interviewed, but by the end of May 2012 some 10 men had agreed to provide their life stories (an 11th man later committed). From this cohort about half had previously availed of the Sonke/ADAPT training. The others engaged with the research by word of mouth and one joined through interviews I held at the 8th Street Clinic (see 3.2.4).

The men were from diverse backgrounds and ages. Their ages at the time of the research ranged from 21 to 59 years. Family backgrounds varied, but most had been born in or around Alexandra and had lived there for most of their lives with intermittent periods of stay in neighbouring townships. Some of the men retained links with their family's rural homestead while others chose to associate with their wife's ancestral home of origin. Some had spent their schooling years in the rural area and returned to Alexandra during the school holidays, while others had lived permanently in Alexandra as children and would visit the rural area during holidays. Some had never left Alexandra township or Gauteng Province, where Alexandra township is located. Of the men who participated in the life history method, five were either married or in long-term relationships. Only three of the men were in formal employment: one was a counsellor/social worker, another was the assistant coordinator for the ADAPT Men's Forum, and the third worked as a long-distance lorry driver, although his work was insecure and unpredictable. Nearly all the men at some stage had engaged in piecework, such as in construction, industrial cleaning, the motor industry, catering, hawking, and so on.

I visited Alexandra each day during the week and occasionally at the weekends to hang out with the men and to conduct individual life history interviews. Initially, semi-structured questions based on general themes were developed to guide and support the flow of the discussions. In most cases the men simply required further clarification during their storytelling. Occasionally, I would steer the interview back on course if it had diverged from the focus of the discussion. No meeting was ever forced. If one of the men did not want to meet on an agreed date, no such meeting took place. This, however, was rare. The life histories for ten of the men were gathered over three to four separate interview sessions, with each individual session lasting between 1.5 - 2.5 hours each. Since these interviews were about

their lives and the men appeared happy to discuss this, I allowed the length of the interviews to be dictated by them.

Much of the data was gathered during May-August 2012. When I returned to Alexandra during July-August 2013, I reconnected with all but one of the men and was able to gather further in-depth data with five of the original ten men. One of the men had recently found work as a carpet fitter and two of the younger men were volunteering full-time with a community-based youth programme. Another had not been seen around the township since I had left a year earlier, while one had increased his hours in the local radio station, Alex FM, and had reached out to various community projects which consumed his time. Unfortunately, despite arranging to meet with one of the men at his house, I was unable to have a formal discussion as planned due to circumstances that are all too often the daily reality of life in Alexandra. His 14-year-old son had been killed outside of his home in a hit and run incident, the night before we were to meet. He was apologetic that he was unable to meet with me personally for our interview, informing me of how much he enjoyed our time together. I visited with him once again before I left Alexandra, but was unable to re-schedule an individual interview. Just before I left in August 2013, I had the opportunity to collect an additional life history, bringing a total of 11 life histories (see 5.2.11).

iii)   Visual methods in gathering data

By June 2012 I felt that engagement with the men could benefit from a more energetic and participatory exercise, something that would be fun but also informative and relevant to the research. I explained to the men what their engagement in the workshops would entail and after exploring their interest, I organised two separate activity based participatory workshops. My intention was to engage with men in a different context and gather data in a more jovial environment

that would enable the men to self-reflect in an alternative way to oral methods, and also have some tangible output to their engagement. I was conscious of the implications of using visual methods as data gathering opportunities and whether these could constitute data for the purposes of interpretation. As Mason finds, for example, the output may be 'visual' but it may not be 'visible' (2002:105). However, the findings from the two workshops raised new issues, encouraged alternative reflections on the men's lives and provided new information that may not have been revealed in focus groups or life history interviews. For example, discussions during the workshops revealed some of them men's love of reading and in particular romance novels by Mills and Boon, supplementary information which may not have been revealed or discussed in the more formal research settings. The data gathered for the participatory workshops were recorded through notetaking and photographing each man's output as they presented their work. Both workshops were fun, engaging, trust-building exercises and gave the men the space to enjoy the creativity of contemplating their lives and their future. The specific activities carried out during the workshops are described below.

- Identity boxes

In previous employment, I had been exposed to a popular education method commonly utilised by community educators called the 'identity box'. Specifically, I used the *Identity Box – Art in Education Project,* as promoted by development education NGO 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World, to explore individual identities within the context of the wider social environment. Using an assortment of materials (such as magazines, newspapers, pens, paints, paper, glue, string and cardboard boxes) each of the men designed and constructed a 3-dimensional representational image of their lives within the space of a modified cardboard box. The men were asked to illustrate the exterior of the box to represent their 'outer' selves (or identities) - the everyday aspects of their lives which are 'publicly' visible:

their home, work, hobbies, interests and religion, for example. For their display inside of the box, the men were asked to contemplate on their lives at a deeper level and consider their inner identities, their desires, hopes, dreams, vulnerabilities, fears, and so on. All the men who took part in the workshop claimed to have enjoyed constructing their box and the social nature of the workshop. Once the boxes had been constructed, the men presented their finished box (Figures 2 and 3).

Some found discussing the inside of the box difficult and did not share their content with the group. One of the men enjoyed talking about his box with the group, demonstrating that the exterior of his box displayed a life of crime with a related focus on the accumulation of wealth, and being the 'big man' and the benefits associated with this. On the inside of his box, he explained how he had tried to represent his wife, who had recently left him and had taken their children, how much he loved her and how painful this separation was for him. His box represented the need for family, to be loved and to have companionship.

The workshop took place on a Saturday morning at the Alexsan Kopano Resource Centre in the centre of Alexandra township. Ten men attended the workshop, some of whom were new to the research and had heard about the workshop from some of the other men. The workshop was a useful social exercise that also provided the space for general conversation, primarily about sport or the content in the magazines and newspapers that were used to develop the identity boxes.

Figure 2 Partially completed identity box displaying the 'inside'

Figure 3 Partially completed identity box displaying the 'outside'

- Vision boards

After exploring identities through the identity box workshop in July 2012, we later explored the future through the 'vision board' method (Figure 4), in which the men graphically represented their five-year life plan. Materials such as those used in the identity boxes were used to develop images on A3 sheets of blank coloured paper. Ten men also attended this workshop held at in the board room of the Alexandra Health Centre and University Clinic. Once each of the men had completed their board, they presented it to the rest of the group. The men found this exercise

difficult since their future is a place that they rarely explore. Each of the men described the content of their 'vision board' to the rest of the group. Some of the men envisioned an ambitious five-year plan, such as buying a 'big house in Sandton', or a family holiday in Europe or around the Caribbean. Within these dreams, however, most indicated their hopes for a stable future for and with their families, having children, establishing and providing for a homestead, having fun and exploring South Africa with their children. All the men aspired for family and their role as a 'good' father to their children. Data for this method was also recorded in note and photographic form.

Figure 4 Developing a 'vision board' workshop

- Diaries

I piloted the use of diaries as a data gathering method (Plowman 2010). In supporting the men to contemplate their lives at a deeper, personal level, I suggested that perhaps a writing project could help. However, only three of the men tried this method. One found this particularly useful and sought direction each week, seeking stimulating questions about his life. Another did not want to share his input and the other did not utilise the diary. Issues of literacy and language predominated. Time, space and privacy to write were also issues, since most of the men lived with

others in cramped, overcrowded conditions with no space to write and nowhere to keep their diary safe. Interestingly, one of the research participants who did not wish to engage with the diary method, discussed in his life history narrative how writing his feelings on paper helped him to control his temper and deal with his anger. He would subsequently destroy the paper once he had vented his feelings.

- Observation and trust-building

It is difficult to fully convey the richness of the experiences and relationships involved in gathering data for fieldwork. I found it challenging to remove myself from being present in the lives of the men or in the everyday logistics of life in Alexandra. It felt morally and ethically inappropriate to not become a part of this life, despite the brevity of time. While this was not an ethnographic study, it was important for me to appreciate life for the people of Alexandra.

In gathering the boxes necessary for the identity box workshop with some of the men from the research, I visited various stores to request the donation of boxes. This enabled me to walk throughout the township, converse with shop attendants and their customers about the research and engage in animated discussions about life for men in Alexandra. It also contributed to my familiarity with the township, and it with me. I gained an understanding of the intimacy and smallness of the geographical area. Taking local Alex taxis to and from the train station and within the township provided opportunities to engage with local taxi drivers and their customers. On different occasions, two taxi drivers took detours on my journeys to Brown House. One of them took me to meet his fiancé and the other to meet his wife, a taxi driver who had been involved in a serious vehicle accident which had left her paralysed in her right arm. These occasions enabled fruitful discussions on the issues of *lobola* (dowry/bride price), women, relationships, corruption, politics, hardships, even the complexities and precarious nature of the taxi business in the

township. I would often walk with several of the men throughout Alexandra in search of food and 'real' coffee, which introduced me to a whole new perspective on life in the township. I experienced shortcuts through back yards that passed through homes and was exposed to the realities of life inside (or rather outside) the many shacks that sprawl across the landscape of the township. One of the men took me to meet his grandmother, a traditional healer and matriarch who had lived in Alexandra for nearly 60 years, who invited me into her home, walked with me around her area and purchased fruit for me from a local market stall.

Making myself available every day for support with CVs, job applications, printing, the strategic planning process for one of the men's local community-based projects, and other support activities all contributed to my continued access to the township and building trust with the men and the community.

When I returned to Alexandra in 2013 I rented a car. Driving through the township provided a very diverse experience. Having access to 'wheels' meant that I temporarily joined the ranks of an 'Alex Taxi', ferrying men back and forth, which enabled me to be welcomed into homes I had previously not been exposed to. When I transported the assistant coordinator to his regular Thursday slot on local radio station Alex FM, I was unexpectedly invited into the studio and interviewed live on radio about the research that I was conducting with the men in Alexandra. Of significance was the invitation to visit the assistant coordinator's shack close to the offices of Alex FM. I understood his previous reluctance in inviting me, given the poor living conditions, and so truly appreciated the importance and symbolism of the gesture when I was invited.

One of the younger men lived in a four-room detached bond (mortgaged) house on the boundary of 'old' Alex. His house, which was in a central location, provided sufficient space and amenities to facilitate people getting together in individual meetings, social gatherings and cooking lessons, for example. Some of the younger

men would gather and cook food at the house, where I would often be invited. Before I left South Africa in 2012 and again on my return in 2013 I organised a 'braai' (barbeque) at his house, in which friends and family also gathered.

Another dimension to trust-building was the reciprocity of information sharing. The men were interested in my life and issues that affected me as a visitor to South Africa, my experience within the continent and my life in Europe. One of the men, for example, active in the armed struggle for freedom had a particular interest in the conflict in Northern Ireland. Others wanted to know about my family, my work, what life was like in Ireland and the UK, about my experiences in other parts of Africa.

The data gathering methods outlined above supported the collection of rich and illuminating research data, both in terms of responding to the central research enquiry and in contributing to its research design. The data gathered through the life history method encouraged, maintained and enhanced the building of trust between myself and the men participating in the study. It not only provided the opportunity for in-depth discussions about the life experiences of these men but also added to my credibility as a transient visitor.

3.2.4   Seeking 'men of Alex' – locating the research participants

It took time, and patience, to get men interested in the research. Identifying, selecting and engaging men to participate was a difficult process. Since many of the men were not in full-time employment, opportunities for piecework took precedence over their engagement with the research. Often, everyday financial realities resulted in men having to move to more affordable shacks or to move in with other family members or friends, often making it difficult and time-consuming to locate them. Others would temporarily return to rural areas for extended periods before returning to Alexandra to resume their search for employment. Some were geographically mobile between Soweto and Alexandra. One of the men, who was employed as a

long-distance truck driver, often left for extended periods, transporting goods between Johannesburg and Cape Town. Despite these challenges, the majority of men that I came into contact with were enthusiastic about the focus of the research and indicated an interest in participating. Considering the various challenges that men faced in Alexandra township, the sampling method required a less formal design that relied on a snowballing technique. While my initial entry point into the township and to men was initiated through Sonke and ADAPT, I also gained access to men through word of mouth from existing participants and through my daily presence within the township, which initiated general inquisitiveness among residents, men included. I explored the possibility of engaging with men from additional sources. I was aware of a men's clinic in the township that was held at the 8th Street Clinic, which specialised in the specific treatment of genital warts for men. I approached the director of the project to ask if I could speak to some of the men accessing this service. Once approval was finalised, I visited the clinic and met with the male nurse administering the treatment. The nurse agreed to inform individual men receiving treatment that I was not interested in their treatment or their condition, but that I was interested in meeting with them to discuss their specific experiences of being a man in Alexandra township. Any men who agreed to be interviewed would be brought by the nurse to a small office directly behind the reception area, which was facilitated by the clinic administration staff. I met with four men over the two weeks that I attended the clinic. The clinic was busy and noisy, and we were often disturbed by staff accessing files, retrieving their handbags or turning on the kettle, so for this reason, I stopped interviewing there. One of the men, however, continued with the research and subsequently joined the ADAPT Men's Forum.

A major limitation in interviewing men is finding an appropriate space to meet. Alexandra is a very busy and noisy township and quiet space is scarce. I was also

conscious of the locations in which I publicly spent time with men and that research 'spaces' needed to be places where the men could feel 'safe' and comfortable enough to discuss their lives without interruption or judgement. Additionally, I was conscious of the possible implications of their being seen with a white woman in a predominantly black township and wanting to minimise the implications of what this may represent for individual men. For example, one of the men informed me that being seen in the township alongside a white woman, indicated to others financial benefits.

Over the course of the research, I directly engaged with more than 50 men through focus group discussions and the Men's Forum drop-in conversations. There were countless other opportunities where other men were indirectly engaged in the research: informal discussions with taxi drivers or when waiting for taxis, talking with security guards or passers-by, when waiting at clinics, in and around shops and shopping centres, and at the train station. On two occasions where I visited the 8th street clinic, I encountered large groups of men queueing up in the clinic courtyard. As I chatted to these men, who primarily identified as Zulu, it became clear that they were waiting for Medical Male Circumcision (MMC). For Zulu men, the tradition of male circumcision is no longer an important cultural practice since it was banned during the 19th century by King Shaka. It was claimed that the lengthy process of initiation resulted in 'boys' of warrior age being unavailable for battle and interfered with the king's strategic military endeavours. In 2009 King Goodwill Zwelithini attempted to revive the practise of circumcision for Zulu men through Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) to combat the rising levels of HIV in the country. The men had become aware about the national government programme to provide free MMC through local radio, along with the associated health advantages and its impact on HIV prevention. During the time of the research the queues of men outside the clinic would indicate that the message had been well received by men in Alexandra, who

viewed the procedure as a positive health initiative. This provided the researcher with the space to discuss issues of HIV, men's attitudes to sex, men's fears over the medical procedure and what other men may think of them.

However, it was the specific contribution of 11 men, all from diverse backgrounds and experiences, who gave their individual time over extended periods throughout the course of the fieldwork to provide an in-depth account of their lives in Alexandra township, that was key to my understandings of the specific issues relating to masculinity in contemporary urban South Africa. Each of these core respondents shared their unique life histories. They presented narratives that highlighted key life events which they interpreted as impacting on the evolution of their lives: their experiences during childhood, the main events of their young adult lives, the challenges they experienced, their struggles and "pressures", their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Engaging and interacting with this group of men significantly impacted on the research process and in interpreting, understanding and elaborating on the research enquiry and its findings. It also contributed to the strengthening of the methodological framework and in modifying the methods used in gathering the data.

3.3   Analysing and interpreting the data

I was anxious to ensure that my interpretation of the data adequately reflected the realities of the men that I interacted with and that I was "not simply inventing data", as Mason warns (2002:76). It was, I kept reminding myself, their story to tell. I was also conscious not to misrepresent the meanings of the data. Within an African context of storytelling, some of the men's narratives were interwoven with legends and folktales, parables and proverbs, which at times complicated my understanding. Since much of the narrative was personal and at times sensitive, I was mindful in how I approached its interpretation (Lewis 2008:563), seeking clarification during

and after discussions, through observation and the use of secondary sources. In researching the historical context of South Africa and in particular the unique history of Alexandra township and the lives of those that lived there, ethnographic studies of ethnicity in South Africa, along with other autobiographical accounts, were useful (for example, in understanding the symbolism and meaning of the ritual of circumcision for men in diverse cultural contexts). Regularly visiting the township, 'hanging out' with the men and continuing contact during and after the field research timeframe was instrumental in supporting the interpretation of their narratives.

I used a digital tape recorder to record the life histories/stories and focus group discussions, supplemented by informal field notes, which were most often written up on the train journey back from Alexandra to Pretoria. These reflected on my perceptions and observations at the time, such as the men's demeanour, noticing new haircuts or scars, dress, who arrived together, who was missing and why, etc. I was able to keep in contact with the men after the field research through a Men's Forum 'WhatsApp' group set up by one of the younger men and through personal communication on Facebook, WhatsApp, Google Chat or mobile phone.

In analysing the data, I used a thematic analysis approach to identify, examine and record patterns or 'themes' that emerged within the data and which responded to the overall research enquiry (Braun and Clarke 2006:79). The simplicity and flexibility of this approach was central to this choice, since it enabled me to work with detailed narrative and utilise richer and more complex descriptions of the data.

All the individual life history interview tapes were transcribed verbatim and extensive notes were made of the tapes from focus group discussions. I read and re-read each full transcript many times to familiarise myself with the data, to get a sense of the emerging themes and patterns across each of the interviews and focus groups that related to the overall research question (Braun and Clarke 2006), and to listen for the "voices *within* each narrative" (Chase 2011:663, emphasis added).

Repeatedly listening to the interview tapes supported this dimension. This was often carried out during the many journeys for school drop-off and pick-up. I looked for supporting data in my field notes. With a manageable sample, I was able to immerse myself in the data and manually extract the prominent themes, a process that Berg calls "data reduction" (Berg 2007:47). This was a demanding task. I began by thematically coding the entire data set, then recording the initial and emerging themes on a handwritten thematic 'map'. I re-read the men's narratives and highlighted in various colours, the corresponding themes within each narrative. I then cut and paste these into a "theme pile" (Braun and Clarke 2006:89). As patterns emerged, the key themes that responded to the key research questions and the conceptual framework examining multiple masculinities, identities and subjectivities, were filtered through an open-coding system using a matrix developed in an Excel spreadsheet. This "data display" (ibid., Chase 2011) formed simple categories for each theme that responded to the data. For example, I included data under six separate categories that represented to the major themes across the men's narratives: challenges of 'traditional' masculinity; life 'before'; a 'different' man/role models'; relationships (parents, friends, family, girlfriends); life in the township; aspirations/'the future'. Within these themes, sub-themes developed which formed the basis of the written analysis. For example, the idea of a 'Zulu culture' and 'Zulu masculinity' emerged as prominent themes among the men in Alexandra, which were issues that I had not necessarily anticipated would dominate the data. I filtered the themes according to each participant and their age, and could write simple notes alongside each entry. This process occurred throughout the period of the research (Berg 2007).

3.4   Ethics

In addition to obtaining ethical clearance from the ethics committee in the School of International Development at the University of East Anglia to begin the field research in Alexandra township, I was also required to undertake the lengthy process of securing ethical clearance within South Africa. Any researcher conducting research in the country on 'human subjects' must be linked with either a university in South Africa, or gain clearance from the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Pretoria. Once the process was concluded through the HSRC, I was then required to notify and gain clearance from Johannesburg City Council (JCC). To directly interact with the men in the township, I met with and solicited support from, the Directors of Sonke and ADAPT. Annual reports were submitted to the HSRC and six-monthly reports to the JCC. I also kept ADAPT and Sonke regularly informed of the progress of the research.

All participants were fully informed about the research, its focus, goals and implications, and informed consent was obtained. The participants were presented with information about the background to the research and an informed consent form (see Appendices A and B), which was read out, translated as necessary and discussed. Those men (and women) who wanted to engage with the research were encouraged to sign the form and a copy was given to each of them. Not all the men found it necessary to sign the form, which I recorded in my field notes. I also felt awkward asking them to. It seemed to close a barrier or present a distance between us, making the process excessively formal. I asked the men for feedback concerning their participation, the process and the outcome. Few questions were asked, and most were positive about their engagement. Some disclosed their relief that someone was finally taking an interest in the lives of men in Alexandra that did not directly relate masculinity with sexual violence.

Only the men (and women) who voluntarily agreed to engage with the research were included in the study. Participants were free to withdraw at any time during the process. Most of the men that I interacted with were comfortable with their real names being used in the thesis. However, on my return to Alexandra in 2013, one of the men asked to remain anonymous and, for this reason, I subsequently used pseudonyms for all the men. Having said this, several of the men are recognisable through their employment status with ADAPT, for example. I really struggled with this ethical dilemma in writing up this thesis, particularly since the information about their lives was relevant to the findings of the research. I therefore went back to the men concerned and discussed this issue directly with them. They saw no difficulty with this.

Being the only white person that I encountered while travelling throughout the township during the period of the research, I was often randomly stopped to ask about my presence there. Invariably, I would disclose the purpose of my visits, which were generally met with interest. For those people who I talked to but were not directly engaged with the research, for example, passers-by, those on trains, in taxis, in shops or within the township, prior specific permission was not sought. Where appropriate, I solicited verbal permission to use content that arose from these discussions that I thought may prove to be representative and useful data.

I struggled with the principles of reimbursing research participants for their contributions towards the research. Those men that were directly engaged in the study were not only contributing their time, but sharing their life experiences with a stranger who was ultimately to gain much more from the process than they would. To provide a hot meal for each of the men that attended focus groups, as Sonke had previously done as part of the OMC, was beyond my financial capacity, especially when on any given day there may have been more than 20 men in attendance. However, this did not appear to be an issue for the men who continued

to attend our discussions once Sonke had concluded the OMC training. When there was a core group of men who regularly attended, I was able to provide a basic lunch. At first, the men suggested a local restaurant to provide the food, which was normally fried burger and chips with Achar, a local hot chilli relish. Since I wanted to eat with the men, this quickly became a health challenge and I did not want to be eating a different dish to them. I decided that on my way into the train station each morning, I would purchase food such as bread and cooked chicken, fruit and Rooibus tea bags (their request) and we would together make up lunch each day. On occasion, I would cook something for the group and bring it in, such as a cake or a dish of meat chilli with rice. On other occasions, I would provide the ingredients for cooking at one of the men's houses in the township.

At the end of each individual life history interview (on average two or three sessions), I would provide R100 (about £7 at the time and equivalent to about two day's casual labour). I noticed that each of the men would spend some of this money to have their hair cut and buy phone credit. South Africa can be very cold in the winter months and on two occasions in July 2012 we experienced snow in Alexandra. Brown House is a brick structure with a corrugated sheet metal roof and during the cold months it was incredibly cold conducting interviews and holding meetings. I noticed that one of the men had a thin top over his t-shirt, had no jumper or coat and wore no socks. I spoke with the ADAPT Men's Forum assistant coordinator about this who revealed that the man had had not worked for more than 2 years, so had no money to buy clothes. I therefore brought this man a jumper and purchased socks for him.

3.5   Reflecting on methodology in researching urban subaltern men

3.5.1   Reflexivity, flexibility and a qualitative research design

In this section, I reflect on the qualitative approach used in gathering and interpreting the research data for this study. Qualitative methodologies continue to be critiqued for limitations in their validity and generalisations of the research findings (Pini and Pease 2013). Key to this criticism is the researcher's intimate association with data gathering and interpretation (Giddens 1993, Marsh and Stoker 2002:23). The researcher does "not simply 'give voice' in a straightforward way", claims Lewis (2008:563), they are in control of the data and how it is interpreted and presented (Gardner 2002, Lewis 2008, Atkinson 1998). For Wetherell and Edley, the researcher's "own discourse and construction of the issues is influential in setting the local context" (1999:339). This is echoed by Moller, who argues that during the research design phase, "'naming' in advance of finding" can predetermine the outcome (Moller 2007:265). In exploring masculinities, for example, he claims that by labelling masculinity as hegemonic, the researcher will seek data "which seems to fit its description" (ibid.). During the initial stages of this research, I became acutely aware of this argument as I tried to explore the men's experiences and interpretations of life for them and those around them under apartheid. I found it difficult to understand the men's reluctance to engage with this agenda and their nonchalance and passivity in recounting their experiences of events from a key period in their country's history, which I considered to be fascinating. In my eagerness to extract interpretations of apartheid that corresponded with my own, I had overlooked the fact that it was not my story to tell and I almost missed the wealth of information that situated reality for the men. For example, references to darkness in Alexandra "at that time", which, in the history of the township known historically as the 'dark city' (see chapter 4), is a key reflection that was incorporated into the fabric of several of the men's narratives. For me, it

was a historical fact but for the men, it spoke of the fear, distrust, poverty, control, uncertainty, violence, gangsters, apartheid police, lack of utilities, etc., that simmered and at times exploded in township life and contributed to definitions of manhood within this context, much of which continues in contemporary Alexandra.

Interpreting the data, what this means for the researcher, the research participants and the study generally, is another area that I reflected on. It was important for me to consider several contexts in my understanding of what reality meant for the men living in Alexandra township. Firstly, I needed to appreciate that for individual men their reality was defined by what they determined as real for them at particular points in time: "…if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Swaine 1928:572 in Berg 2007:10). Since human behaviour responds to the multifaceted interpretations of the diverse multiplicity of experiences, which are continuously mediated and negotiated among and between individuals and societies, interpreting men's realities is established as a subjective, rather than an objective process (Berg 2007:13). It is the role of the researcher to try to make sense of the men's interpretations and subjectivities through an exploration of the ways in which they give meaning to their actual or perceived realities and experiences (Berg 2007) and how these relate to the wider society. While the researcher is required to develop what Les Back calls "The Art of Listening… with openness and humility" (Back 2007:4), it is also critical to consider and appreciate the contextual circumstances that intersect and influence the ways in which individuals understand their lives and how they fit within their broader environment. Alexandra township has had a very animated political, social and economic history. It is one of the oldest townships in the country and one that has survived despite the many attempts under apartheid to demolish it. Most of its inhabitants are black African, with many residents impoverished and forced to live in cramped and unsanitary conditions. The township has a very diverse cultural background, but

despite its urban location, adjacent to Johannesburg, and aspirations to modernity, it continues to be infused with traditional cultural values. These realities influence the experiences of those who live within its boundaries. It is for this reason that Ratele (2006) reminds those undertaking research within a diverse cultural setting such as South Africa, of the importance of understanding the cultural dimensions in their interpretation of knowledge. He suggests that the researcher should have "unlearned her or his prejudices, dealt with her or his nervous condition, yet remains critical about these adjectives" (Ratele 2006:548), adjectives such as 'black', 'African', and 'cultural'.

The context for this research and the interactions that played a part of it, therefore, required reflexivity (Berg 2007, Bourdieu 1999). This demanded an awareness of my own participation within the social world, and the values, ideologies and judgements that I brought to the research setting and the individuals that I met during the field research (Berg 2007, Hollway and Jefferson 2000, Marsh and Stoker 2002). While being a 'foreigner' impacted on the ways in which I may have seen and internalised these complexities, it also provided a vantage point as an 'outsider', affording a view that perhaps a South African researcher, who may have been more intimately involved, might have understood and interpreted quite differently.

Another dimension in researching men is the issue of power and power relations as a female researcher. Considering the relationship between interviewer and interviewee as it relates to power, gender difference, perceived influence and masculine ideology, are critical issues for reflection within masculinities research (Pini and Pease 2013). In developing the methodology for this research, I deliberated on the various implications of my gender and how this may have impacted on the data gathering process. In what ways would my being a woman influence not only the potential to access men for the research but also their

willingness and capacity to divulge their personal experiences/information and the ways in which I would understand and interpret what was being disclosed or withheld (Bagilhole and Cross 2006). Moller warns of the centrality of the power position of the researcher in interpreting research data. Relating to the study of masculinities, he highlights the "power and privilege" of the researcher on "the people whose lives and practices fill the pages of the research…[who] frequently function as objects of critical scorn for a more politically aware author" (Moller 2007:265). What then are the implications of power relationships, real or perceived, between myself as the researcher - a white, western, professional, middle-class, middle-aged woman - and the black African male participants from an economically disadvantaged context? In what ways would each of us play out our gender within the confines of our social, political, historical, economic, gender and cultural backgrounds? In what ways would my privileged, feminine identity emerge during the research? How would I negotiate this within the context of a group of men who were socially, politically, culturally and economically different to myself? In what ways did my gender, social and economic positioning and related behaviours within the research context impact on the nature of the data gathered? One example was my preconceived notions of the impact of apartheid on the residents of Alexandra, or perhaps expectations of anger at the years of oppression, which were not in keeping with my direct experience in talking to men and women throughout the township.

The fact that I was married, middle-aged, had children, and in particular boys, was a considerable advantage in trust-building and credibility. These attributes contributed in validating a status aligned with seniority and respect. For some of the younger men the image of a 'mother figure' encouraged discussions about some of the issues that directly affected their lives. These included issues such as family and social relationships, male sexuality and biological experiences. At times, my identity

enabled conversations with older men about issues regarding their spouses and children. My being from the 'outside' of the township also supported issues of anonymity: as I did not live in the township I was not considered a potential threat in disclosing information to neighbours, family or friends. Importantly, being foreign meant that I had not been directly influenced or predisposed to the township's political history. My academic advantage supported their needs for technical assistance such as filling in job application forms, writing proposals, developing Curriculum Vitae's, simplifying difficult texts, facilitating a strategic planning process for one of the men's community-based organisation set-up, and other workshops. It also supported in exploring and clarifying issues that arose during focus groups, such as further researching the ways in which masturbation impacts on men's health and sexuality, for example, or indeed the taboo nature of discussing such topics.

Additionally, I carefully considered how I would dress during my visits to Alexandra. The realities of security and crime associated with moving in and out of a Johannesburg township in itself required a more muted wardrobe. I wore no jewellery and confined myself to a limited wardrobe, which I would recycle each week. I did not use my personal vehicle to travel and carried an old Blackberry mobile phone, commonly used within the township.

While some researchers have documented sexual harassment from participants during the research (Pini and Pease 2013), I never encountered this dimension. I never once felt that I, as a woman, was under threat, at risk or in danger while conducting the research. The men displayed concern about my safety, in particular when I would leave as it was getting dark, and would often wait with me to 'vet' the taxis that would take me to the train station. This, of course, is not the situation for most women and girls that reside and travel in the township, who live with the daily threat and fear of sexual and domestic violence.

I reflected on the reasons why I was in some ways 'protected' by the men during my time in Alexandra. Did my racial positioning as white and foreign, infer as Motsemme (2002:653) argues, a historical position of "power (over) and domination" that white women under apartheid exercised over black men and women? Was it perhaps the way in which I offered an alternative approach to gathering data than the men had previously experienced. I did not focus on male violence for example, I spent time with them in various social contexts, I varied the research methods and was genuinely interested in their day-to-day lives and experiences as men living in Alexandra. Did meeting and interacting with my husband and children create a familiarity and reciprocity with a part of my own life? While I provided some material benefit to participation this was limited to simple food, some second-hand clothes or a small stipend at the end of recounting their life history this, critically, did not include all of the men. I considered whether my connection, my 'status', with Sonke and ADAPT perhaps influenced the ways in which I was perceived and therefore treated? This of course, could have impacted on the data that was gathered during the research. Some of the men's direct and indirect links with ADAPT and/or men associated with the organisation may have influenced the findings. Some of the men had previously been exposed to gender transformative workshops through either ADAPT, Sonke or both, or other gender workshops and conferences within the township. They were well versed in gender terminology and knowledgeable about the costs/benefits of masculinity to them as men, to women, in their relationships and the wider society. Yet at times, their behaviour, their guarded and sometimes unguarded talk during casual meetings or more formal discussions conflicted with their gender inclusive language. This was evident for example in a discussion between two of the men in which one man reprimanded the other for ill-treating his mother despite his talk of inclusion and equality during workshops and discussions; in the men's discussions and perceptions about women's expectations and behaviour towards them or in passing sexist remarks about women, clearly marking

gender boundaries within their talk of equality; in the sexist commentary from workshop presenters and trainers during workshops and Forum meetings as they 'trained' others in gender sensitivity and the need to empower women. One example that I directly experienced was during a gathering of the Men's Forum. It was agreed that I could sit in with the group as an observer. The focus of the gathering was to discuss the ways in which 'men continued to oppress women in society'. The facilitator initially chose to demonstrate this through role-play. He enlisted the support of one of the other men and proceeded to display the ways in which men are violent towards women. He then explained about 'patriarchy', 'oppressive masculinity' and the 'rights of women' and 'women's empowerment' in South African society. The presentation transgressed into the ways in which women took 'advantage' of their rights, which at times created conflict in the household. The dialogue was unidirectional. The other men in attendance were not encouraged to contribute to the conversation and were challenged by the facilitator when they attempted to. This created tensions during the meeting and subsequently I was enlisted by the facilitator to mediate to which, as an agreed observer, I declined. I and the other men were left speechless and unsure of the purpose of the meeting, it's outcome or how to proceed further. Luckily, the meeting ran out of time and the men dispersed before dark.

Designing a research approach whilst sat in a university and considering the practical logistics of the realities and limitations of implementing this approach were at times in conflict. During the desk-based planning stage of the research design, the dominant focus was on gathering a representative cohort of men that responded to specific characteristics, all within a set time-frame, providing information to corroborate what I had already researched about black South African men. I soon realised the need for flexibility in the practical execution of the research process. In the beginning, I was self-absorbed with my own agenda and had the propensity to

enforce my own process. I realised that I was directing the data rather than allowing it to emerge naturally. Once I became focused on the men's narratives and encouraged them to tell their own unique stories, allowing them space and time to do so, I was exposed to a whole new world of township men. I learnt that, at times, the data collection needed to be participant led. In doing so, I was able to explore wide-ranging issues that I had not directly considered. If the discussion went off on an extreme tangent, then I recalibrated the focus. However, at times the tangent allowed for some illuminating conversations and very rich data.

3.5.2   Reflecting on methods

i)   Focus group discussions

Reflecting on the data gathering methods, I found that focus group discussions were a particularly useful research tool in gathering information about topical issues such as men's perceptions of women, defining an 'ideal' man, HIV and AIDS, masculine norms, cultural expectations, and their collective beliefs/opinions/concerns about various other topics. Once the men were used to gathering as a group to discuss pertinent issues, they became more interested and animated in engaging with discussions and seemed to regulate their own conversations, often encouraging input from others or challenging responses. In early discussions when Sonke and ADAPT staff were present, they would dominate conversations and I would need to intervene to ensure the full participation of all the men. Discussions in focus groups with the men did not always flow, and at times went off on a tangent, with abstract answers given to questions posed. On occasions, this would require a re-focus "to bring them to the point", as Czarniawska (1997:28) writes. At other times, it was useful to allow the diversion, realising that, as Chase finds, "this *is* the way" (Chase 2011:660, my emphasis). These diversions, therefore, often led to fruitful and informative sessions. An example of this was during an early focus group where I

began the meeting by asking the men what they could recall from the previous day's discussion and if they had any further input or questions. After several moments of silence, one of the men reported that he had found the discussion on HIV and AIDS the most useful. Since there had been no discussion about HIV and AIDS at any of our gatherings, I prompted him to elaborate further. What followed was an intensely informative session surrounding not only the men's perceptions and behaviour of HIV and AIDS, and in particular the use (or not) of condoms, but also a heated debate around the social taboos surrounding men and masturbation. It provided an opportunity to understand some of the vulnerabilities that men experience, fuelled by misinformation and a lack of education about the issues, peer pressure and social expectations.

While the discussion was informative, it also revealed the men's perceptions of the research process itself. It was indicative of the men's initial expectations of the research and perhaps of me as the researcher. The issue of HIV and AIDS and men was not a specific priority in my immediate agenda for discussion as there is already substantial research in this area (Hunter 2010, Jewkes et al 2010, 2003, Kalichman and Simbayi 2003, Leichliter et al 2011, Robbins 2004, Sui et al 2013). However, in the past, some of the men had been exposed to other researchers', non-governmental and community organisations, and government trainings focusing on gender-based violence, which had included information about the gendered realities of HIV and AIDS. The men had *expected* the research to be about this topic and responded with what they thought I had wanted to hear. I reflected on whether the consistent stereotyping and expectations of men in Alexandra as violent, oppressive 'players' in the continued oppression and subordination of women had set a standard for the external interest in men and issues related to them, in particular, since much of the programme/project interventions and funding for engaging men were tied to gender-based violence interventions. Were the men feeding on this

widespread expectation and was I perceived as expecting much of the same? This also revealed the severe lack of awareness on such issues despite the constant public exposure. It took a while for the men to understand that the research was not directly about male violence, rather a more holistic understanding, exploration and discussion about their lives. Once the majority of the men began to understand this, the discussions became much more relaxed, engaging and intensely informative.

ii)   Life Histories/stories/narratives

I was particularly interested in exploring the lives of men through the stories they exposed, not only from an historical perspective, in terms of how this impacted on their lives and how they internalised it (Atkinson 1998, Chase 2011), but also from the perspective of their current lives, their hopes and aspirations for the future. In gathering this data, the life history/life story method was particularly useful as a research tool. Each story is the individual's own unique narrative that provides them with a sense of empowerment, "emancipation" (Chase 2011:667) and power over the telling (Plummer 2001). My aim, therefore, was to produce a narrative which, as Atkinson explains, was "100% in the words of [the] insider-storyteller" (Atkinson 1998:4). The view that interviewees are narrators "with stories to tell and voices of their own", requires what Chase advises as a "conceptual shift" in viewing the words of the interviewee as more than simply responding to the researcher's enquiry (Chase 2011:661). For some, the telling can promote a "positive change" (ibid.:667). As a research tool, the life history/story method facilitated a space to explore the ways in which the men's individual lives were interconnected within the wider community and influenced through power relationships (Atkinson 1998), and how these could impact on possibilities for broader social change (Frank 1981 in Chase 2011:668). The stories that each of the men exposed were, as Berg also finds, "extremely dynamic" (Berg 2007:277). As a group of men who directly experienced or lived in the shadows of apartheid, their stories enabled me to begin to understand

the subjectivities of a social group that have, and in some ways, continue to be, "…muted, excised from history, [and] invisible from the records of their culture" (Long 1987:5 in Berg 2007:278). The reality of apartheid was rarely a discussion for elaboration. Such averseness in remembering and debating this dimension was telling in itself. Could the silencing of individual and community experiences, and the potential 'un'telling of lived realities, contribute to the future muting and invisibility of its impact?

3.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology that underpins this study, discussed the methods used in gathering the data, and highlighted the complexities experienced in researching men in economically deprived contexts. A qualitative, interpretive research approach allows for flexibility and reflexivity. Fundamental to the final research design and the data gathering process was the significance of researcher time and presence, research space and trust-building, along with the centrality of the research participant, her own perceptions, understandings, behaviour and socio-economic positionality. Critically, the flexibility of a qualitative approach emphasised and facilitated a modification to the original research design, particularly in maintaining research participants, their continued interest in participating in the study and my own familiarity and comfort with the research location.

I appreciate that this study was conducted at a particular point in time, within a specific location, among a relatively small cohort of men, many of whom were in one way or another linked with the local NGO ADAPT. The presence of ADAPT in other aspects of the research such as accessing the research location; supporting with the venue for the continued gathering of men once 13th Street became inaccessible; their role in the continued mobilisation of men; the researchers own experience of

Alexandra township, could all have implications for the data gathered during the field research. I am acutely aware of the limitations and critiques in making any generalisations from the data gathered. While I cannot claim towards a universality of the findings, an important and crucial role of this research has been in promoting a research design that is flexible and enables the researcher to consider the subjectivities and map out the daily realities of the lives of men in an economically disadvantaged township context. This context is introduced and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4   CONTEXTUALISING THE RESEARCH LOCATION

4.1   Introduction

Having discussed and reflected on the methodology of the research in the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter is to geographically and historically contextualise the research location. Critical in this analysis is the systematic racial formation, classification and segregation that began under colonialism and was categorically defined, enshrined and abused through the architecture of apartheid (1948-1994). Exploring South Africa's historical and political background is critical in mapping out the intersecting dimensions of men's experiences that resonate with the ways in which they define and negotiate their subjectivities and masculine identities. It is also critical in exploring the ways in which these continue to be played out in post-apartheid South Africa as evidenced through the widening poverty and inequality gap that divides the country along the lines of race, gender and class.

I begin the chapter with a snapshot of South Africa today in terms of its human development. I then take a step back to explore the country's colonial and apartheid history as it relates to the ways in which racial classification and segregation determined and defined every aspect of daily life. The experiences of men's historical migration for waged work, along with the rapid expansion and policing of 'male-only' urban areas are explored in terms of the meanings that men attach to these realities. The ways in which men's perceptions shape their masculinities today and influence on the traditional gender order and redefined traditional family life are also explored within this context. Focusing specifically on one of the oldest townships in South Africa, Alexandra township, I will explore the critical role of Alexandra in this historical context.

4.2   South Africa – a human development perspective

On the 11th February 1990, African National Congress (ANC) leader and political activist Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years in captivity. Mandela's subsequent election as the first democratic leader, in 1994, in an overwhelming victory for the ANC, marked the end of the anti-apartheid struggle, which had culminated in many decades of black oppression under white rule. The transition to democracy was fraught with heightened tensions and mistrust among the people of South Africa. In 1993, South African Communist Party leader and Chief of Staff of the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK), Chris Hani, was murdered by two white men opposing the country's political transition. Hani's murder was a defining moment in South Africa's history, which nearly plunged the country into chaos. In a televised speech to the nation Nelson Mandela appealed for calm and 'discipline', initiating a road to recovery through peace and reconciliation. Despite the widespread atrocities suffered under apartheid, both by the state and the resistance movements, South Africans were encouraged to engage in a peaceful democratic transition on the "basis that there is need for…reparation but not for retaliation" (Interim Constitution of South Africa 1994 in Krog 1999:vii). This was facilitated through the establishment in 1995 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC provided a platform for many voices to be heard, which had, until then, been suppressed and historically silent. Individuals were facilitated to articulate their experiences of oppression and pain under apartheid and for the perpetrators (who sought it) to seek amnesty for their crimes. It named the oppression, the oppressed and the oppressor in attempts to encourage South Africans to peacefully move on from the violence of the past. The success of the TRC process has been disputed (Krog 1999, Mamdani 2002, Motsemme 2002), primarily in its neglect of women. The voices of the oppressed were overwhelmingly focused on men and in cases where women were heard, it

was in cataloguing the injustices experienced by their husbands, sons, grandsons and brothers. The realities and specificities of women's experiences as victims of the state and as comrades within the struggle remained silent and were inadequately addressed, despite women's suffering and their critical contribution to the struggle (Andrews 2016, Motsemme 2002).

Despite the various recent attempts to alleviate generations of inequality and injustice in South Africa, the country remains one of the most unequal nations in the world. In terms of income inequality, South Africa ranks 119th out of 188 countries listed in the UNDP Human Development Index (UNDP 2016), with a Human Development Index of 66.6 (the lower the number the greater the equality in a society). The Gini coefficient for South Africa (0.66 in 2015), which measures total inequality against total equality, exposes South Africa as one of the most unequal societies in the world (SSA 2014). The situation of women in the country remains acute (Lopi et al 2008), in particular as it relates to sexual violence. South Africa's unrelenting levels of sexual and gender-based violence remains one of the highest incidences faced by a society not at war (Wood and Jewkes 2001).

By 2016, the population of the Republic of South Africa reached nearly 56 million people (Statistics South Africa 2016a). In identifying individuals and populations as 'black' I refer to the "[f]ossilised ethnic classifications" (Carton et al 2008:4) as defined by apartheid in the Population Registration Act 1950, namely, 'black', 'coloured' (mixed race), 'white' and later 'Asian/Indian', which continue to be utilised in contemporary settings. Under these categories, 80.5 percent of the population are categorised as 'black'. 'Coloureds' represent 8.8 percent of the population; 2.5 percent are Indian/Asian and 8.4 percent are categorised 'white'. South Africa has a high proportion of young people with over a third of its overall population aged 15 years or younger. Just 8 percent are 60 years or over (Statistics South Africa

2016a). Despite its upper middle-income status and reputation as the most developed country on the continent, the life expectancy for the average South African is estimated at 60.6 years for males; 64.3 years for females and there remains 33.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. South Africa carries one of the highest levels of HIV prevalence in the world, with an estimated overall rate of approximately 12.7 percent of the total South African population. Among those aged 15 to 49, some 18.9 percent are said to be living with HIV. Poverty remains a challenge (ibid). Using international poverty lines as an indicator of poverty, the proportion of South Africa's that is living below US$1.25 a day is approximately 10.7 percent and those living below US$2.50 a day was estimated at 36.4 percent (Statistics South Africa 2008). Referring to the Statistics South Africa (2008) Food Poverty Line of R305 (approximately £17. This indicates an individual's economic need for basic energy intake) per capita per month, there are 26.3 percent of South Africans who are unable to pay for basic nutritional requirements, despite various government interventions such as the child support grant, older persons grant and the more recent youth grants being proposed at the time of the research. Nearly 39 percent of South Africans reportedly do not have enough money to buy both basic food and non-food items, and 52.3 percent fall under the widest definition of poverty, unable to afford 'adequate' food and non-food items, who are surviving on less than ZAR577 (£33.50) per month (ibid).

The official unemployment rate in South Africa (as at end 2016) is 27.1 percent (Statistics South Africa 2016). 'Black Africans' represent more than a third of the unemployed, with those aged between 15-24 years who face an unemployment rate of 53.7 percent. However, this rate includes only those considered 'actively' *looking* for work, measured in line with the 1982 International Labour Office guidelines (Statistics South Africa 1998:1). If these figures included those categorised as 'non-searching' unemployed, which includes piecework and temporary work, the figure is

said to increase by at least ten percentage points (Posel and Rudwick 2014). As of 2016, the 'expanded' unemployment rate was 36.4 percent (women 40.4, men 32.9 percent) of which 40.9 percent were 'black African', 28 percent 'coloured', 16.6 percent Asian/Indian and 8.6 percent 'white' (Statistics South Africa 2016).

The majority of those in 'official' employment (50.7 percent) are located within Gauteng Province. Gauteng is the smallest of the nine provinces in South Africa, occupying just 1.4 percent of the country's total land mass, although it accommodates nearly 24 percent of the total population. Gauteng has the second largest concentration (19.7 percent) of children under 15 years old (KwaZulu-Natal claims the highest with 23.9 percent) and has the highest percentage of those aged over 60 years (26.3 percent). Despite its size, Gauteng contributes 33.9 percent of South Africa's GDP and an estimated 10 percent of the total GDP of the continent of Africa (Government of South Africa 2016). It accommodates the two main cities: Johannesburg, the financial 'capital' and Tshwane (Pretoria), the 'official' (administrative) country capital which is home to government buildings. Many residents are located within urban areas, with 70 percent of Gauteng's 13 million people residing in townships, peri-urban centres and semi-rural boundary areas (GCIS 2013, Statistics South Africa 2015, 2016, 1998).

As a visitor to Gauteng, you are immediately captivated by the structural and economic development concentrated into this small area, which skews your perceptions of life for most South Africans. A clear consequence of South Africa's apartheid policies is the visual absence of the endemic poverty that underlies this apparent affluence. Townships are generally hidden from the immediate landscape of the province and yet there are 65 identified townships in Gauteng, including the (in)famous Soweto, Diepsloot, and Alexandra, where this study is located. A visitor

could spend extended periods in the country and never directly observe or experience the daily realities of the poor.

To appreciate this context and the influences that shape South Africa's contemporary identity, I step back and reconsider the country's complex and animated historical events. In the subsequent sections, I reflect on the widespread stereotypical 'image of Africa' (Achebe 1987) that dominated European perceptions of the 'dark continent'. The scramble for the continent's natural and human resources in the colonial expansion project is then discussed, with reference to the migration of African men to the mines and urban areas as mineral extraction intensified. The ways in which this relates to black men's subjectivities and the (re)negotiation of their masculine identities is also explored.

4.3   Early impressions of Africa

Joseph Conrad, in his well-known classic novel *Heart of Darkness,* which was first published in 1899, describes life in the Belgian Congo on the continent of Africa as "unearthly" (Conrad 2007:50). Conrad's depiction was the popular view among Europeans of the time. In an increasingly industrialising Britain where Victorian values and modernisation were considered the epitome of 'civilisation', Africa represented all that Britain was not and its inhabitants, "…savages" (Poulsen 1981:76). They were seen as residing in "'the other world'…the antithesis of Europe and therefore civilization", writes Achebe (1987:3). Schools across Britain and the colonies during the early 1900s continued to negatively stereotype Africa and Africans. The work of Dr. Theal, a seemingly leading figure in South African history between 1795 and 1872, which was promoted through the national history curriculum in South Africa during the early 1900s, compounded the backwardness of the continent until its 'discovery' by Europeans: "there were no roads other than footpaths… no bridges… there was only one square house …Such was the state of

South Africa when the first Europeans entered it" (Theal 1909:9). A 1909 publication compiled for the South African school history curriculum described early indigenous populations such as the 'Bushmen' of southern Africa as "a race of savages...dwarfish savages…so low in the scale of civilisation" (Theal 1909:1-*2)* who possessed little of value to white settlers (Theal 1909: preface). While the 'dark continent' and its inhabitants were seen as fearful, they remained at the same time, mysterious and captivating. The fascination with the black body, for example, among Victorian England and throughout Europe was insatiable. Consider the plight of Saartje Baartman, a young Khoikhoi woman from Eastern Cape in South Africa who was sold as a slave and exported to London in the late 1700s. She was given the 'stage' name Venus Hottentot and paraded in one of the many 'freak shows' popular in Britain at that time. Baartman's unique lure to British observers was her large 'derrière' and 'extra-long' labia, which were put on show to the British public. Her anatomy also fascinated the French, who were so consumed by the mysticism of the African body that they preserved Baartman's brain, skeleton and genitalia in a French museum until 1974. In wasn't until 2002 that Baartman's remains were finally returned to South Africa for a proper burial (Holmes 2007). Indeed, African sexuality was discussed at length by Franz Fanon in his 1952 publication, *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which Fanon reflected on the 'white' preoccupation with 'the Negro' and their body, arguing that "[i]n relation to the Negro, everything takes place on the genital level" and the Europeans found their "sexual potency…hallucinating" (Fanon 1986:157). The black African male was regarded purely in physiological terms, with no intellectual identity. The early colonial perception of the black male mineworker in South Africa in the early 1900s was also linked with sexuality, despite them being compared to an "overgrown child" (Irvine and Macaulay 1906:156).

This goes someway in explaining the derogatory ways in which black men were subsequently referred to as 'boys' by white colonists and later white South Africans

under apartheid. Yet, despite being considered 'childlike', at the same time, they were not to be trusted.

> "Good-natured and docile in the main, he is easily amused, and has a keen appreciation of a joke if it be of the physical sort, and nothing delights him so much as the mock war-dances which are frequently held on Sundays in the compounds. In many of his wants and ideals he is a mere overgrown child, but he is not without an underlying vein of sensualism and cruelty and cunning" (Irvine and Macaulay 1906:156).

British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote in 1963 that, "[p]erhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none; only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness" (in Mazrui 1978:94). Poulsen suggests that, prior to the 1960s, perhaps Trevor-Roper may have been correct. Much of the literature and research before then was dominated by the perceptions of white settler presence on the continent (Poulsen 1981, Holmes 2007). Frank Cana, writing more than a century ago in 1916, critiqued the extensively referenced historical work of Dr Theal, claiming that his work was written "solely from the standpoint of its colonization by European races" (Cana 1916:337). Critically, he reminds us that "South Africa is, and will remain, as much a Black Man's Country as a White's" (ibid.). In recent years, historical and anthropological studies have attempted to balance this void through works by scholars such as the Comaroffs, John Illife and Basil Davidson, along with various African writers, poets, playwrights and academics including Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ken Saro Wiwa, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Mark Mathabane, Franz Fanon among many, many more. However, the colonial impression on African soil remains an important part of not only the continent's history, but its present and perhaps, its future. As Robert Morrell writes in relation to the history of South Africa, "[t]he present day

socio-political landscape of the country is a clear product of its colonial and apartheid past" (Morrel et al, 2012:14). This history has shaped gender relations, and operated as a "master narrative" (Campbell 1997:227-8) in not only the construction of masculinities but also, more specifically, how male migration to the mines and the development of male-only living mapped out the course of masculine identities and subjectivities (Osella and Osella 2000) and contemporary masculinities (this dimension is further discussed in section 4.5).

Next, I begin with a brief account of South Africa's early history, followed by an outline of the key events in the country's apartheid past in the context of the discovery of gold and diamonds, which transformed traditional gender norms.

The earliest named human inhabitants to settle in South Africa were the San and the Khoisan, who inhabited the southern tip of the continent (the Cape) for more than two thousand years before Portuguese explorer Batholemeu Dias, in his search for a sea route to trade with India in 1488, discovered and named this southern tip, the Cape of Good Hope. Vasco da Gama first set foot on the Southern African soil in 1497, followed by Joao da Nova in 1501 and Antonio de Saldanha in 1503, who established trading posts. In 1560, missionaries arrived in attempts to convert indigenous populations to Christianity but, it is claimed, without success (Theal 1909). It wasn't until 1652, under Jan Van Riebeeck of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) that settlers arrived and stayed, marking what Morrell refers to as the beginnings of centuries of a "brutal, violent, struggle over land, with forcible dispossession of the indigenous population" (Morrell et al 2012:14). Indigenous and settler communities were initially trading partners, but it became clear, with the importation of slaves and the growing numbers of 'white' settlers into the Cape, that disputes over land would lead to bloodshed. As a result, the Khoisan almost disappeared as an identifiable ethnic group through land conflicts, massacres,

imported diseases such as smallpox and intermarriage (Carter 1960, Holmes 2007, Theal 1909, Unterhalter 1982).

Sovereignty and land ownership in South Africa was brutally and fatally contested in a complex series of historical events. The Cape Colony remained under Dutch administration until 1795, when Britain seized control. In 1803, it returned to Dutch rule under a Batavian administration for three years, until Britain re-occupied the Colony for a second time in 1806, and in 1814 it was then formally ceded to once again become part of the British Empire. On 1 December 1838, on Emancipation Day, the British abolished slavery and subsequently set about developing a series of human rights focused policies aimed at supporting indigenous populations (Comaroff 1989). Unhappy with what was looking increasingly like race equality measures, in 1834, many Dutch settlers (now identified as 'Boers') began their legendary 'Great Trek' north into the African interior. Many of these Voortrekkers settled in the Orange Free State (now Free State) and others trekked to Natal (today known as KwaZulu-Natal). In 1899, the Anglo-Boer war broke out between the British and the Boers, which continued until 1902, when the Transvaal and Orange Free State were made into self-governing colonies of the British Empire. The two warring parties settled for negotiation and amalgamated the then four colonies into a Union of South Africa, in 1910. Prior to this event, between 1908-9, a constitution was instituted which included three central, negotiated governing principles: i) a Westminster model of government – a unitary state with political power under a sovereign parliament; ii) both English and Dutch as official languages and, iii) voting rights for blacks – a highly controversial element which was allowed to be individually determined by each of the self-governing colonies. Unsurprisingly, Orange River and the Transvaal colonies elected to deny voting rights for blacks. In 1934, the Status of the Union Act validated South Africa as an independent self-governing sovereign state, with a Governor-General in place as a representative of

the Crown, and with power exercised by a Prime Minister, who was then Louis Botha.

To protect and sustain the increasingly affluent "white man's ways of living and Western standards" (Rhoodie 1969:3) in South Africa, the issue of the country's "racial problem" (ibid) and what to do about it became a critical priority. In the Transvaal, the strategic segregation of blacks from whites began as early as 1899. Black Africans were excluded from trade, all skilled work and prohibited from owning land. In 1903, under Lord Milner, the South African Native Affairs Commission was established, which issued a report two years later, under its Chairman Sir Godfrey Langden, regarding the "Bantu question", (ibid) which proposed solutions through the permanent separation of blacks from whites in political spheres, land ownership and land occupation (Meredith 2007:497). The report advised that urban areas should have separate 'locations' for Africans, turning what was already occurring in practice into "political doctrine" (ibid:499). The Constitution of 1909 formally and legally enshrined the exclusion of non-white races from South African politics and set out the legal channels for the oppression of black populations, such as the 1911 Mines and Works Act (that prevented black Africans from skilled industrial jobs) and the Native's Land Act of 1913 (which focused on territorial segregation as proposed in the Langden Commission). In the Cape Colony, the right to vote was applied equally regardless of race, yet was based on land ownership rights. This changed in 1936 when black Africans in the Cape were removed from the electoral register, which they had previously been enrolled for more than 80 years (Meredith 2007).

Laws and policies were introduced to legally segregate 'black' from 'white'. Black populations were subjugated, dispossessed from their lands, heavily taxed and subjected to restrictive pass laws (further discussed in section 4.4) to protect the rapidly expanding urban areas where segregation was violently enforced. The land

allocated for black Africans amounted to 8 percent of the total land mass, increasing

to just 13 percent in 1936 and as such the 'reserves', 'tribal lands' or 'locations' were

severely overcrowded and generally in dangerous and unsanitary conditions.

Unable to support their families in the reserves and required to pay escalating taxes,

scores of men migrated into urban areas for waged work and women and children

were obligated to survive on small subsistence plots in the reserves. This resulted in

wage labour becoming a critical survival strategy for black Africans and was a

crucial defining characteristic of masculinity as men increasingly became the sole

provider for their families back in the reserves. Mining and migration, therefore, had

a profound impression on men and the ways in which a hegemonic masculinity was

socially defined and anticipated (Morrell 2001, Reid and Walker 2005).

The Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 established urban areas as primarily for white

populations. Black Africans were tolerated only to facilitate the needs of white

populations as domestic servants, gardeners or nannies, for example. The Act

regulated influx controls of blacks into and out of urban areas. The rising numbers of

black men who were migrating for work competed with the much-needed manual

labour in the agricultural sector. Waged labour from the mines was increasingly

instrumental in supporting local enterprise in the rural homestead economy and

enabled black Africans to utilise their local farming skills and family labour to

increase their local production, but this ran the risk of competing with white farmers.

Ensuring the availability of labour in the mines and challenging the increasing rivalry

from black farms preoccupied colonial elites and further encouraged policies of

separation (Koos 2011:55). This resulted in an intensification of the

"superexploitation of African male migrant labourers" (Morrell et al 2012:15).

Although white supremacy and the oppression of black populations were central

features of life in South Africa, it wasn't until the National Party came to power in

1948, the same year as the world embraced the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, that the policy of apartheid formally legitimated the subjugation of an entire population based on race. This set about defining and controlling all aspects of life for the black African. In the next section, I consider the key events that led up to, authorised and sustained the legal segregation of races for nearly five decades.

4.4   Enshrining oppression

In 1948, the National Party (founded in 1914) won the general election under the leadership of D. F. Malan and almost immediately began introducing a series of racially motivated legislation designed to provide a permanent solution to the growing 'African problem' and the preservation of white supremacy. Building on past accomplishments, racial discrimination became institutionalised through a system officially and formally labelled *apartheid* (an Afrikaans word meaning 'apartness' or 'separateness'). This has been described as "the most elaborate racial edifice the world has ever seen – a vast apparatus of laws and controls to enforce white supremacy…every facet of African life – residence, employment, education, public amenities and politics – was regulated to ensure their subordination" (Meredith 2007:525). By 1950, the apartheid government had separated the nation through an intricate race classification system administered under the Group Areas Act (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008). The 'race problem' was settled through the legal and intensified segregation of black from white and created a much more complex systematic structure of segregation that further classified blacks from Asiatics (Indians) and coloureds (Rhoodie 1969:3). Under the Population Registration Act of 1950, individuals were subjected to arbitrary and indiscriminate tests to determine and regulate their racial category. For example, state defined racial characteristics such as 'Afro-textured hair' became determining features of segregation and oppression through a simple 'Pencil Test' (if a pencil remains in the hair the

individual would be classified as 'black', in contrast to a pencil that slid out, which implied the individual was 'white').

Additionally, an enhanced and more complex pass system, which had already been in existence since the 19th century, now became a central component of 'Native' policy in controlling black lives. The passes were gendered. Initially, only African men were required to carry passes to record their permission to enter, work and live in one particular area (and later in any area). Pass law restrictions were extended to women in the early 1960s to control and limit their access to urban areas. A pass was required for travel, to pay taxes, for curfews, and, indeed, for any aspect of black living. They were also essential for regular, ad hoc police inspections. Those found without a pass, or a pass that was not in order, were arrested, detained and most often, tortured. Some went 'missing' and others returned to townships with conditions attached. Some people deemed surplus to labour needs were deported to the reserves (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008, Malan 1991, Mathabane 1986, Meredith 2007, Ndebele 2003). The impact of the wider oppressive and often fatal experiences of the pass control system that "instilled fear and rebellion in the hearts of Alexandra's residents…" (Bonner and Nieftagodein 2008:111) is well documented, as is the deep-rooted resentment of the arbitrariness of the pass system that could determine life – or death. Mark Mathabane's autobiography *Kaffir Boy* (1986) for example, is steeped in the fear, resentment and powerlessness that Alexandra's township residents experienced. Throughout his autobiography, Mathabane presents his father as a violent, angry, yet proud man. However, his autobiography illustrates the emasculating effects of the systematic policies and practices of apartheid on men, which severely challenged and restricted their capacity to adequately fulfil the social expectations of masculinity. Mathabane outlines his experience of his father's public humiliation, powerlessness and emasculation in the context of this state subjugation:

> "…at that moment he seemed to age a thousand years, a pitiful sight. The policeman playfully prodded my father's penis with a truncheon… [my father's] head bowed, his hands manacled, his self-esteem drained, his manhood sapped" (Mathabane 1986:21, 23).

As men's social roles became increasingly aligned to material provision through their role as provider, the political, social and economic restrictions under apartheid negated their capacity to fulfil this social expectation, along with men's socially anticipated role to protect.

The focus of the next section is to further explore the ways in which male migration to the mines, urbanisation, the phenomenon of single-sex living and men's absence from family and rural life mapped out the ways in which men (re)defined, (re)negotiated and (re)constructed new versions of masculinities and masculine identities within the confines of their social and political status.

4.5   Migrating masculinities

4.5.1   Migration to the mines

A significant impression on the history of South Africa was the discovery of diamonds in the late 1860s and gold two decades later, which defined the future course of the country and determined the plight of indigenous populations. The discovery created an insatiable demand for migrant labour to the rapidly developing urban areas, radically altering the social landscape of the traditional rural homestead. By the time the Union of South Africa was founded in 1910, South Africa had become the richest nation on the continent, supplying a third of the worlds' gold and 98 percent of the world's diamond supply (Meredith 2007:520). Predictably, the unearthing and supply of precious minerals encouraged migration from all corners of the globe and elevated conflicts over land, which eventually led

to the systematic quashing of independent African chiefdoms, their forced assimilation under white rule and dramatically altered traditional indigenous life.

Initially, labour for the mines was sourced from across the continent. A report in 1905 by Irvine and Macaulay (1906) revealed that some 60 percent of the total labour force for gold mining in the Witwatersrand (now part of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan area in Gauteng Province) and its neighbouring mining areas originated from Southern Portuguese East Coast Provinces. The remainder of the labour force was sourced from British South Africa (32 percent), which at the time included "the entire southern horn of the African continent, from the southern coast to the Zambesi River, and from the Indian Ocean on the east to the Atlantic on the west" (Lane 1921:296), the "Portuguese provinces north of latitude 22°" (3.6 percent) and from German South–West Africa (1 percent). Just 2 percent were sourced from British Central Africa and the remaining miners were categorised as Chinese. In the Cape Colony, 64.5 percent of mine labour originated from "areas outside of British territory altogether" (Irvine and Macauley 1906:149), with 12.3 percent sourced from other colonies of British South Africa and just 9 percent from the Transvaal (ibid.). The low numbers of indigenous recruitment resulted from the prohibition on the active recruitment of 'natives' for the mines due to the labour shortages on the land. Any indigenous hires were primarily sourced from "other local employment" or transferred from one mine to another at the expiry of their initial contract which, at that time, was for six months (ibid:150). Since much of the mine labour, called the "raw boys", originated from "tropical or sub-tropical malarial districts" (ibid:163), there was a high mortality rate (80.36 deaths per 1000 men each year in the early 1900s) and many 'boys' died on their journey to the mines (ibid.). Others died while in detention as a consequence of the poor living conditions or illness, such as "pneumonia, phthisis, and other respiratory diseases" (Irvine and

Macauley 1906:55). Others still perished because of the notoriously tough and hazardous working conditions in the mines (Breckenridge 1998, Moodie 1992).

4.5.2   A world of men – violence and hegemonic masculinity in the mines

The living and working conditions experienced by migrant men generated and facilitated extreme forms of violence. In the mines, life was defined by violence (Breckenridge 1998, Campbell 1997, Moodie 1992, Reid and Walker 2005) along with poor and high-risk working and living conditions (Guy and Thabane 1992), which were not only "humiliating, violent and brutal" (Reid and Walker 2005:8) but also emasculating (Breckenridge 1998, Kandirikirira 2002, Morrell 1998). The expressions, expectations and realities of violence within and between men – both black and white – was not only a defining feature of masculinity, it was at the "heart" of it (Breckenridge 1998:669. See also Campbell 1997). Masculinity (for both black and white men) was characterised by physical strength, courage and violence and was perpetuated by the men themselves, through the normalising of violence by white superiors and by an increasingly violent apartheid state more generally. This was also compounded by violent working conditions of "machines and explosives… of the earth itself, killing and maiming…" (Breckenridge 1998:674). Within this oppressive context, violence affirmed the maintenance of a masculine cultural ideal in an increasingly racist environment and supported an expression and reassertion of individual and collective masculinities based along ethnic and racial lines (Harris 2000, Morrell 1998).

Keith Breckenridge found that over an 80-year period, until 1990, between 250,000 to 500,000 men were employed in the gold mines alone, with hardly any women present in or around the mines. Some women lived in the nearby slums and neighbourhoods, but mineworkers were discouraged by their superiors and elders from visiting these areas, resulting in men's "pervasive fear" of town women and the

threat of the "eGoli [The Zulu word for gold] women's disease" (Breckenridge 1998:676; see also Moodie 1988). The forced removal by the apartheid state of women of "known loose character" (Breckenridge 1998:676) from slums and areas nearby the mines from 1927 onwards, in addition to the state control of mineworkers' movements through a pass system, clearly demonstrates the state ascendancy on black male sexuality and masculinity. It meant that the only places in which black miners met women was on their annual or biennial return to the rural areas. For the migrant man, this resulted in feelings of isolation, as one mineworker revealed:

> "We are the nomads of our times. For in a period of twelve years the
>
> chances are that one has seen one's people for a year or less, not to say
>
> slept on your own cosy bed for the self-same period" (Ntlemo 1982:96).

New forms of masculinities were constructed during this time. State sanctioned restrictions on residency and internal movement, forced migrations, evictions and urban policies for single-sex living, confined black lives to closed compounds dominated by men. Segregation policies ensured that families remained apart. For the thousands of male migrant workers who provided the much needed manual labour for the rapidly expanding mining and manufacturing industries, life outside of work was restricted to high occupancy single-sex hostels. The realities of men-only living, policed by pass laws, racial and interracial violence, and high rates of detention, shaped masculinities within closed institutions. Within the confines of hostel living, men experienced a life alien to their traditional and customary ways of being a man, challenging their established masculine identities. For example, men were required to share a room with many other men and circumstances necessitated that they undertake domestic tasks traditionally reserved for women

and girls. Ntlemo articulates the impact and prevalence of violence in this setting and men's feeling of emasculation living as a single man with other men:

> "What characterises hostel life is that it borders on the abnormal. Old men are relegated to mere bachelors because their wives are back in their tribal lands and they have to cook for themselves, wash and iron for themselves. Usually a man has to sit on his bed because more often than not the table is occupied by people drinking "mbamba" or beers…In one room one can find a preacher, a drunkard and a faction fighter. When one prays the other drinks "mbamba" (skokiaan) and the other one fixes his weapon for slaughter…" (Ntlemo 1982).

While an archetypal hegemonic masculinity continued to be characterised by strength and violence (Breckenridge 1998, Epprecht 2002, Moodie 1992, Morrell 2001), gender hierarchies and gender roles within male-male sexual relationships directly challenged this, while at the same time sustained it. The realities of this "world without women" (Breckenridge 1998:675) influenced and defined alternative sexualities and masculinities, which contrasted and directly conflicted with traditional gender values and norms (Breckenridge 1998, Epprecht 2002, Moodie 1992). For example, single-sex living and working conditions promoted same-sex relationships and the gender hierarchies that were experienced within this. Exploring masculinity in the gold mines between 1900 and 1950, Breckenridge describes the ways in which mineworkers adopted various gender roles that developed through same-sex relationships, findings that have similarly been reported in researching single-sex closed institutions such as prisons (Gear 2005). Pathways to manhood were established by seniority achieved not only with age but also through years of experience in the mines, in which black men graduated from the subordinate position of 'boy' to 'man' in his male status, sexual maturity and patriarchal

entitlements. For Moodie (1994), the presence of 'mine wives' and 'mine marriages' served to support older men's traditional status as provider and household head, and younger men were financially enabled to pay for *lobola* (bridewealth) and set up their own, independent homestead without having to rely on their fathers or other male guardians (Hunter 2010). These gendered hierarchical relationships were recognised within and between black mine workers, co-existing alongside the paternalistic "racialised masculine hierarchy" (Breckenridge 1998:690), in which white supervisors persisted in referring to and treating black men as 'boys', regardless of age and stature.

4.5.3   Migration and masculinity

Robert Morrell (2001) contends that two key experiences have moulded black South African masculinities in the 20th century. One is the workplace as it relates to the impact of migration to the mines and the other, rural life. The demand for male migrant labour to work in the mines, along with the subsequent state control of the migrant men's personal and social lives impacted on gender relations and influenced the ways in which men could (re)define and (re)construct their masculinities. Male migration meant that men were mostly missing from the rural areas leaving behind women, children and elderly men, necessitating that women assumed roles traditionally reserved for men, while elderly men were tasked as gatekeepers of the patriarchal order. Traditional expectations of masculinity in rural contexts continued to entrench a patriarchal ideology that was subscribed to by both women and men. This supported and facilitated male ascendency that influenced social and gendered rules and norms within society. This rural value system remained deeply entrenched within the belief systems and gendered performances of those who migrated to urban areas and was central to shaping urban

masculinities and ensuring that a traditional rural masculinity remained hegemonic (Morrell 1998).

With traditional associations and social responsibilities of manhood centred on the family and the homestead (Morrell 2001, Hunter 2005), the denial of family life which skewed traditional masculine norms in urban realities, challenged men's status, reputation and respectability and served to deflate their sense of masculinity (Campbell 1990). Hopes of a re-validation of these roles on their temporary return to the homestead were dashed as men discovered that life went on in their absence, further denting their masculinity. This challenged the traditional social and gendered rules of rural living, creating a space for gendered and generational conflicts (Carton 2001) both in the rural areas, as men returned for visits and in urban areas, which were becoming increasingly dominated by young men. In response, some men sought ways to re-inflate their masculinity and fulfil their reputational status (Wilson 1969) through aggression and control over women and their families (Dolan 2005, Kandirikirira 2002:118). Some exaggerated fighting skills in attempts to reassert their masculine positionality over women and to publicly taunt and challenge older men's authority (Carton 2001).

Critical in defining subjectivities and men's social identities during the period of migration and rapid urban expansion are the links between masculinity and money from waged work in the mines (Osella and Osella 2000), which directly linked men's social role to that of provider. With many men now living in urban township contexts, the struggle to survive conditions of hardship and escalating political violence, masculinities mutated in response to these struggles.

4.5.4   An evolving urban culture aligned to the struggle

Within an urban context, violence and the liberation struggle became key features of the ways in which new masculinities emerged. While opposition to apartheid began

with peaceful demonstrations, the tightening racial edifice of the apartheid state evolved into a struggle that became increasingly defined by violent opposition. Accordingly, masculinities were constructed along these realities, creating what Penelope Andrews terms "[t]he lethal cocktail of apartheid masculinities" (Andrews 2016:28). Within the confines of life under apartheid, black masculinities evolved, mutated and repositioned alongside a traditional patriarchal ideology that sustained a hegemonic form and an urban culture that responded to the oppression of apartheid and the realities of urban living.

Local opposition to early European invasion and more intensely under apartheid, is impressive. The liberation struggle during apartheid shaped resistance masculinities. These were formed through 'heroic' (Unterhalter 2000) and 'struggle' masculinities, for the comrades within the country and those in exile. This was facilitated through membership of military organisations such as the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe or PAC's Azanian People Liberation Army, for example. 'Street' masculinities (Xaba 2001) were constructed alongside and in some cases, a part of, 'struggle' masculinities and both emerged as a result of the anti-apartheid movement across townships, where many young men were both directly involved in the struggle and at the same time surviving the hardships of township street life.

In the next section, I highlight the historical context of black men's political agency, demonstrating oppositional masculinities in resisting oppression. Specifically, I consider the ways in which men constructed their masculinities within the context of the anti-apartheid liberation struggle and the limitations of township living.

4.6   Resisting oppression – 'black' agency

Early historical accounts of indigenous opposition to European encroachment and white rule on South African soil were recorded 18 months after the arrival of the first

settlers, in the early 1700s (Theal 1909:36). The Bushmen fought against European settlers for much of the 18th century and the early 19th century, until there were "so few Bushmen left that they could do very little harm" (Theal 1909:57). The 'Kaffir Wars' between the Xhosa and European settlers (both British and Boer) in the Cape lasted almost 100 years between 1779 to 1879 (Holmes 2012: unpaginated). From 1820, warriors of the "fearsome Zulu nation" (ibid.) gathered under the leadership of Chief Tshaka, who is described in history books as "…cruel and ferocious almost beyond description…" (Theal 1909:106). Zulu warriors set the scene for the popularly depicted "destructive warfare" (ibid.) at the battle of Isandhlwana in 1879, known as the first Anglo-Zulu war (Holmes 2012), where British troops were claimed to have been decimated by Zulu warriors. While the scale of this event has recently been contested by Nauright and Carton (2015), the legend attached to it remains enshrined. Hollywood and history have maintained this mythical typecast, portraying Zulu men as violent, proud warriors and perpetuating the valour of violence (ibid.).

The word 'struggle' has a multiplicity of meanings within the context of South Africa's past, present and future. Yet, it is most widely referenced in its relationship to the political fight for freedom – the liberation struggle against apartheid, defined by its resistance to the structural violence that promoted the continued subjugation of an entire race. While opposition to white supremacy was present at all levels of society, leading the resistance against the unrelenting barrage of state interventions increasingly evident throughout every facet of black life, was the African National Congress (ANC). Formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress, it was later renamed the ANC in 1923. Originally a men's only movement, it took three decades before women were entitled to become active members with full voting rights, in 1943 (Morrell et al., 2012). In the same year, the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) was formed and in 1955 some 20,000 women mobilised a protest on Government buildings in Pretoria against the pass

laws and other apartheid restrictions. For nearly a century the ANC engaged in what Nelson Mandela described as a "[g]reat moral struggle…against the oppression of an entire nation…and the emancipation of its people" (Mandela 2003 in Sisulu 2011:6). Despite the relentless state violence, the ANC's struggle for freedom originally pursued a non-violent response in the form of peaceful public protests and demonstrations, petitions and boycotts. It wasn't until the late 1950s that the ANC seriously considered the need for armed resistance and even then, tried to disassociate itself with any direct links to violence. However, reports of violent clashes in rural homeland areas, outrage at the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 (where 69 peaceful demonstrators were brutally murdered by state police) and the subsequent 'state of emergency', which banned organisations such as the ANC (under the Unlawful Organisations Bill), marked a shift in oppositional strategies (Ellis 2011). The days of "peaceful methods of struggle were over… the alternative was armed struggle – violence" (Harmel in Eillis 2011:661). In December 1961, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) - the 'Spear of the Nation' - was established. Believed to have been the initiative of the South African Communist Party (SACP), it was popularly referred to as the 'military wing' of the ANC, although the ANC president at the time, Albert Luthuli, agreed to the formation of MK on the condition that it was seen to be independent of the ANC, thus reaffirming its identification with non-violence (Ellis 2011). The MK engaged in a repertoire of responses that included sabotage, guerrilla warfare and urban uprisings, which lasted more than three decades. In 1964, senior ANC leaders were arrested, tried and imprisoned for life after the famous Rivonia Trial. Others were forced into exile or went underground to continue the internal struggle. This, along with the intensifying repression from state apparatus against non-white populations, had a devastating effect on the struggle for freedom, and "…its impacts dulled the edge of popular resistance throughout the 1960s" (Mahajan 2014:37).

It was more than a decade later, from the mid-1970s and then throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, that the resistance movement encouraged widespread militancy. These years of "the famous cycle of resistance and oppression" (Krog 1999:9) were characterised by the ruthlessness of state violence and extreme subjugation of black populations throughout urban areas. This period also signalled the intensified mobilisation and representation of civil society, who were organising themselves in opposition. All the while, the ANC continued its armed response, raising its profile alongside underground political units who were influencing the formation of mass organisations such as the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (O'Malley: undated).

At the same time, black students focused on more peaceful oppositional strategies, emphasising black leadership roles in the liberation struggle and calling for a disassociation with the ruling party and Bantustan (homeland) leaders, who were perceived as collaborators with the ruling party. The Black Consciousness Movement, founded by popular activist Steve Biko, played a critical role in influencing young people's engagement in the country's struggle for freedom. Biko was also instrumental in the formation of an all-black South African Student Organisation (SASO) in 1968. SASO was critical in carrying out community and school awareness programmes focused on encouraging black youth into leadership roles. The organisation was banned by the National Party in 1973 and its leadership were violently repressed, murdered, or died under suspicious circumstances while in police custody.

In 1976, the Soweto Youth Uprising, which spread throughout the country and into townships including Alexandra, represented the protest of the youth against the deteriorating Bantu education and the wider oppressions enforced under the

apartheid state (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008, Ndlovu 2006). The Soweto scene opened a new chapter in South Africa's history, which proved to be a turning point in the liberation struggle. Although the clampdown by the apartheid Government was brutal and merciless, it was unable to contain the rising youth resistance within South Africa and the intensifying international opposition. Trade unions, political, civic and youth organisations took to the streets to oppose the Government's continuing oppressive policies and restrictions. Violent clashes intensified between the youth and the state apparatus. Through mass rallies, boycotts and strikes the resistance movement succeeded in obstructing the South African economy. While not clear at the time, the balance of power had already begun to shift, and change was imminent. By 1984, a 'people's war' emerged as the struggle extended throughout the townships, with mass cadres solicited and trained in military combat. This also resulted in the proliferation of arms within the townships (O'Malley: undated). Young people, dissatisfied with the lack of progress and perceived collusion with the state by their elders, took charge in responding to state violence within their own territories. This opened new avenues for an urban gang culture that responded to both the struggle, the realities of poverty and life on the street. Participation in gang culture became an essential marker of reputation and a key feature in how young men performed their masculinity within the township context (Cock 2001). 'Street' alongside 'struggle' masculinities (Xaba 2001) facilitated the interconnectedness of gang culture with the political struggle in what was becoming an increasingly dominant urban masculinity shrouded in violence, power and male exclusivity that mirrored that of the mines. Women were viewed as gang property or targets and were often on the receiving end of this violence (Glaser 1992,1998, Xaba 2001).

Violence in the townships escalated, both internally and from an increasingly intolerant government. Within this theatre of violence, Alexandra township continued

to be at the epicentre of the conflict. The township's role in influencing local opposition to apartheid has been critical to the history of the people's politics - both peacefully and later through violent demonstration. In the following sections, I focus on Alexandra's role in the struggle for freedom and its influence on men's subjectivities and the ways in which urban township masculine identities were defined and constructed.

4.7   Alexandra township – the 'urban promised land'

"In South Africa, the very word township conjures up images of Alexandra"

(Mayekiso 1996:11)

Alexandra township, as Mojapelo (2008:38) describes it, is "one of the oldest and funkiest townships in the country". It "is and always has been, a special place", claim Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008:1) in one of the most comprehensive histories ever written on Alexandra. Throughout its long and animated history, the township has been home to prominent figures such as Nelson Mandela, former Mozambican president Samora Machel, the wonderful African poet Wally Serote, music legends such as Hugh Masekela and Zacks Nkosi. Geographically, Alexandra is centrally located just eleven miles north of South Africa's financial capital Johannesburg, and is within the Johannesburg City Council administration (Figure 6). It is a short distance from South Africa's financial and business powerhouse, Sandton, where luxury apartments can command a starting price of £2 million. Due to its proximity to both Johannesburg and Sandton and its position close to many of the main travel routes including the new Gautrain railway station, Alexandra township remains a priority stop for those in search of employment in and around the greater Johannesburg metropolitan area (Figure 7). Population statistics for Alexandra vary across sources from official statistics of nearly 180,000 people (Census SA 2011) to 750,000 (MIT 2000) living within its borders and some 20,000 shacks sprawled

across its landscape (ibid.). For those of us immersed in exploring the trials and tribulations of Alexandra over its 105-year history and the mass populations that have domiciled there, it is hard to imagine that its geographical boundaries reach just 800 hectares, or 3 square miles. Yet, it punches above its size and somehow, throughout the years of oppression, hardship and apartheid strategies for urban control, Alexandra as a township survived where many others, like the popular Sophiatown, did not (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008).
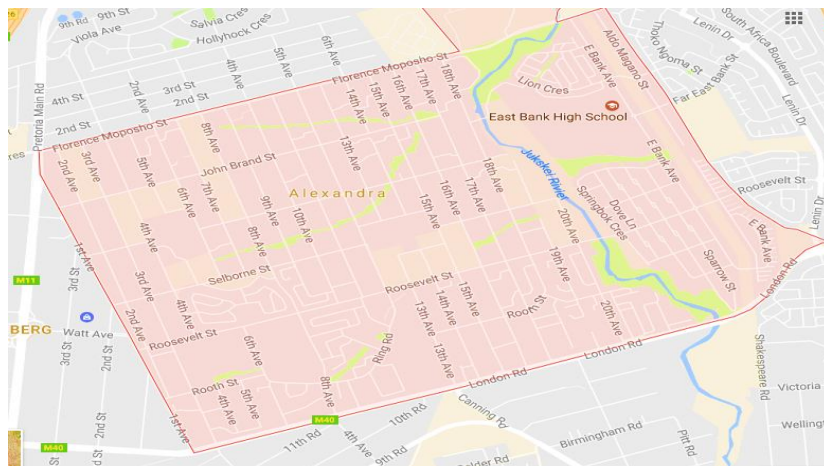
Figure 5 Map of Alexandra township (Map data ©2017 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd, Google)

Figure 6 Alexandra in relation to Johannesburg and International Airport (Map data ©2017 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd, Google)
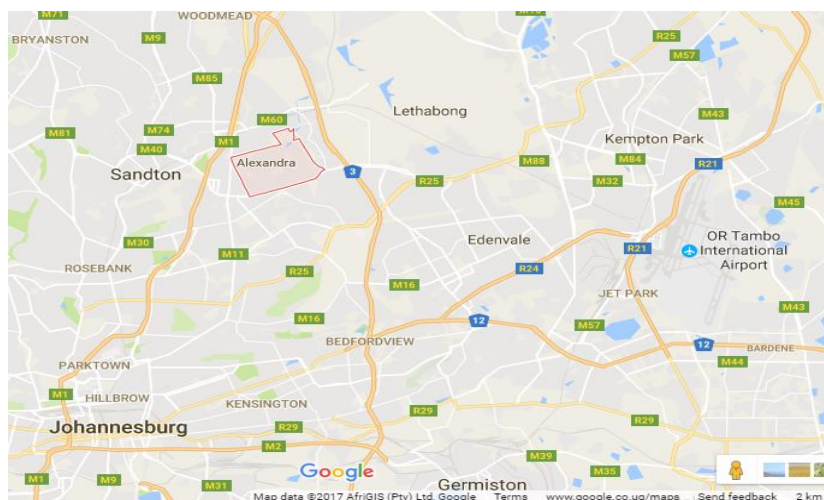
Alexandra's community, although diverse in its composition, was instrumental in fashioning a wave of urban resistance that was an "unfailing source of political controversy" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:1) throughout its history and during the years of 'high' apartheid. This did not go unnoticed among the white elites who lobbied extensively for the township to be demolished (Naughright 1998). The communal nature of Alexandra's political resistance is noteworthy. There was no distinct group or individual 'leader' that has been identified as instigating or organising demonstrations and boycotts within the township (ibid.). Alexandra township was instrumental in the collective activism of its residents in opposing the restrictions and policies of apartheid (Jochelson 1990). Examples include: the famous bus boycotts *Azikhwelwa,* in 1944 and again in 1957; the student resistance in 1976; the 'six-day war' in 1986; and more recently although negatively, the xenophobic violence that startled South Africa in 2008, 2012 and 2014 in which Alexandra was a key player in the violence that targeted foreign nationals primarily from other African countries most notably Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Angolans and Somalis. This more recent violence towards foreigners was, at times, reminiscent of the experiences of black populations under apartheid. For example, an article by Ndlovu (2008) in South Africa's popular Mail and Guardian newspaper reported on the random way in which those considered 'foreign' were selected and how they were subsequently subjected to 'tests' affirming their nationality before being beaten, robbed and/or killed in public.

4.7.1   Alexandra township – an early history

Alexandra emerged in 1904 when H. B. Papenfus purchased the land on which the township is situated. The origin of the name Alexandra remains the subject of mythology. A common rumour is that the area was named after either the wife or one of the daughters of Papenfus. This has recently been contested by Bonner and

Nieftagodien (2008), who claim that there is no evidence to suggest that any female in the Papenfus extended family was named Alexandra. Their findings do, however, reveal that an illegitimate child of Mr. Papenfus and his secretary Mrs. Gordon was born around the same time that Alexandra was established. Although the gender of the child is unknown it is suggested that the child may have been a girl called Alexandra.

Originally, Papenfus had planned to sell off plots of land to white buyers. However, at the time, the distance to the centre of Johannesburg was considered too lengthy and the terrain 'too wet', so much so that there was little demand for the 338 plots on sale at the time. Unable to sell these plots to whites, Papenfus redesigned the plans to create further plots and proceeded to make Alexandra one of the few areas where blacks and coloureds could purchase freehold land and be somewhat independent of white municipal control, which many other townships were exposed to. This became one of Alexandra's many distinguishing and appealing features (Bonner and Naughright 1998, Bozzoli 2004, Nieftagodien 2008, Sisulu 2011). In 1912, Alexandra was officially established as a black freehold township just as the Native Land Bill was being drafted by the government, which later became statute under the Native Land Act of 1913. The Act served to prevent blacks from repurchasing their land from white farmers and, critically, banned sharecropping (where black farmers cultivated white owned land and could claim a third or half of the crop once reaped). Consequently, there was a rush by black Africans to buy land before the Act was passed, after which land ownership for blacks was prohibited. From this time until 1930, when the then Prime Minister J. B. Hertzog abolished this right, Alexandra township was the only place where blacks could buy freehold land and be outside of municipal control.

The early settlers to Alexandra, who purchased land and became plot owners, were predominantly former sharecropper tenants from the Orange Free State or the Transvaal. Some were better-off labour tenants or "professional elites" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:5). Under the Act, sharecroppers were either obliged to accept inequitable agreements with white farmers or forced off white-owned land. Some sought more favourable sharecropping conditions in other areas in the Transvaal. Those with capital could sell off their assets, purchase plots and set up businesses in Alexandra or Sophiatown. Being land owners distinguished them from the rest of black society, who were primarily living in locations throughout the country. This "moral universe" in which blacks could own land under white rule encouraged a middle-class "'civilised' status" with "urban social standing and respectability" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:4-5).

As the poverty in rural areas worsened on farms and tribal lands, the influx of black Africans into urban areas intensified as people migrated in search of waged labour. With signs of racial mixing, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and the Slums Act of 1934 served to expel black populations from newly designated white areas (ibid:29-30). Alexandra was viewed by officials as a "springboard" (Duncan 2005:10) to Johannesburg and they sought to curb what they considered the influx of black labour into white areas. In response, the residents of the township were squeezed out of the job market and preferential treatment was offered to those already in the Johannesburg municipal locations.

The Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952 served to further divide Alexandra's inhabitants from those with rights to reside and those without. New influxes of people migrating to work could temporarily live in Alexandra, but only to undertake the "most arduous and menial jobs" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:108). One of the commonplace consequences of the Group Areas Act were forced removals

along with the bulldozing of much-loved townships like Sophiatown. Some claim that up to 3.5 million people in 1983 alone were affected by forced evictions (Duncan 2005:10). However, the planned demolition of black urban and peri-urban townships did not consider the increasing labour needs of the rapidly expanding white urban areas and Alexandra's strategic geographical location meant that it was one of the main suppliers of labour for neighbouring industrial areas such as Kew and Wynberg, in addition to other white suburban areas (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008). In response, the government sought to develop Alexandra as a tactical base for migrant labour, through the planned development of single-sex hostels to diminish Alexandra's black freeholder identity. Alexandra would no longer be recognised as the vibrant and diverse abode for "urbanised black people with freehold rights" (ibid:11).

The character, class composition and political identity of Alexandra were transformed as former slum dwellers and sub-tenants began to dominate its population. Plot owners would support their bond (mortgage) repayments by sub-letting shacks that had been built in their yards to these new arrivals, or to temporary proletarian workers being evicted from nearby slums. To survive, these new arrivals illicitly brewed and sold local alcohol, which was claimed to have introduced a "much more turbulent and ungovernable element into Alexandra's social and political culture" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:17), and created ethnic tensions between plot owners and the new arrivals, which were to continue for many years.

Alexandra's now bulging population raised serious implications for public health. With deteriorating health and pollution a perceived crisis in townships, Alexandra was placed under the management of the Alexandra Health Committee (AHC), headed by a white man with an elected black majority membership, until 1958. The

AHC however, had limited scope in developing the township due to its more meagre resources and lack of interest from government. While black township settlements in South Africa were allowed to exist because of the growing need for cheap labour in white neighbourhoods (Gibson 2011:182), the reality of their presence was however, considered to be a blot on urban white middle-class populations. As early as 1919, affluent families living in proximity to Alexandra were making incessant complaints to municipalities and newspapers about the township's rapidly increasing population, noise, disease, and drunkenness. Those complaining expressed their fear of black male sexual violence on white women and girls, or worse, residents revolting against white rule. The pressure from white ratepayers who sought for the removal of Alexandra or at least its incorporation into Johannesburg City Council, led to more stringent controls and increasing police raids (Naughright 1998:67, 75). The problem of Alexandra went back and forth until it came to the critical attention of the National Party in 1955 and again in 1962. Some residents were removed, houses were demolished and some were replaced with single-sex hostels, some of which continue to haunt the township's landscape today.

No-one in positions of authority quite knew what to do with Alexandra, the "number-one problem township…the running sore of evil…the Mecca of Native Scum…" (Naughright 1998:65). When H. F. Werwoerd came to power in 1958, he vowed to find a 'final solution' to the problem of Alexandra. Yet, for more than 40 years the township avoided the threat of being bulldozed as was the ill-fated reality for many of the other townships such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg or District 6 in Cape Town. At the time of the apartheid government's sweeping forced removals Alexandra was just outside the boundaries of Johannesburg City Council. It wasn't fully controlled or regulated by the sophisticated state labour or residential laws that were accumulating under the National Party. After a long and bitter struggle by the Alexandra community under the direction of its former mayor, the Reverend Sam

Buti, the threat of Alexandra's demolition and the Government's plans for its transformation into a "prototype migrant urban township" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:277) finally experienced a reprieve in 1979. While the township was safe from extinction, it remained a thorn in the side of the apartheid government and no-one wanted to take responsibility for its development. A new Master Plan was developed, which outlined progressive structural plans for 'legal' Africans in urban areas, but which never materialised due to insufficient funds and inconsistencies with apartheid policies.

By 1992, just two years before the first democratic general elections, migration and overcrowding continued to dominate township politics. Some 360,000 people were reportedly living in Alexandra by then, which is fifty times more people per hectare than the wealthy neighbouring area of Sandton and four times more than Soweto township (Mayesiko 1996). The average number of people per household was estimated at 11, all living in the 10,500 formal housing units and 11,080 informal settlement units. There were, of course, thousands more living in the backyard sheds and shacks along with the 9,420 hostel beds and an undetermined number of people living in them (Mayekiso and Bond 1996). Services to the community of Alexandra were limited; for example, only 16 percent of the population had access to electricity. There was only one appropriate medical facility, and limited educational and recreational facilities. Unemployment was high, and those with jobs were earning between £25 and £50 per month in unskilled/semi-skilled work.

Alexandra continues to exist on the margins of social provision. Today, it remains acutely overcrowded, with no clean running water, no sewerage and limited electricity, reinforcing its popular identity as the 'dark city'.

4.8   Constructing township masculinities

The structural, physical and psychological impact of apartheid, and in particular the despised pass laws, on the lives of those living in townships was brutal. It was especially challenging for young people. Those able to access education needed a pass to get to and from school. For the children of Alexandra's original plot owners, who had mostly attended school, finding work and obtaining a pass was difficult. Many were disinterested in the menial nature of the jobs proposed by the state, primarily in the agricultural and domestic sectors. Outside of this offering, the state was unwilling to facilitate them. Many young people throughout townships without work were considered idle by the state and arrested under the Children's Act of 1937. Some were imprisoned or sold as farm labourers, where many died (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:110). Those imprisoned were subjected to extreme violence and torture by state forces and/or prison inmates. Many young men, some imprisoned for minor offences, came into contact with gang members in prison and returned to the streets as hardened criminals. Given their unemployed status on their release, they were not able to get a pass and consequently many young men became embroiled in a cycle of violence characterised by street life.

In the early years of migration parents and guardians attempted to enforce traditional values when raising their young boys (Glaser 1998) however, given the nature of life within townships, this became increasingly difficult. With pass laws necessitating those living in townships to be employed, parents who were in urban areas would generally be working and therefore, away from the township during the day. Young people were often left without parental or elder direction or supervision, and parents found it difficult to constrain their children, particularly young boys, who were generally left to their own devices and free to explore their identities and sexualities (Glaser 1998, Mathabane 1986, Morrell 2001). In urban areas, young

people had access to their own finances through petty trade or crime, which enabled their independence and further isolated them from their families (Glaser 1990). Membership of one of the many street gangs in Alexandra was an alluring option for young people. The most violent gang presence in Alexandra was during the mid-1950s, when the height of the influx control measures began to impact on everyday township living. The notorious Spoilers gang, Zorro Fighting Legion, and later the Msomis, wreaked havoc on Alexandra's residents. Violence and waves of street gangs continued to escalate throughout the decades. Becoming a member of a street gang was exciting for many young men and in most cases inescapable (Glaser 1998, Mathabane 1986). Mark Mathabane's (1986) autobiography details how peer pressure and the realities of poverty made joining a gang an attractive option. He demonstrates how, for some young people, it provided an escape from the personal daily violence of township living and gave them a sense of identity, belonging and purpose. It enabled young men to receive and provide protection, and more importantly, earn a reputation among the community. Early gangs and their members were known and valued by the community and were tasked with the role of protecting their territory.

As the martial response intensified on both sides, there was a proliferation of guns within the township in response to both the liberation struggle and the realities of poverty, and were an essential marker of struggle and street masculinities (Cock 2001:43). According to Cock (2001:45) the gun, and in particular the AK-47, symbolised group identity and political allegiance among young men during apartheid and was iconized by the MK. While some argue that biology (Fukuyama 1998) or sexuality (Theweleit 1989) is the basis for male violence and obsession with guns, the presence and use of guns within Alexandra was attributed by my respondents, to the need for protection of self and community in an increasingly

oppressive, violent and poverty afflicted environment. It also enabled men to fulfil the masculine role of provider and protector, as expected of them by society.

Migration for work and the challenges of urban living under apartheid have influenced the evolution and (re)construction of masculinities. The widespread traditional expectations of manhood were transported from rural to urban living. The working context of migrant men and urban living conditions cultivated an environment where crime and violence provided opportunities and outlets for survival, alongside responding to the growing need for local resistance to mounting state oppression. The intensifying militarism amongst opposition struggle parties and the despondency with traditional, internal structures of authority, facilitated young men in creating new versions of masculinities and masculine identities that responded to the realities of township living. 'Street' alongside 'struggle' masculinities (Xaba 2001) facilitated the interconnectedness of gang culture alongside the political struggle, enabling young men to position themselves within what was becoming an increasingly dominant urban township masculinity. Masculine expectations of the struggle remained closely linked with fighting skills, courage and independence (Morrell 2001, Unterhalter 2000, Xaba 2001) and within an urban context, territoriality and law-breaking were incorporated as key features within an exclusively male gang culture (Glaser 1998). Young men identified with the struggle, the street or both through membership of youth movements, as comrades and/or activists with the various militant organisations active within the townships and the many gangs that dominated township life. This facilitated masculine respect through a reputational status.

4.8.1 The urban warrior

In rural settings in South Africa, the traditional storytelling of heroic warriors of the past provided a connection between the adult male and the boy child, and

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glamorised the perception that fighting, protection and endurance were directly linked with an admired 'warrior' masculinity (Mandela 1995, Suttner 2005, Waetjen 2004). This idealised masculinity was encapsulated through the rise of the Zulu warrior who fought against the subjugation of black populations under colonialism. The over-popularised historical account of Shaka Zulu's victory over the British army at the Battle of Isandlwana in 1879 (a popular legend recently challenged by Julian Cobbing 1988), idealised a stereotype of Zulu men as "natural-born killers" or a "man slaying war machine" (Morrell and Carton 2012:31). The militarism of King Shaka was a dimension adopted and promoted by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) to endorse patriotism through 'Zuluness' throughout South Africa, and which continues to be exploited by reigning Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini today. Hollywood and history have also maintained this typecast portraying Zulu men as violent and proud warriors, and through doing so, have perpetuated the valour of violence (Nauright and Carton 2015).

Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi first built on this warrior reputation through the re-energising of the dormant Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Through the IFP (originally formed in 1975 as Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe), he motivated a patriotism towards Zulu ethnicity and nationalism linking the IFP politically, geographically and ethnically with the KwaZulu homeland. During the struggle against apartheid, young men considered themselves contemporary 'warriors' protecting their community from a common enemy, an image that was nourished, exported and sustained in urban areas by the IFP (Carton 2001, Waetjen 2004, Xaba 2001). The deliberate promotion of prescribed masculine behaviours for Zulu men in all spheres of their lives – home, workplace and the struggle (Carton 2001) – was facilitated through the exaggerated promotion of images of Zulu warriors in traditional dress, of Zulu stick fighting culture and preservation of male patriarchy; all of which served to promote the vision of a hegemonic masculinity. The IFP encouraged and supported

a militaristic masculinity that was appealing to those committed to their rural homestead, such as migrant labourers, who were predominantly housed in single-sex hostels throughout townships (Ntlemo 1982, Waetjen 2004). Utilising symbols of traditional weaponry and chants of death to regain cultural pride and identity, through the IFP, Zulu men were motivated to once again rise up and defend their nation (Waetjen 2004).

The development of a traditional masculinity through the notion of a warrior identity was also tactically utilised by the ANC in encouraging men to visualise "picking up the spear" (Suttner 2005:88) and in naming the military wing of the ANC as the 'spear' of the nation. Initially, the IFP had links with the ANC, but as reports emerged of Chief Buthelezi's perceived links with the apartheid government and its external support for militarisation, along with news of IFP conflicting political motives, tensions intensified between the two parties, provoking violence. The fight for political dominance sparked some of the deadliest political violence between supporters of both parties, resulting in "deeply entrenched rivalries" and tensions (Waetjen and Mare 2001:195).

Issues of masculinity were embedded within this conflict. Zulu King Goodwill Zwelethini accused the ANC of assaulting Zulu masculinity in their appeals to deprive "Zulu men of their manhood by taking away their cultural weapons" (King Goodwill Zwelithini cited in Campbell 1992:614). The reference to cultural weapons refers to the age-old tradition of stick fighting among Zulu men, which is synonymous with Zulu masculine identity (Morrell 2012), and which to be without is like "[a] Christian without a bible" (Cock 2001:50). This "martial recreation" (Morrell 2012:31) was transported by migrant men into urban areas where outward displays of strength and fighting became key elements associated with a dominant masculinity. Mark Mathabane in his autobiography *Kaffir Boy* (Mathabane 1986:74)*,*

notes the presence of 'impis' (Zulu warriors) in his controversial reference of his childhood exposure to 'Matanyula' ("male prostitution" referenced in relation to sex with young boys). Mathabane describes entering "a large compound" (ibid:68) where he encountered "…shirtless, muscular *impis* engaged in mock fights using spears and knobkerries" (ibid:70, my emphasis). The compounds he referred to are the single-sex hostels in Alexandra and the 'impis' the migrant workers living in them. The potential violence within the township among 'impis' going "on a rampage with knobkerries [a short club with a knobbed end used by 'warriors' as a weapon] and spears" (ibid:70), intimidated the residents of Alexandra and forced the silence of their experiences.

The political struggle for freedom became synonymous with black township male identity. Enduring accounts of valour, through bravery that challenged oppression against a common enemy, created space for men to construct their masculine identities. For the comrades who remained within the country and those exiled who continued to operate from outside of South Africa, these were aligned to the construction of a "heroic" (Unterhalter 2000) masculinity that was based on the idea of the militaristic struggle and was symbolised through 'warrior-like' capabilities (ibid.). Heroes of the cause, linked with militarisation, became dominant role models for young men, who aspired to a "hegemonic struggle masculinity" (Suttner 2005:79). In particular, as the struggle for freedom intensified, many young men became combatants and comrades, which for some was seen as a rite of passage to manhood (Suttner 2005) in a context where there were few economic and political opportunities to transition from youth to adulthood.

For those men in Alexandra township, the image of the Zulu warrior and its associated militaristic skill, along with the presence of populations of mostly single migrant Zulu men, exemplified a masculinity that responded to young men's

aspirations for manhood at a critical time for masculinities, which some scholars have referred to as "a crisis of African masculinity" (Campbell 1992:614, Walker 2005:10). The internal struggle for freedom constructed masculinities that emergence through the 'struggle' for freedom and 'street' masculinities through gang membership that corresponded to the guise of "warriors who stood with the community" (Xaba 2001:110).

4.9   Conclusion

South Africa has had a tumultuous and fascinating history. In this chapter, I have captured some of the key events in the country's history to provide a contextual historical background to this thesis enquiry. While Anthony Holmes (2012) managed to contain South Africa's history to 'an hour', this does, however, miss the uniqueness of the country and, more importantly, the distinctiveness of its people. For centuries, the indigenous populations suffered under the intensifying oppression of white supremacy, while at the same time actively opposing this oppression. While the struggle that culminated with the 1994 general democratic elections may have ended the official racial demarcations of separation under apartheid, South Africa today continues to function along race and class lines. The poverty experienced by those living in Alexandra township today remains relatively unchanged and perhaps, has worsened.

Colonialism and apartheid are key historical events that shaped men's subjectivities and the ways in which men defined their masculinities and male identities and how these play out in daily life (Carton 2001, Hunter 2011, Jewkes and Lindegger 2012, Morrell 2001, Ouzgane and Morrell 2005, Reid and Walker 2005, Xaba 2001). Policies of race and gender segregation and familial separation set the tone for the ways in which masculinities evolved and were renegotiated. These were aligned to violence, township survival and continuing traditional ideologies. For example, the

notion of a hegemonic masculinity persisted within same-sex living and intimate relationships in urban areas that were aligned to traditional masculine hierarchies and privileges over subordinate 'female' roles for younger or perceived weaker men. The dependence of women and children on men's wages from minework established the engrained role of man as provider, a contentious male social value that continues to influence male subjectivities and defines dominant gender norms.

Despite the embedded traditional patriarchal ideologies and social expectations that were transposed from rural to urban settings, the contextual diversities of urban lived realities impacted on the social fabric of the family and on understandings of masculinity. With weakening rural ties and limited aspirations by township youth towards traditional models of leadership, along with the severely restricted opportunities for social mobility, there were very few job opportunities for young men whose experiences of poverty, racial discrimination and violent repression were seen to block any chance of their progression within South African society (Glaser 1998). This resulted in young men exploring alternative masculinities which responded to the intersections of the social, economic and political conditions within the country. As state repression intensified, political militancy among opposition groups in the townships deepened, which encouraged the construction of masculinities that were closely aligned with the struggle for freedom and survival on the street, both of which are inherently violent and militaristic in nature, and which instituted men's role of protector for their families and local communities. These realities demonstrate the diversity and multiplicity of masculinities that change over time and context.

Understanding and appreciating this historical context and the ways in which men's subjectivities shape their identities, is best illuminated through the individual stories of those who have experienced and continue to experience life in Alexandra. In

chapter 6, I explore Alexandra township from the perspective of the individuals I interacted with throughout the research, both directly as participants and indirectly through informal conversations throughout Alexandra. Specifically, I refer to the narratives of a small sample of men who participated in the life history method and who significantly facilitated my own experience of Alexandra life and my understandings of the unique perceptions of those that reside there. These men are introduced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5   MEN OF ALEX – A PROFILE

5.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I briefly outlined South Africa's complex and animated history. The impact of colonial and apartheid rules and policies on racial and gender segregation, along with the impact of the liberation struggle in opposing state oppression was considered within the context of Alexandra township. Situating this historical background was critical in supporting an understanding of the ways in which men defined and constructed their masculinities. However, what is missing from this historical perspective is the uniqueness of the day-to-day experiences of life for men and their subjective interpretations of their masculinities. In what ways, for example, did the realities of this history – the struggle, state repression, mine life, violence, gang culture, traditional and cultural expectations, poverty for example - impact on men, their interpretations of their masculinities and their sense of self? The life history method was critical in gathering the necessary in-depth data to analyse and understand this dimension. Eliciting the historical subjective interpretations of individual men living in Alexandra township was central to identifying and understanding the wider issues that specifically relate to and impact on men in this area. Throughout the thesis, I draw extensively from these narratives. The contextual realities of those that directly participated in the research are critical in understanding some of the complexities and specificities associated with being a man in Alexandra township.

In this chapter, I introduce some of the key characters that illuminate the findings of this research. Specifically, this includes brief profiles of 11 men who participated in the life history method over the course of the research (see appendix C). At the time of the research each of these men were living in Alexandra Township. Their ages ranged from 21-59 years. Understanding their ethnic identities was complex. For

example, while Elijah was of Zulu origin, he identified himself through his wife's rural home in Mpumalanga. Boipelo talked of his maternal grandfather's rural home in Brits near Pretoria, but identified himself as "an Alexandran". The younger men, born and raised in Alexandra township associated more strongly with their paternal ancestral ties, despite having spent limited time there. All the men were educated to at least secondary school level, although not all had matriculated. At the time of the research, just three of the men were working, others were unemployed or engaged in temporary 'piecework'. Just three were married and of these, one was living with his wife in Alexandra.

While I interacted with men in various contexts throughout the township during the field research, it was the regular and in-depth discussions that I had with 11 men who participated in the life history method that supported my exploration and understanding of the complexities of the experiences and specificities of living as a man in Alexandra township and the ways in which men perceived these experiences. The time that I spent with these 11 men enabled a rapport and trust between us that continued after my time in South Africa. Many of the men contacted me through social media and added my contact to a men's WhatsApp group that was set up to debate men's issues.

Below, I introduce each of these men in the order in which I first met them.

5.2   Eleven men of Alex

5.2.1   Boipelo

At the time of the research, Boipelo was 32 years old, unmarried and was not, he says, in a "romantic relationship". Boipelo is an only child. Growing up, he lived between Alexandra township with his mother and maternal grandparents, and alone in his maternal grandfather's ancestral home in Brits, just outside of Pretoria. As a

child, he did not know his biological father and being brought up in a single parent family, was a source of anxiety for Boipelo for much of his life. When he was in Alexandra, Boipelo lived with his mother and grandparents. He recalls being "very, very, very close", to his grandmother but found his grandfather to be "very strict and aggressive", apparently due to his occupation as a "black police officer" within the township during apartheid. During school term-time, Boipelo lived alone in his mother's corrugated shack in Brits. While there were 'aunties' in the rural areas, Boipelo talked of his loneliness growing up alone in the shack.

Once Boipelo matriculated (completed his final exams to graduate from high school), he was desperate to return to Alexandra. His mother had, by this time, secured employment as a live-in domestic worker and was able to find work for Boipelo as a security guard for the local radio station, YFM. Boipelo "hated" working as a security guard. However, being positioned at YFM enabled him to indulge in his first love, the arts. He explained that this was, "*something that is close to my habit and my likings and my career. I had to meet with celebrities, even if I was just opening the gate and signing them in and out... [I] had an opportunity to be in a studio... as a guest speaker or host…So I was not feeling that I'm working as a security guard. I'm employed in YFM"*.

When he was retrenched from the security company, he returned to Alexandra to live in his grandfather's shack and spent much of the time unemployed or volunteering with youth programmes, until he was taken on as a full-time (voluntary) youth leader. Boipelo currently works with a local NGO in Alexandra township. He continues to dream of a future in drama and acting.

5.2.2   Kabelo

Kabelo, who was 24 years old at the time of the research, was working in a local NGO as a project assistant. He was born and raised in Alexandra township, but of

all the men that I interacted with during the research, he was the most committed to his (maternal) ancestral home in Mokopane, Limpopo province and the traditions of his Ndebele culture. In Alexandra, he lives in a 'bond' (mortgaged) house in an area called the East Bank, on the perimeter of 'old Alex' as the township expands. There are four rooms to the rear of Kabelo's yard (compound) and a shipping container to the side of his house, all of which are sub-let to tenants who share toilet facilities. Despite living in what the other men called a 'posh house' and having the potential to receive income from tenancies, his sister claims all the financial benefits. Kabelo talked most affectionately about his relationship with his mother, who was the fourth wife to his biological father, describing her as a "formidable" woman. He claims that his mother was the first black, female entrepreneur to be "trained" by South African Breweries. As a single mother of three children, she secured a mortgage for the house, built up a 'liquor' business and also set up Kabelo's older brother's car washing business. Both businesses were located in the yard of the house.

However, Kabelo's mother died when he was 19 years and his brother was shot and killed at the car wash a year later. Kabelo's early narratives were dominated by feelings of solitude and neglect, in particular by his sister who "did not take on the role of parent". Kabelo has a diploma in paralegal studies from Boston College, Johannesburg campus and was keen to complete a degree in customary law at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Kabelo is a jovial and desperately positive man. He is eager to please and support others, and always greeted everyone that he came into contact with. He would constantly be talking to strangers as he walked along the street and would often assist those in need throughout the township. Kabelo loved to cook and we would often engage in discussions about food varieties, their nutritional values and food preparation. He had great plans for his future, which entailed much international travel. He loved studying and was a ferocious reader, enjoying historical and political texts, but also romance novels

such as 'Mills and Boon', which I was frequently asked to source for him. After nine months without work, Kabelo secured a position with a local NGO that worked with youth in raising the awareness of HIV and AIDS through sports, and in particular soccer. He also worked part-time with Tiger Brands supporting their youth programme. These were both volunteer positions, which provided a minimal stipend. When I returned in 2013, Kabelo had found full-time employment with Boston College as a student liaison officer, his first paid job. He has since registered to complete a Bachelor's Degree in Law at the University of South Africa.

5.2.3   Abel

At 40 years of age, Abel's face and body revealed signs of hardship and struggle. During the initial interviews in 2012, there was a great sadness and despondency in his demeanour. On rare occasions, signs of hope would emerge only to once again disappear at our next meeting. It was as though the long struggle, which he recounted in his life narratives had taken its toll on Abel. The promise of a better life for his support of South Africa's long liberation struggle seemed further than what the immediate future had to offer him. Abel appreciated the opportunity the research presented to reflect on his past, a life that was so often mirrored the experiences of the majority of those living in townships around his age.

Abel was born in Alexandra township in 1973. According to Abel, it was customary in his maternal Swazi culture for the first-born grandson to be raised by grandparents. Although Abel was the last-born grandchild, he was the only boy in the family and so, at seven years of age, he was sent to live with his maternal grandparents in Soweto township in Johannesburg. As a child, Abel loved to swim in a local public pool near his home. This was the only occasion of happiness that he referred to other than when he talked about his grandmother. From a very early age, Abel earned money selling peanuts at a local train station and by extorting

'protection money' from fellow school children at his primary school. When he was 17 years old, he returned to reside full-time in Alexandra township and lived with his mother, who had since separated from his biological father. Abel was a member of the Soweto Youth Congress (SAYCO). SAYCO was a youth organisation formed during the 1980s and targeted towards non-student youth, unemployed youth and young workers who could not be members of the student youth organisation Congress of South African Students (COSAS). SAYCO was later absorbed into the ANC Youth League. Abel was also active in the African National Congress Self-Defence Unit (SDU - an informal, non-statutory 'community policing' structure). He was also, like his biological father before him, an active gang leader of a local street gang. Abel was arrested many times but never convicted for any of the serious crimes that he claimed to have committed. He had only once in his life had 'regular' work in a factory. At the time of the research, he had been volunteering for several years with a local community organisation as an HIV and AIDS peer educator. Of all the men I interviewed, Abel was the most politically active, recounting his life in the liberation struggle, although he also expressed his anger with the government that he and others like him had not been compensated for their commitment and contribution to the struggle.

5.2.4   Elijah

Elijah, called "Bra Elijah" by the other men, was considered an elder of the Men's Forum. He was 39 years old, married and had four daughters. He was referred to as the 'pastor' of the group, often called upon to pray before, during and after our gatherings and meetings. He was softly spoken, supportive towards the other men, always sought the positive in situations and was a mediator on occasions when discussions became heated.

When he was a baby, Elijah's mother deserted him. He was subsequently raised by his father and stepmother. His father's death when he was 15 years old was 'traumatic' for Elijah and resulted in his 'risky' behaviour. This was confirmed by one of the clinic counsellors with whom we shared tea one morning. She remembered Elijah in 'the early days', commenting that *"This one? This one was bad, bad, bad".*

Elijah mostly talked about his family and how one day he hoped that they would all be able to live together. Elijah's family were living in his wife's ancestral home in Mpumalanga province, while he sought work and tried to develop his various business ventures in Alexandra, which I never completely managed to comprehend. Elijah claimed to have been involved in 'business management' training, learning about 'stocks and shares', and dreamt of buying stocks on the London stock exchange. Elijah is Zulu, although he associates culturally with his wife's rural home in Mpumalanga. He talked very little about his Zulu background and culture, despite the dominance of Zulu language and cultural traditions throughout Alexandra.

Like some of the 'older' men, Elijah was active in South Africa's struggle for freedom. However, unlike Abel, Elijah was disinterested in talking in any great depth about this part of his life. He had joined the ADAPT Men's Forum in 2007 and had been an active member ever since. He is involved in community work throughout Alexandra as a valued peer educator and is a respected 'uncle' at home. When I first met him, Elijah had already been unemployed for four years. However, when I returned to Alex in 2013, he had since found work as a carpet cleaner. He was delighted to be employed and very proud of his new skill. He was earning an income, albeit a minimal one, but it was regular and afforded him the opportunity to plan for his future with his family and the 'white wedding' that he and his wife longed for.

5.2.5   Teboho

The youngest of seven children, Teboho was born in Alexandra in 1988. He lives on 13th Street, in the heart of Alexandra and in a compound owned and developed by his maternal grandmother. When he was seven years of age, Teboho was sent to attend school in his maternal village of Malamulele in Xicundu, Limpopo province. Until he matriculated, during term-time he lived with two of his siblings, returning to Alexandra during the school holidays. After completing his school exams in 2008, he returned to live full-time in the township. He shares one of the small shacks inside his grandmother's compound with four other men. It was difficult to completely grasp the total number of people that live on his grandmother's compound, suffice to say there was a high density of people living in a very small patch of land in the middle of a very busy location in the heart of Alexandra.

Teboho's grandmother is the only individual that continues to support and sustain the wider extended family. She is in receipt of a small pension grant from the government and continues with her activities as a Sangoma (a traditional healer). She was one of the pioneering Sangomas within the township and, in the early days, could earn 'good' money. However, since the end of apartheid, the competition from the influx of other Sangomas into Alexandra has negatively impacted her earning potential. Teboho described his grandmother as his role model and substitute parent. On one occasion, I was personally introduced to Teboho's grandmother and invited into her home on 13th Street. I was also proudly shown a government certificate and licence that recognised her unique skills in traditional healing, which was framed and displayed on a wall inside her home. During the visit, Teboho's grandmother took me around her compound and also to visit a local fruit seller so she could purchase fruit for me to take home. It was clear from the visit with Teboho's grandmother and the conversations between the two of them, that he is a young man struggling to survive in a tough environment. He cares

deeply for his family and wants so much to be a 'good man' and associate with the right people. However, the reality of poverty and the constant striving to be self-sufficient forces him to associate with 'friends' that he claims not to trust and who do not have the same vision in life as he does. Like most men I spoke with, Teboho wanted to own his own business in Alexandra and to earn enough to provide for his family.

Teboho has worked on only one occasion as a casual waiter. His more reliable income, he informs me, is earned through his criminal activities as a gang member, which he claims to engage in only when he is "hungry". When I returned to Alexandra in 2013, I was unable to sit and speak individually with Teboho. However, he did come to visit me at Brown House with some of the other men. Very little had changed in his life since I had last met with him. However, when I left South Africa Teboho got in touch with me through Facebook. He has since found work in the prestigious location of Sandton as a coffee 'barista' in a large hotel. He is very proud of his achievements and regularly posts images of his 'latte art' on his Facebook page.

5.2.6   Tihokomela

Tihokomela was born in 1989. His mother was born and raised in Soweto of Swazi heritage and his father a Pedi from Limpopo province. Traditionally, Tihokomela aligns himself with Pedi culture, although he considers himself a modern Alex man. He lives at home with his parents and two sisters in Tsutsumani Village in Alexandra in a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) house (government social housing). He recently graduated in Business Management and Entrepreneurship from College Campus at Parktown College in Johannesburg. He was pleased with his academic achievement and on one occasion brought his graduation

photographs to one of our meetings, for myself and the rest of the men to see. He hopes one day to complete an MBA.

Tihokomela spends much of his leisure time with Kabelo playing football and discussing ways of improving and furthering their lives. His choice of future partner reflected his choice of friends. At the time of the research he did not have a girlfriend and, like Teboho, acknowledged the difficulties in meeting someone in the township who would *"enhance my knowledge, who's gonna bring something tangible into my life. … not the typical Alexandra girl, who's out for parties and all that".* Tihokomela described how finding like-minded people in Alexandra was a challenge. He is a Jehovah's Witness and claims that, despite his current lapse in church attendance, he continues to read the Bible, especially 'Proverbs', and maintains a Christian outlook and philosophy. He is an avid reader and claims to enjoy motivational texts.

Tihokomela is an interesting mix of the urban with the traditional. Despite having engaged in the traditional ritual of male circumcision by 'going to the mountain', he disassociates with the ideology of tradition and culture primarily as it relates to honouring ancestors and the perpetuation of sexism and gender inequality. He describes himself as independent and self-sufficient, believing that entrepreneurship, rather than a *"job mentality",* is the only way to develop the self and community. His ambition is to show the people of Alexandra that it is possible to be a successful entrepreneur and remain morally inclusive. He had already developed a 'business plan' to buy and renovate an old bus into a 'party' bus that would travel around "*all the hotspots"* in the province. Securing the necessary capital for this project, however, remains a challenge. When I returned to Alex, Tihokomela was working as a volunteer, supporting a youth programme which was trying to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS through football. In addition, he had recently secured work with Kabelo at the Johannesburg campus of Boston College.

5.2.7   Aaron

Every morning, on my way to Brown House, I would take a local Alex taxi and pass by Kabelo's house to collect him. I met Aaron whilst waiting for Kabelo to get ready one morning and he agreed to be interviewed. Aaron is from Thohoyandou, formerly in the homeland of Venda, which is now in Limpopo Province. He had recently arrived in Alexandra from Venda and was renting the empty container located in Kabelo's yard to live in. He was not married but had a girlfriend who was studying in Pretoria and together they had a two-year-old daughter. Aaron had been previously worked as a DJ in Makhado in Venda and had moved to Alex to volunteer part-time with the community radio station Alex FM. This was part of his strategic goal of becoming a DJ with the popular nationwide radio station, Metro FM and perhaps even progressing to becoming a TV presenter.

Aaron was goals driven and fixated on having a positive mental attitude, which he attributed to his father's life lessons and positive "mindset". He explained that to him, *"everything is possible as long as you set your mindset in a good way…[and] associate with the positive and positive people"*, even though he acknowledged that it was "*difficult to find those kind of people".* Aaron's father taught him to believe that anything is possible, even if something appears impossible at first and encouraged Aaron to reject anyone who challenged this outlook. He added that *"if ever now I want to buy an aeroplane, because he told me, I can buy that aeroplane… and you say, 'it's expensive', so why do I have to associate with you?"* As a result, Aaron spends much of his time alone, *"because even today I don't have a friend. At work, I don't have a friend. In the church, I don't have a friend. Wherever, I don't have a friend, because he told me he doesn't trust friends".*

Aaron was terrified of living in Alexandra township. His radio shift was in the early hours of the morning, so he would leave before dark and sleep on the couch at the

radio station until his shift began. He had no time for negativity and made me a "promise" that the next time I would meet him he would already have achieved his dreams. I never managed to re-interview Aaron on my return in 2013. However, I met him briefly one of the days I was waiting – again – for Kabelo. He was still struggling at Alex FM and still living in the container in Kabelo's compound, but he continued to be intensely positive about his situation and his future.

5.2.8   James

I met James on one of my visits to the Alexandra health clinic on 8th Street. James spoke a "deep Zulu", so my conversations with him required a translator. James was born in 1985 in Ladysmith in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. When he was 5 years old, his father moved to Gauteng province for work and never returned. This event was a significant and defining moment in James's life. All our interviews were dominated by this experience. In 2004, when he was 19 years old, his mother remarried and was able to help James obtain an identity card so that he could move to Alexandra to find work. However, not being able to speak English is a limitation in James's search for employment. He occasionally obtains 'piecework' on building sites or as an industrial cleaner but, at the time of the research, he had been out of work for 2 years. His mother is financially supportive, along with his girlfriend, who works as a cashier in a supermarket in Sandton. Together with his girlfriend, who is also Zulu, they have a five-year-old boy. James's mother recently secured the required money to pay for *damages* to his girlfriend's family for 'impregnating' her before marriage. This afforded James the opportunity to take his son from the child's maternal family in rural KwaZulu Natal to stay with his mother in Gauteng, closer to James and his girlfriend. His life, however, continues to be preoccupied with finding his biological father. He and his mother believe that the father left them in KwaZulu-Natal as a result of witchcraft. There are regular rumours about various sightings of his father in different locations throughout the province. Some spot him

'at the stadium watching soccer'; 'somewhere in Fernacken with his new family', 'outside the Zolas in Alexandra' or 'around the side of Nelspruit'. Each sighting raises James's hopes, which are then dashed due to the 'lack of finances' to follow up on each lead.

Like Aaron and Elijah, finding and associating with people that have a positive outlook on life was considered by James to be a key strategy for being happy. He has a positive outlook on life and is *"patient one day it will all work out"*. James was consistently appreciative for the opportunity that the research afforded him to talk about his life. Through a translator he explained that *"it was nice to talk about issues that affecting him. It was lucky for him to be approached by you to talk about those issues that are affecting him. It was the first time and he felt good about it"*. When I returned in 2013, James continued to talk about his need to reconnect with his father and expressed his gratitude that someone was willing to listen.

5.2.9   Latsego

Latsego was an infrequent visitor to the men's group. When he attended, he remained quiet and rarely contributed to focus group or general discussions. When he did contribute, he was very careful in his choice of words and never raised his voice, even when gatherings at times became heated. During our life history interviews, I was surprised with Latsego's openness in recounting his life experiences and his feelings.

Latsego was born in the Free State in 1978 and was brought up in Soweto township. He moved to Alexandra when he was 19 years-old after his parents bought a bond house on 16th Street. He continues to live there with his mother, sister and grandmother. He has one sibling, an older sister, who is a dental nurse. His mother is a medical nurse in a private suburban hospital close to Alexandra. His father, who died in 2007, was a tiler and a handy man. Latsego's parents divorced

when he was a young boy, but his father would sporadically return to the family home. Many of the 'pressures' that Latsego disclosed during the interviews stem from the estranged nature of his relationship with his father, with whom he has directed much of his anger, feeling that he had relinquished his parental responsibilities towards Latsego and his sister.

After he matriculated, Latsego claimed to have studied for a diploma in electronics. However, the only work he could find after his diploma was as a 'delivery man' for a communications company. After he was retrenched from this job, he claimed to have returned to school to complete various courses, including, electronics and cell-phone service certificate and nursing college to become a care worker. For now, Latsego is a long-distance heavy goods driver, regularly driving to and from Johannesburg to Cape Town, but is unhappy in this work.

Latsego also talked of his life of crime and violence. He was the only participant who talked in detail of his complicity in violence towards women, the ways he had felt anger towards them and the ways in which he would justify his actions. He was a gangster in an Alex gang, a life experience not too dissimilar to that of Abel. Like Abel, he moved to Soweto to get away from the violence in Alexandra, "*because I know myself that I will end up doing wrong things… everybody they end up getting scared of me".* However, living alone only further entrenched his internal conflicts and so he returned to live with his mother and sister in Alexandra. This put further pressure on him as he couldn't accept that he was living back at home with his mother. Despite his anger and violence towards his mother, Latsego talks of his respect for her and his appreciation of her love and continued support. He is very close to his sister and regularly seeks her advice on a variety of issues. Latsego talked of the coping strategies for his violent tendencies and in finding solace within his church. I was unable to re-connect with Latsego on my return in 2013.

5.2.10 John

John was born in Alexandra in 1953 and lived all his life in the township. Other than visiting Tembisa (the neighbouring township), he has never left Alexandra. His mother was also born and raised in Alex. When he was *"thirty-something years"*, John was brutally attacked on the streets of Alexandra by *tsotsis* (township gangsters) while returning from a party, "just as it was getting dark". During that time, Alexandra was considered extremely violent and after dark was awash with tsotsis. The attack left John blind. Since the accident happened in the evening, during the weekend and during apartheid, emergency treatment for a poor black man from a township was inaccessible. When he finally was able to access treatment, the necessary machines and specialist doctors were unavailable. Any chance of repairing his eyes was negated by this reality.

Before his accident, John was married and had one child, a boy. Both left after his accident and neither remained in contact with him. Once his parents and his brother died, John was alone. He recalls the despondency he felt as he contemplated his future, alone and now blind. It wasn't until John met volunteers from a charity working with the blind that he talked of his sense of hope for a future and to finally contribute to his livelihood. Through the charity, he was able to secure work as a basket maker in a local factory, until the owner died and the organisation closed. He has not worked since. During his time at work, he met his current wife who is also blind. However, when John and his new wife had their first child things began to change and John's interviews were dominated by suspicions of his wife's 'cheating' and her plans to 'take' his house from him. John's son, who was 14 at the time of the research, also had behavioural problems, which John attributed to his wife "spoiling him too much" and trying to turn the son away from him.

John began counselling sessions at the clinic with his wife, which is where he met Boipelo and began attending some of the Men's Forum gatherings. John is the eldest of the men that were interviewed in the research and was able to engage in conversation of his life experiences during apartheid when dancing, music and dress preoccupied his everyday life, alongside the state oppression and violence that dominated township living. Indeed, John stood out with his elegant dress sense. On one occasion, I went to collect him from his home to attend a braai (barbeque) that we had organised in Kabelo's house. He was dressed in a tweed three-piece suit and with his dark glasses, bore a startling resemblance to the late American rhythm and blues singer/songwriter Ray Charles.

John spends much of his day sat at home listening to the radio and reading from his only book, the Mormon bible, which is printed in braille. I remember the sadness I felt during the hours transcribing John's story. I couldn't help but think how very unlucky this man had been throughout his life. All of the interviews were held at John's RDP home in Tsutsumani in Alexandra, where I was able to meet his wife and his young son.

When I returned in 2013, I went to visit John to arrange follow-up interviews. Boipelo and I drove up to his house one Tuesday morning, to be met with scores of people moving in and around John's small home. The evening before, John's teenage son had been killed in a hit and run accident just outside his house, an all-too-often regular occurrence in Alexandra. I was not able to re-interview John.

5.2.11 Paul

Paul is counsellors and social worker. He is also the coordinator of the Men's Forum. On my return in 2013, towards the end of my visit, I called by Paul's office to say goodbye and to thank him for the use of Brown House as interview space, and for the staff time and support to the research. I also used the opportunity to provide

some initial feedback on the research process that had been revealed during the research. I was not expecting that Paul would be one of the direct participants in the research. Yet, the time spent listening to his story during that afternoon elicited a wealth of data that not only provided another individual life history perspective, but also contributed to my understanding of some of the issues that were revealed by, and discussed with, the other men.

Paul relocated to Alexandra after he graduated from the University of Venda as a social worker. One of his university tutors linked him with the director of ADAPT in Alexandra and he began working as the coordinator of the Men's Programme. Given staff resource limitations, Paul was included as one of the social workers focusing on issues of domestic violence and then began counselling 'male perpetrators'.

Paul's story reflected that of many of the men I personally interacted with. As the first male child, Paul was placed under pressure to conform to his father's masculine standards, a man who Paul said, *"wanted to raise a man of his character".* As a consequence, Paul explained that he grew up angry and violent. It was the prospect of going to prison after he violently assaulted a man in his village, which led him to contemplate on his life. Paul's father had been imprisoned on several occasions and he did not want to continue the cycle of violence. That was in 1997 and it wasn't until 2010, after Paul had himself had received counselling that he was able to be reconciled with his father. Paul is married with a five-year-old son, with whom he is careful to lead by example as a "good role model".

5.3   Conclusion

The 11 men profiled in this chapter have been instrumental in shaping my understandings of the complexity of issues experienced by men in Alexandra township. I refer extensively to their life histories, general conversations and

observations throughout the subsequent chapters, in a discussion that considers the realities of contemporary township living for men and how their subjectivities influence the ways in which they shape their identities. The lives of these 11 men are as vibrant and as intricate as the history of the township that they live in and their narratives offer a fascinating insight into the spheres of the masculine. While each of the men's individual story differs according to their historical experience, age, ethnicity, upbringing, employment, etc., they are united in their locations of poverty and their ambiguities in their understandings of manhood in a contemporary setting.

What is striking in the narratives, in particular among some of the older men, including Abel, John, Elijah, Latsego, is the very recent experience of South Africa as a democracy. Yet, at the same time, it felt as though discussing the men's experiences of apartheid was in a distant past, despite many of them being less than 40 years of age.

In the next chapter, I examine Alexandra's historical and contemporary context through the unique perspectives of the men who live there. Other men who attended some of the early focus group discussions are also included in the chapter and, where possible, I have outlined their relevant basic background information.

CHAPTER 6   REFLECTING ON THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

6.1   Introduction

Having situated Alexandra's historical context, in this chapter I further explore this dimension through the lived experiences, perceptions and subjectivities of the men who directly and indirectly engaged with this research. Their stories and experiences uniquely capture and animate the complexities of the everyday struggles to survive the harsh living conditions. This is important for illuminating Alexandra's 'dark days' for example, the intensity of the struggle during the last days of apartheid, or indeed the difficulties faced by many individuals living in contemporary Alexandra. These reflections support a critical analysis of the ways in which contextual experiences and men's subjectivities influence on how they define and construct their masculinities in various situational contexts. The life history narratives of the men introduced in the previous chapter are essential in supporting my understandings of the multiplicity of men's identities as they attempt to (re)construct their masculinities within the boundaries of the realities of township living.

I begin the chapter by outlining my own initial perceptions and observations of Alexandra as I began the research. I do this to contextualise an outsider's preconceived views of a South African township, which is based on stereotypical views of violence and crime and then to juxtapose this with contrasting findings based on my active engagement with everyday township life. I continue by further exploring contemporary Alexandra life from the perspectives of the men who live there and the ways in which their perceptions influence and shape their

interpretations of what it is to be a man in this context. Their views encompass experiences of unemployment, overcrowding, poverty, crime and violence.

6.2   Reflections of Alexandra

Figure 7 View of Alexandra township from Tsutsumani

6.2.1   A researcher's initial perceptions

On my inaugural journey into Alexandra township (Figure 8), I was initially apprehensive to begin the field research. Considering the severe cautions received from various sources, I took a recommended private-hire taxi from Pretoria to the township, which was to take me to 3-Square on 13th Street, where I was to meet up with Sonke and ADAPT staff. With no real reason to go in and out of Alexandra unless there is something specific to take you there, I hadn't planned on my taxi driver's lack of geographical knowledge of the area. Neither of us knew how to get to my destination and to make matters worse, the taxi driver was clearly uncomfortable with being in the township and unhappy to stop to ask for directions. Noticing signs for areas such as 'East Bank' and 'Beirut' did little to calm my nerves.

On my second visit into Alexandra, I decided to make use of the newly operational, 'high speed', Gautrain, a by-product of the FIFA World Cup in 2010. The Gautrain is a state of the art rail system that can get you from Pretoria to O.R. Tambo International Airport or Johannesburg in approximately an hour. The new stations and trains are pristine since littering is taken very seriously. Chewing gum or eating food in the station or on trains is prohibited and dogmatically enforced. If you are caught chewing on the platform or on the train, one of the many security guards will ask you to immediately dispose of it, or alternatively, ask you to leave the train and/or the station. The whole experience is quite surreal and is a stark reminder of the continuing segregation of a population defined in terms of race and class. This is acutely evident on the initial route from Pretoria to Johannesburg, which runs alongside the old, rundown railway station. Passengers accessing these train services are predominantly black populations as the trip to Johannesburg on the Gautrain is beyond the financial means of many black South Africans.

My stop was Marlboro station. This was also the stop to change platforms for your journey to O.R. Tambo International Airport. Nearly everyone who disembarked at Marlboro station switched platforms so that they could travel onwards to the airport. The couple of others who exited the station building, but not its grounds, had friends, family or corporate drivers to collect them at the station entrance, with none ever having to leave their vehicle. I was the only person to exit the station grounds on nearly every visit. Marlboro station is situated on the border of Alexandra township whose established notoriety for violence continues to dominate its reputation. Few white people in South Africa would have reason to visit or pass through Alexandra. The township remains a product of its past, segregated from the idea of equality and racial integration envisioned by democracy. Yet, each subsequent visit to Alexandra township, each local taxi that I sat in, every person that I met and each experience I encountered, opened up new insights which

allowed for an interpretation of the vibrancy and diversity that so many in the township talk of.

In the next section, observations of the township are considered from the perspectives and experiences of men who live(d) there. I begin with excerpts from two autobiographical accounts of Alexandra life to demonstrate the similarities of their observations and experiences, despite being three decades apart. The ways in which township living facilitates and challenges definitions and constructions of masculinities is also considered.

6.2.2   Reflecting on Alexandra by men who live(d) there

In his celebrated autobiography, the Long Walk to Freedom, ANC leader and the first democratic president Nelson Mandela, captures life in Alexandra in the 1940s, his first home after graduating from college:

> "Life in Alexandra was exhilarating and precarious. Its atmosphere was alive, its spirit adventurous, its people resourceful. Although the township did boast some handsome buildings, it could fairly be described as a slum, living testimony to the neglect of the authorities. The roads were unpaved and dirty, and filled with hungry, undernourished children scampering around half naked. The air was thick with the smoke of coal fires in tin braziers and stoves. A single water tap served several houses. Pools of stinking, stagnant water full of maggots collected by the side of the road. Alexandra was known as the 'Dark City' for its complete absence of electricity. Walking home at night was perilous, for there were no lights, the silence pierced by yells, laughter and occasional gunfire" (Mandela 1995:88).

Mark Mathabane (1986:162), in his autobiography presenting Alexandra some three decades later, describes a very similar experience:

"Alexandra continued being the decaying shantytown it was before I was

born. The police continued their raids; children continued dying of

malnutrition; the gutters continued to overflow with filth and hovels continued

mushrooming all over the place; families continued being deported to the

tribal reserves…waves of immigrants continued arriving in Alexandra…"

It seems that very little has changed in the 70 years since Mandela lived there.

While there is some evidence of electricity in the township today, Alexandra remains

a 'dark city'. On the many occasions that I visited the township, I observed Eskom,

(South Africa's electricity public utility) workers or contractors regularly

disconnecting the roughly attached illegal electricity cables that linked individual

shacks to the central electricity supply. Roads remain untarred or unrepaired. Waste

from all sources continues to be scattered throughout the streets and the stench

from stagnant water pollutes the air. Giant rats pass by as though authorised

tenants competing for space in an already overcrowded environment (Figure 9).

Sanitation facilities are provided through the interspersed and irregularly emptied

'temporary' porta-loos scattered throughout the township. These facilities are not

nearly sufficient for its explosive population and using them after dark continues to

instil the fear of rape among women and girls (Figure 10). The township remains a

security risk in terms of personal safety, particularly at night, and has facilitated

scenes of extreme violence, as experienced in the recent incidences of xenophobic

attacks.

Figure 8 View of 'illegal' shacks along the Jukskei river

Figure 9 Some of the many 'porta loos' throughout Alexandra

Today, Alexandra is home to many diverse cultures and nationalities and remains a vibrant hub of activity. It continues to be the focal point for those in search of work with its strategic location next to Sandton and proximity to Johannesburg offering aspirations that one day a job will be found. However, Alexandra's central location next to Johannesburg demands higher rents, which also makes living in the township beyond the means of many. Since the abolishment of pass laws, which restricted the movement of black South Africans in and around urban areas,

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migration into the township has dramatically increased. Many people move from rural areas to Johannesburg in search of work, but jobs continue to be scarce and those that are available are generally insecure, temporary and grossly underpaid. This has resulted in disillusionment and distaste for the 'foreigner' living in the township, whether from outside of the country or from the rural areas of South Africa itself. In recent years, responses to rising migration in Alexandra have, at times, turned violent. In 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2015, for example, the township was theatre to some of the worst scenes of xenophobic violence targeted towards foreigners. Often those reportedly taking jobs, houses and benefits were claimed, by those who I spoke with, to originate from Zimbabwe, Angola, or Somalia, who reportedly dominated the township Spaza shops - small, informal convenience shops. Those from the rural areas were also, at times, referred to and treated as 'foreigners', considered to be 'backward' and 'traditional'. Tihokomela, for example, while claiming that those migrating to Alexandra from rural areas in other provinces no longer experienced hostility, also demonstrated that they are, nevertheless, not considered representative of the "average South African". The rural-urban reality remains a division within the township and is not necessarily delineated along ethnic lines. An example of this was whilst I was waiting one morning for men to arrive at 3-Square. I observed Alexandra residents, mostly women, transporting small cages or sacks of rats where council workers were waiting with yet more sacks. Seeking further clarification, I enquired from those observing, mostly men, what was happening. Due to the prevalence of rats throughout the township, the council had piloted various schemes aimed at exterminating Alexandra's swelling rat population. This particular scheme, involved members of the public 'trapping' rats (with traps supplied by the council) and transporting them to 3-Square to be 'gassed'. The deceased rats where then disposed of by the council. Previous schemes had involved placing owls in the limited number of trees in Alexandra and another was to

introduce cats. I asked a group of men who were gathered at 3-square one morning why previous attempts had not worked. Laughing, they commented that 'foreigners' living in the township were afraid of both creatures. Assuming that 'foreigners' were from outside of the country, the men once again laughed and clarified that foreigners were those that had migrated into the township from the rural areas of South Africa.

While Tihokomela considers his 'rural identity' aligned to his father's home in Limpopo Province, his urban status clearly demonstrates his prejudice towards what he termed "a rural mentality" that has no place in an urban context:

> *"Let's say the person that grew up here [in Alex] is the average South African…people that come from Limpopo, all they have is a Limpopo mentality. You can see that when you take someone from Natal and someone from Limpopo when you put them together there's kind of a clash. But, let's say you take someone from Soweto who is Zulu and you take someone from Alexandra and even though he's Pedi, they gonna, it's easy for them to connect".*

The perception of rural backwardness and the inability of those from rural areas to 'connect' with township living is seen by some to exacerbate conflict through a clash of ideologies, which at times can erupt into violence. Yet, for Tihokomela, aspects of his masculine identity remain linked to his paternal rural village in Limpopo and as we see in the next chapter, in his support for traditional values and rituals, which is at odds with his discourse and aspirations of more modern masculinities.

Central to the discourse on township life are issues of overcrowding and unemployment in Alexandra. These realities exacerbate men's experiences of poverty and challenges the ways in which they can define, construct and live out their masculine identities, whilst at the same time respond to the socially defined

expectations of manhood. Discussions with men related to life in Alexandra focused

primarily on the difficulties that men experience in finding work. Overcrowding in the

township and the continued migration of the 'foreigner', either rural or from outside

of the country, into Alexandra is perceived by many as the key challenge to their

securing employment. The intensity and the complexities of the challenges of

unemployment for men is illustrated through a dialogue that took place during one of

the early focus group discussions. One of the younger men, Tumisang, unhappy

with his inability to secure employment and the realities of overcrowding in

Alexandra, proposed the idea of re-introducing a pass system, similar to the much-

despised system that operated under apartheid, as a way of containing migration

into the township and facilitating increased access to jobs for those with permission

to live there. He links his inability to find employment with the need to control

population numbers in the township that are competing for the already scarce

resources and jobs.

Tumisang attended each of the early focus group discussions until we left 3-Square

and relocated our discussions to Brown House. I reconnected with him by chance

whilst walking through Alexandra one morning. I did not manage to make contact

with him again. Tumisang was born in Alexandra and spent the school term times in

Xicundu in Limpopo Province with his brother and sister, returning to the township

during the school holidays. At the time of the research, he was 21 years old and had

yet to find his first job. He lived with his mother and siblings in a tiny shack on 13th

Street. He was an occasional member of a local street gang, where he would

engage in crime activities when he was "hungry" (gang membership is further

discussed under 6.3). Tumisang referred to his own experiences of unemployment,

poverty, overcrowding and the prevalence of crime and gangs, which all suggested

to him a need to restrict and control migration into Alexandra. During the discussion,

he tries to make sense of his situation as a young man unable to find work and lift

himself out of poverty. He is frustrated with his economic situation which, he feels, necessitates him to engage in crime to sustain himself. Tumisang's input also reveals the feelings of disappointment and anger at the current leadership, "our government…black people" contrasted with a "white government", who he distinguishes as having provided jobs for those that wanted to work. The discussion is indicative of his vexation with the current social, political and economic conditions within the country, that for some were perhaps 'better' before democracy, as Boipelo remarked, "…*maybe for me, I'd go back to the olden days*".

For Tumisang, despite the contested pass system in operation during apartheid, the issues of overcrowding and unemployment in Alexandra took precedence in his life and for him, needed to be critically addressed. His solution was the reintroduction of a modern-day 'pass' system not unlike that of the past, as he outlines below:

> "… *I just want to pose a question to everyone. Is that back then you had to have a work permit to live here. Wouldn't life be better if that law was being applied even now, in our generation? That if you don't have a work permit you don't have to be here. Because if you here without a work permit it means you are not working, right? And if you are not working you'll have to find some means to live. And that leads to some of the things like crime and stuff…Now you can go anywhere because you've got that freedom. Don't you think it adds to those things that causing unemployment? Because there's so many people in one place and the other places don't…coming in and out as they please…*
>
> *My problem is even now people are still coming in to Alexandra and there is no work but they still coming in. So, I'm failing to understand. I'm here for work, but there's no work...*

As an outsider having read extensively about apartheid in South Africa and the loathed nature of the pass laws, I was surprised by this. I remained interested in the men's perceptions of this critical period and in the ways in which the men interpreted their roles and identities within this context. I kept pushing the men to discuss this dimension, yet finally recognised their reluctance to discuss in any great depth the daily realities for the many who lived through these experiences. Was it perhaps, as Bonner and Nieftagodien also find, "…too gross and humiliating to be discussed" (2008:115)? Or is it because the daily hardship realities of life for men in contemporary Alexandra are consumed with poverty, unemployment and overcrowding that in their daily livelihood experiences are perceived to be worse than they were in the past? This is evident in the second part of Tumisang's narrative, which demonstrates his disappointment with democracy and expectations of freedom under and ANC led government:

> *…Are we happy being ruled by so to say, 'white people' or maybe Afrikaans people or is it better if it's our government, the black people on our own? Is it better in that way, or is it better to be ruled by other people who can bring in work? What's more important – to live freely or to live having something? I'm posing the question to everyone. Now it's fine, we can go anywhere we want, we can live freely, there's no permits, but there's still no jobs. But if we bring back the Afrikaans government, bring back those people with their permits and their jobs don't you think it's much better to have a job, than to stay and have nothing and be free. I think the … apartheid regime it was doing much better. That's my point. Because people had a place to live and they had a right to live there. They had jobs. But now as you can see, there is unemployment. There are a lot of people who doesn't have a place to stay".*

The discussion was a critical one in exploring the pertinent issues that affect men's lives in Alexandra today. It demonstrates the complex link between unemployment and men's capacity to realise their socially established male role of provider (discussed in chapter 7) without which they have no social value. To be employed and working means being able to survive, to fulfil social roles and norms and to feel a sense of freedom, as John explained when describing how he felt the one time he was employed, "*You know, I felt free".* The concept of freedom in the context of South Africa is important. For decades, South Africans within and outside of the country fought for their 'freedom' to live on their land as recognised citizens with equal rights. They fought for the freedom from oppression and violence that characterised much of the day-to-day living for many. For John to equate being employed with being 'free' succinctly demonstrates the intensity to which men's experiences of unemployment impacts on their lives and the ways in which they can identify themselves as men in Alexandra society. In the next section I will return to the discussion of freedom and the evolution of the concept in modern day Alexandra.

6.2.3   Reflecting on the past, contemplating the future

During the initial stages of the research, I was interested in understanding men's experiences and/or perceptions of apartheid and the ways in which men internalised these understandings and negotiated their masculine identities alongside these interpretations. Yet, despite the pervasiveness of this issue, I found that it was not a topic that people in Alexandra were keen to discuss in any great depth. While autobiographies, such as those by Mark Mathabane (1986), Nelson Mandela (1994) or Rian Malan (1991) and many others, provide a much more detailed picture of the abuses and violence of the pass system, John was able to provide a snapshot of what life was like for him and others like him, living in Alexandra at the time. He

demonstrated how the passbooks and their policing were gendered. His narrative stresses the need for employment and having a pass:

> *"Yah you know, everybody in Alexandra was crying for freedom… you know, the passbooks… If you haven't got that one, and there were police who were walking all over around here, when they see you being a man, you must produce your passbook so that they must see if you are working or you are a loafer and all that. If you don't [have] that thing, then they lock you up. You see then how difficult we were living… Though to females, they were not asked [for] those passbooks, you know in the street where they walked, but they had to have one. And you had to have your passbook with you wherever you go…If you don't have a permit then you must be locked… You must be out of Alexandra by then because you are not a resident of Alexandra. You are not wanted here…it was a matter of must that you must have that permit".*

In much of the literature on life under apartheid that I explored, the overwhelming consensus was the intimidating randomness, insecurity and brutality of the pass system. While pass laws were repealed in 1986, allowing the movement of black people from rural areas into black urban areas, the system of racial classification and segregation continued. For black South African's, while racial segregation is no longer legally enforced, it remains a daily reality based on class difference. Today, many black South African's do not share in the legacy or vision of freedom that was promoted through the liberation struggle and the promise of a better life. As Abel explains,

> *"I've got nothing from the struggle. Freedom meant that 'the land shall be shared for those who worked for it'. We all worked for it not just those in exile. Nothing has changed… No, no, no, we are not living Freedom Charter.*

>*Even the single thing of the Freedom Charter, it was put aside. They see as*
>
>*we are free. Hence, the more we are free the more we are oppressed…"*

Elijah, also active in the struggle supports this view. The actualities of freedom and democracy means that *"everyone has got the rights to opportunity to buy any car they want… allows people to do whatever you want by in that moment*", however while this "somehow is a good thing", the reality for the men is that it is not, since "people they are losing their job each and every day". The freedom to move and make choices are obstructed by the limitations of unemployment and poverty.

There is anger today at the older generations who are seen to be incessantly reminding young people of their freedom in a 'new' South Africa. For Tumisang and many other young people in the township, the concept of freedom from racial oppression is overwhelmed by the daily realities of their poverty, unemployment and crime, which they consider their modern-day oppression and struggle. They have no reference point of the political oppression of the past, responding that the *"…freedom you talk of is yours, not mine".* These are very real experiences and circumstances and not dissimilar to those of young people during apartheid who were also unable to find work, were often hungry and displayed intergenerational anger.

The discussion about freedom versus unfreedom also highlights the noticeable absence among families and friends in recalling South Africa's apartheid past and its brutal realities. Any discussions that may have taken place focused primarily on the role of the ANC or individual contributions to the struggle. For example, Boipelo talked of his grandfather's role as a black policeman during apartheid, yet despite the controversial nature of his job and the fear and perceptions of state collaboration that such a job instilled within the community, Boipelo spoke only of his grandfather's anger in the home and the family's acceptance of this because of the

work-related stress that they imagined he suffered. Others talked about life being

"*hard back then*" but did not offer any specific explanations. Elijah would often avoid

questions about the past as it related to his experience under apartheid, and would

lessen the reality of his experience, "*coz it doesn't mean something*", opting rather

to move on from this history and think only about the present. As he explained, "*I

don't want to think about something that [far] back, coz my life it goes on. I'm

focusing on the present".* Another man talked about the role his aunt took in the

peace negotiations between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) as a

result of the conflict that raged in Alexandra during the 1980s and early 1990s, but

had only limited insight into the direct individual impact and experiences inflicted by

the conflict. In this sense, Tumisang's perception and interpretation of the pass

system is understandable given the view that that during apartheid there was full

employment and only those that refused work were unemployed, as Elijah explains:

> *"Before 1994… nothing was wrong…There was work, a lot of work. Because
>
> during that time, when the Afrikaner people [governed], there was a lot of
>
> jobs. There was no-one sitting at home without job. Even if you didn't finish
>
> school during that time, they take you to the military forces you work there.
>
> They don't want to see the people just going around doing nothing".*

It should also perhaps be unsurprising that discussing oppression and hardship is

not something people want to revisit. While the TRC provided a platform for some to

voice their pain, it has not made an impact on the everyday realities for the majority.

Despite the contemporary sentiments of life 'back then', apartheid severely

impacted the lives of young people in urban areas, many of whom had not known

life outside of the daily violence of the township. Despite some of the perceptions of

today's youth, young people living at the time of apartheid were generally unable to

secure jobs and were constantly at risk of detection, detention and harassment by the authorities.

In the next section, I further explore the understandings of 'freedom' and 'struggle' for the young people of Alexandra during apartheid and in the run up to the democratic elections in 1994. The personal experiences of township gangs and gang membership as strategies for survival, along with the necessity for political activity in the liberation struggle, are illustrated through the stories of Abel, Teboho, John and Latsego. What each of these men reveal is that becoming a member of a gang is not simply about the love of violence (Nauright and Carton 2015) or hegemonic displays of masculinity (Campbell 1992, Mandela 1995, Suttner 2005) where potentially anyone could be your enemy, as some suggest (Dissel 1977, Glaser 2000, Steinberg 2004, Vigh 2007). It is about economic survival and the very real need to allay the pangs of hunger that many continue to experience through township living. Abel's narrative in the next section provides an insight into the complexities of the daily struggles of life as a man in a township context. His story begins by outlining his experiences of violence growing up as a child and the survival strategies required to escape this violence, while at the same time demonstrating the need to incorporate violence to survive economic hardship and to fulfil socially anticipated masculine roles and norms.

6.3   The township struggle and (re)defining masculine identities

The concepts of freedom and struggle as it relates to South Africa and the ways in which individuals understand and internalise this, is fascinating. Abel, who was the most articulate about his experiences of growing up in a township, suggests a more complex understanding of freedom within the context of township living, and at the same time provides an insight into the influencing factors that influence on how masculinities were shaped during this time. He provides an interesting depiction of

the struggle that many young urban men experienced through attempts to survive the multidimensional oppressions of township living. Abel became immersed in the political struggle for democracy as a teenager during the 1980s and in the run-up to the 1994 democratic elections. While the 1980s and early 1990s were a period of intense violence as both the liberation struggle and the state response to it intensified, Abel's narrative reveals the multi-layered violence which infiltrated the everyday realities of life in a township. He talked directly of the stresses of the generational violence that he and other young people experienced growing up and highlights the centrality of violence within township life, which in Abel's case established the course of his future:

> *"Everything you say you will be beaten... A person can say something about you and even if it's not true they will beat you. An old person may come, he will know us because he's old, but we don't know him...He will say go to 13 [street]. And [you know] that is too far. But he will say, 'I will give you 5 minutes because I'm in a hurry. Go fast, and buy this and this and this'. If you are late, he will beat you. Someone, he will spit on the ground and will say 'you must come back before this saliva becomes dry'. When you get there, the shop have a queue and you have to wait. You will be beaten because you are late. Children would be beaten for play fighting in the streets. Most people who beat you, who beat children, were women more than just men...It made me feel sad. We don't have rights here. If you ask why, they will hit you more".*

As a consequence of his childhood violence, when he was 10 years old, Abel joined the Soweto Youth Congress (SAYCO). He realised early on that by being a member of SAYCO he could be protected from this daily violence and was facilitated to protect others. Becoming a member of an actively combative organisation was

widely encouraged during this period, which became a necessity as the struggle for liberation intensified. Yet, despite the perceived fascination for young men and guns or their militaristic tendencies, Abel's narrative shows that some men joined the struggle to find freedom from the daily experiences of personal violence, for self-protection and from the multifaceted oppressions of poverty. For Abel, the liberation cause was secondary:

> *"I was selling at the train and SAYCO came. They said 'why you selling? Come with us'. I was at a neighbour's funeral and they were all there. Seeing them at funeral I understood. If I join them no-one will beat me. I joined the struggle for protection. I was young and didn't know [about freedom]".*

Protection was a key feature for young men in defining their masculinities in the township context. Being actively engaged in the political struggle and being a member of a street gang supported this role. However, the narratives also show that a life on the streets was one of the few options available for many young men who needed to alleviate hunger, become independent, earn money and survive township living. Many became members of the numerous street gangs that flourished throughout Alexandra, which included criminals from other townships, such as Soweto and Pretoria, who would go to Alexandra to evade being captured by local police in other townships. This contributed to Alexandra's reputation for criminality, as Latsego noted: *"If they do the wrong thing they come here to Alexandra. They run away. They know that cops will never find them here. That's why it got dangerous"*. As a prominent Alex gang member, Latsego would himself at times need to move into Soweto township for a reprieve from the violence and confinement of his life in Alexandra, where he was not known as a gangster. Once again, the concept of (un)freedom is used in describing the oppression that young men experience living as a gangster,

> "*Every time you work up, you must look left. You don't know who's standing there for you. Who's waiting for you there. It's hard. It's a hard life because there's no freedom there*".

For Latsego, the risk of exposure to violence to his mother and sister who continued to live in Alexandra would force his return, which speaks of the gendered expectations of men to protect and the gendered dimensions of violence. The anticipated social roles of men to protect, further demonstrates the stresses on men to align to the social expectations to provide and protect in fiercely difficult contexts and also the multiple identities that men are required to inhabit accordingly. Latsego was expected to protect his family from gangs in Alexandra, while also violating other families who required protection from his criminal activities.

John, an elder among the men provided a historical contextual account of Alexandra's notoriety as a haven for gangs and criminals. Himself a victim of a tsotsi attack, he illustrates the realities of living in Alexandra during its famed period as a 'dark city', in particular as it relates to the presence of the many street gangs in the township and the palpable fear among Alexandra residents who were forced to retreat into their homes at sunset, or risk being targeting by gangs:

> "*…since before I was born, Alexandra was very dangerous... Because at that time it was dark city. You had no lights. There were many groups of tsotsi's… maybe you pass somewhere and unfortunately there's where they are fighting. And by that time they must hurt you or maybe kill you. So at 6 o'clock every house must have their lights off. If they see the lights somewhere, they [tsotsis] come and break into your house. Sometimes kill you or take things in your house. People lived in fear. People had to be inside their house…*

The most dangerous tsotsis were carrying guns. They had their offices in Alexandra. Those were the most dangerous tsotsis in Alexandra… every gangster wanted to be the boss in Alexandra…They must be the most feared gangsters, you see. That is why they were fighting one another. If you go out at night, you must know that you are risking [your life]".

As Abel shows, life on the streets was critical for survival. At 17 years of age he became a full-time gangster and gang leader and would regularly abuse drugs, alcohol and girlfriends. When he moved back to Alexandra from Soweto, he joined the Self Defence Unit (SDU - Armed units set up by the ANC in the early 1990s to protect township neighbourhoods), where he simultaneously became active in the ANC political struggle. Membership of the SDU also secured his first gun. For Abel, having a gun provided him with protection from the increasing internal conflict in the township between ANC members and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) members, who dominated the single-sex hostels in Alexandra, and who were considered sympathisers of the apartheid state. Possessing a gun enabled Abel to provide for himself, for fellow gang members, his family and his community. He would steal guns from police and/or security services and sell them on to the growing market of buyers. Each stolen gun could earn him up to R1,000 (£52), about a month's salary at the time. This earned Abel a 'respected' street reputation, not only in his capacity to protect, but also to provide. He demonstrated how the political struggle, township survival and urban violence were all intertwined with poverty, subsistence and the increasing urgency to commit and engage with more widespread militarising oppositional strategies. His narrative reveals the immense pressures on men to provide and protect their community, other gang members and the extended family. It reveals the necessity to engage in both the political struggle and the struggle on the street, to survive and support others and to gain respectability:

> *"You see you cannot involve in the war whilst on other side you are*
> *hungry…Only when you are gangster, friends take care of you. You see your*
> *friends have nothing. You can go and collect a gun. We take guns from*
> *security and police. More security was killed during then. People killing the*
> *police for their guns, coz you cannot take gun from a trained person. That's*
> *why you kill them to steal their gun. During that time, the police were*
> *enemies, so we kill them and take their guns. Police were there during that*
> *time to deliver members of the IFP, so we have to shoot them… It's kill or be*
> *killed".*

For Abel, being known as a gang leader in Alexandra and a member of the SDU
provided him with personal protection that was invaluable during his time in
detention as a political prisoner. Yet, what is also telling about Abel's narrative is the
acknowledgement of his fears and insecurities, which would be perceived as
unmasculine on the street, despite his fearsome reputation:

> *"Life in prison was a hell. Prisoners beating other prisoners, having sex with*
> *other prisoners. I was 1 year 6 months at trial. It was not easy for me to*
> *cope. There was fighting over prison numbers, township association fights...*
> *I was scared. Anyone was picked on. You know no-one even if you do.*
> *Some inmates were marked. For me, I was known [as a gangster]. They*
> *would say 'If you trouble him, make sure they sentence you. If they don't, he*
> *will find you on the outside'.*

Despite the struggle and hardship, the men talked of the communality within the
township - a sense of 'ubuntu' (solidarity, connectedness and cohesiveness that
held a community together) during Alexandra's 'dark days'. According to those I
interviewed, however, this sense of ubuntu has since slipped away and has been
replaced by an individuality that increases suspicion within the community, that

supplements experiences of separation and loneliness that further isolates men, as Latsego describes:

"In Alex, you know… It's changed. There's no that, that humour that I [am] used to because it changes a lot nowadays if you look at it. No-one cares about you anyway. The first time it was like, taking care [of] each other. But nowadays Alexandra, no-one cares about you. You only have nothing…. And never come to you [them] and say, 'I don't have food'. No, they will just look at you and look at the other side".

Similarly, Abel finds that the individuality in Alexandra's contemporary context instils distrust among its neighbours. He reports that poverty in present day Alexandra is much more visible that it was under apartheid. The perception among the men was that during the liberation struggle everyone was perceived as equal in their poverty and were united in their struggle for freedom. The sense of communality and shared values meant that neighbours supported and looked out for each other, nothing was hidden - even gang members were known to the community and to some extent their activities anticipated and respected:

"Alex is no longer a sense of 'ubuntu'. Is less of a community feel. Before I must greet you on the street. You must take care of people – a stranger could sleep at my parents. Now is no longer trust. It's dog eating dog and everyone must do for self. Under apartheid it was hard to see poverty. If I had nothing at home, I can go to my neighbour and eat there. Now [there is] too much suspicion and muti [Traditional herbs used as medicine in witchcraft]. *People no longer trust [each other]. Before we were together in the struggle, now we are apart. Apartheid was oppressing us all. It was not easy to see who has money. Now can see who has and has not got money. [It's] created division among the community. Now suspicious of poor and rich. Say you are working*

and your neighbours are not working. They are there all day. They are eating. You don't know what they are eating. While you at work, someone breaks in and steals from your property - who is the first person you are going to suspect? In apartheid if a house was robbed, people know that house was robbed and it was usually a gangster is involved, not an individual".

Gangs and gangsters in contemporary Alexandra have evolved and are no longer perceived as the idealised entity that they once were. A key feature of the street gangs of the past was their familiarity. As John points out gangsters were, in some ways, seen as being a necessary part of township life. He refers to the gang members of the past as known and 'respected' members of the community, compared to today where gangsters are unknown, unpredictable and unaligned. Gangsters of present-day Alexandra no longer command 'respect', nor do they follow the responsibilities of the past in protecting their areas. The easy availability of guns is claimed to have compounded this perception. Abel demonstrates the association between widespread gun ownership with gangster culture in contemporary Alexandra:

"*During apartheid, the gangsters were visible. People understand you and who you are [as a gangster] …gangsters had names. Today gangsters don't have names. It could be your neighbour… There are more gangsters after apartheid but they no longer active like before. Now not visible. During the apartheid era, gangsters had names. Now gangsters don't have names. You don't know who…".*

The invisibility of gangsters within the community was also discussed by Tihokomela:

"He can walk past you every day and you won't even know that this guy is a gangster. Only when you arrest him you'll know 'ah, this guy's a gangster. I didn't even know and he lives right next door to me".

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For many, the gangsters that once instilled fear among the residents of Alexandra "*are gone now. They are dead…*" as Latsego explained. He also told me how the gangs of today are living on the notoriety of gangs of the past and the masculinity that they represented: "*they are not serious. They are looking for their own thing…They are holding that thing, that memory of that time*".

In contemporary Alexandra, the lure for young men to become members of a street gang is compounded by the continuing struggle from the daily realities of poverty and township survival and as Latsego reveals, the notoriety of a dominant masculinity. Teboho discussed how being a member of a street gang in Alexandra continues to provide the comradery experience of the past as well as protection from hunger and unemployment. While hunger remains an issue for many, gathering goods and cash is a central feature of modern gangster life in Alexandra and for some, regarded as a form of employment. While gangsters may be invisible to those on the 'outside', they are known and visible to those on the 'inside' as Teboho revealed:

> "*…Here in Alexandra 90% of youth are not working…They are hungry. Their parents are not working so how do they live?... Everything is money here [in Alexandra]. You know, there by 13th [Street] where I stay, there a lot of gangsters. When I'm hungry, they can maybe take me [with them] to go and work. It's not difficult. Maybe I did it 3 times. Not every day. They do it every day, but myself I don't do it every day. I don't like that style actually ...But I stay with them and we stay together. I know all of them. How they do everything… stay on the street*".

Teboho demonstrates the critical function of street gang membership for some young men in contemporary Alexandra. In the absence of alternative income earning opportunities, becoming a member of a street gang is a livelihood option

and as both Teboho and Abel explain and fulfils an individual's basic human needs, such as hunger alleviation.

Gang presence on the streets of Alexandra continues to instil fear among its residents as it did 'back then'. Few venture out after dark. Aaron's narrative demonstrates the impact of this on daily life. Having recently arrived from Venda to Alexandra to work at the local radio station Alex FM, Aaron talked of the fear, violence, pandemonium and a preoccupation with materialism that Alexandra township represented to him. The prevalence of unpredictable and unfamiliar street gangs, the pervasiveness of gun ownership and the individualism of life within modern-day Alexandra contributes to its continuing reputation as a place at home with violence. For Aaron, this reputation dictated how he lived his life in the township. As I outlined in chapter 5, since Aaron's working hours are after dark, he chooses to avert any potential risk to his safety by opting to sleep on a couch at his place of work. He contrasted the safety of the rural area, with the danger of the urban:

> *"Here you are always in risk. So, in Venda there, you can walk at around 1 a.m., without any problem. But try to walk at 1am in Alexandra here…I get out of the house by 8 o'clock, then go to the radio station. I sleep there, on the couch…here the crime rate is very high".*

The preoccupation with violence in Alexandra dominates much of the literature I have read about the township and the perceptions of those living both within it and outside of its boundaries. One of the identifiable markers of this violence is the sense of 'Zuluness', which some perceive as one of the defining features of Alexandra's cultural identity. The notion of 'Zuluness' as I have already discussed in chapter 4, is most often associated with the single men's hostel that continues to plague Alexandra's landscape.

In the next section, I consider the role of the hostels - the 'Zolas' or 'Zulu flats', as they are locally referred to – and in particular, the main hostel, KwaMadala, in compounding Alexandra's reputation for violence and its role in the continuing xenophobic violence that at times flares up and disrupts life for those living in the township. The link between the Zola's, violence and perceptions of Zuluness in Alexandra is discussed as a dominant feature in defining the key characteristics of a hegemonic masculine norm within Alexandra township.

6.4   Keeping the past alive – perceptions of Zuluness in contemporary Alexandra

A common perception among the men and others that I spoke with throughout the township remains an impression of a prevailing 'Zuluness' that is claimed to dominate the township's culture and language, despite Alexandra's ethnic and cultural diversity. Language is a defining characteristic of the residents of Alexandra. While the latest census (2011) reveals that just over a quarter (26.25 percent) of township residents are of Zulu origin, the majority of those living in the township speak 'town Zulu', as the men described it, which is understood and accepted by many of the township's residents. The implications for those not aligned to the Zulu language and culture, is explained by Elijah:

> *"If you are not a Zulu, you are not a person. They call you names in Zulu. If I say to you 'I don't understand your language', I will call you 'wena isilwane', It means you're an animal. I don't understand your language. Where do you come from? You must speak Zulu. If you don't speak Zulu I'm calling that name… Alexandra, it's only Zulu and [Set]swana. If you talk Tsonga, or you are coming from Zimbabwe you can't get in".*

The concept of Zuluness is acutely apparent in the notoriously violent taxi industry. In Alexandra, one of the few employment opportunities for men is to become a taxi driver, a profession which is claimed to be controlled, policed and protected by Zulu men. Even today, while there are perhaps more taxi drivers from diverse ethnic identities, the industry remains Zulu controlled and part of what Elijah defines as a wider Zulu culture in Alexandra:

> *"[In Alexandra] It's a Zulu culture…You will find Zulu mostly. The Zulu people, they own the taxis. They control everything. Even all the [taxi] association is Zulu."*

This is echoed by Tihokomela, who demonstrates that perceptions of a Zulu culture among young people continues to dominate contemporary Alexandra living:

> *"You know, Zulus they don't think that other cultures are equal to them. I don't know why they've got that mentality. There are those Zulu young people that they think are better than other cultures. You know, and there's the hostel again. And that is a big influence. You know, there was once a reign of terror. Here at the hostel here. There was a time when they didn't want anyone to pass there. Like they shot you on the spot. I don't know why there was that thing...Even this day, you can see by the taxi rank…Every taxi rank is governed by Zulu".*

This foreboding perception of Zuluness was discussed by the men as being compounded by the presence of the single-sex hostels in Alexandra (Figure 11), which are predominantly occupied by men from the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), who widely promote their Zulu culture and warrior status. This reputation was aggravated by the intensification of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)'s politics of ethnic identity and allegiance to the Zulu nation from the mid-1980s up to the early

1990s. During this time, the IFP claimed a stronghold in Alexandra particularly among the migrant men in the Zola's.

Revelations of the 'Inkathagate' scandal that linked the IFP with the apartheid government, intensified the conflict and violence within the township which became a "regular feature of the whole of Alexandra life", as described by Byers Naude in an interview in 1991 (O'Malley: undated). Elijah remembers this difficult time in Alexandra's history and was able to discuss the dominating feature of Zuluness within Alexandra township:

> *"During that time…there were people coming from KZN. There was a party that we say in our language the Inkatha Freedom Party, coming here in Alexandra, killing people, something like that. There was a hostel, here KwaMadala hostel, if you not a Zulu, you can't enter it…Zulus only. Because where the fighting between Inkatha Freedom Party and the ANC. There was the struggle for that".*

The hostels were (and continue to be) overseen by an *induna,* a 'Chief's official' in Zulu who often acted as a bridge between the people and the Zulu King who presides over all things Zulu within the township Indunas are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that tribal masculine identities are preserved and promoted – they are the cultural gatekeeps who ensure continuity that maintains the traditional link with rural areas. Indunas have ultimate control of all that goes on within a hostel. Nothing happens, and no-one enters (or leaves) without the express approval of the Induna.

To the rest of the Alexandra community, Zola residents represent a backwardness that refuses to let go of the rural within the urban, and which at times creates conflict.

Figure 10 Street view of the 'Zolas' in Alexandra township

The single-sex hostels and the Zulu men living in them continue to generate a "reign of terror" throughout Alexandra, as Tihokomela describes it. Abel also talked about his fear of entering the hostels as a child when his father would send him to buy drugs and "self-made" guns, which can still be negotiated at the hostels. Others talked of the distress of simply walking past the Zolas for fear of being randomly shot, a risk some say continues today as Tihokomela discusses:

> *"there were a lot of guns available around the community. And you could buy from the hostel for cheap. Even now today…There's hit men also that you can buy [from the hostels] to kill someone".*

The men claim that the easy and cheap availability of guns has contributed to their widespread presence within the township, which has changed the landscape of crime since 1994. Many of the local Alexandra taxis drivers that I met disclosed that they carried guns in their vehicles expressing the need to be armed in the township, particularly at night.

As a stark reminder of the past, the Zolas recently made headline news in connection with the violent and fatal xenophobic attacks against foreigners that took

place in 2015. Comments made by the reigning Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini about foreigners needing to "pack their belongings and go back to their countries" (Ndou 2015) at a 'moral regeneration event' in Pongola, KwaZulu-Natal, was associated with promoting violence in both Durban and Johannesburg. In Johannesburg, the media publicity focused on the violence within Alexandra township and, in particular, the hostels (Mbangeni 2015), which were at the epicentre of the violence. What remains of the men's hostel in the township continues to accommodate primarily single men who are said to claim affinity to a Zulu ethnicity and who continue to be regarded with fear and trepidation. This was all too evident in a recent news article on the popular news site the 'Daily Maverick', who reported on the scenes of the 2015 xenophobic violence in Alexandra, demonstrating that the apex of the violence was the Madala men's hostel. This illustrates the continuing realities of poverty and violence in Alexandra's hostels, along with the portrayal of violence that continues to stereotype Zulu masculinity:

> *"Alexandra, the famed township in which so much struggle 'Sturm und Drang' [storm and stress] was set, remains a theatre for this sort of thing. Its crumbling brick hostel, which garrisoned Zulus during the Apartheid years, has seen better days—and its best days were bad days…* On Tuesday afternoon *… Alexandra became a stage for an Economic Freedom Fighters anti-xenophobia rally that would be addressed by Commander in Chief Julius Malema himself… it became clear that we were to march to the men's hostel at the end of the drag. That seemed unwise for several reasons, the most urgent being that some really bad dudes live in the joint, and they'd likely consider this an act of war… 'Where are they going?' asked an older gentleman …he shook his head… 'it's not a good idea to walk to the hostel', he said. 'They're going to be violent, these guys. They make it look like a Zulu thing…"* (Poplak 2015).

The perceptions of a Zulu warrior masculinity within Alexandra township is that it responds to the needs of men in confirming their hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal positions within the community. The Zulu man is seen to set the standard for young, black males in the township as "the shape of men", as Teboho labelled it, which is further discussed in the next chapter. The presence of the foreboding men's hostels sustains a reputation of a dominant male stereotype aligned with that of the Zulu warrior. The reinforcing of Zuluness and the representation of a 'warrior' masculinity as deliberately promoted by the IFP, the reinvigoration of a hegemonic Zulu masculinity reinforced by President Jacob Zuma and the representation of the warrior portrayed by the recently formed political party the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) who continue to assert the prerequisites of a masculinity aligned with traditional expectations of manhood. These are further discussed in the next chapter.

6.5   Conclusion

My aim in this chapter is rediscover Alexandra township through the perspectives, perceptions and subjectivities of some of the men who live there. Their narratives and discussions illuminate the township's historical context (considered in chapter 4) and demonstrates the complexities of life for township residents both in the past and in the present.

South Africa is considered a middle-income country and while there is visible evidence of affluence, at least in Gauteng province, this skewed representation of life is juxtaposed with the realities of increasing unemployment, overcrowding, escalating crime, violence and increasing poverty that is the experience of many. The most pressing issues for men in contemporary Alexandra are linked in various ways to the issues of unemployment. Without work and wages men are unable to

fulfil their socially ascribed gendered roles and are frustrated with what they see as logistical and social impediments to their finding work. This is compounding issues that were pertinent in the past, such as urban migration, poverty and overcrowding, which are creating tensions within contemporary Alexandra.

What is fascinating in the contextual discussions of Alexandra, are the men's interpretations of their complex and diverse understandings of freedom and the struggle. For young men today, their struggle continues as they seek freedom from unemployment and poverty. Men's contemporary experiences of widespread unemployment, overcrowding and poverty suggests to them the need for migration controls that parallel those of the past. The presence and role of gangs in the township, both past and present is critical to understanding the positionality of young men in a township context and provides an insight into the conditions of poverty that continue to plague many residents of Alexandra. As the inequality gap widens and there are limited advances made in employment generation, many more young men will see crime as their only viable solution to survival and in fulfilling their social and cultural roles in society.

In the chapter I have also briefly considered some of the influencing factors that promote and sustain perceptions of a hegemonic township masculinity and the ways in which masculinities are negotiated alongside this norm. What is clear from the discussions about the past in present day Alexandra are the parallels in the struggles and influences on men's lives to provide and protect in an environment that continues to emasculate their reputation and respectability. The ways in which this impacts on how men define and construct their masculinities is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7   EXPLORING SUBJECTIVITIES OF MANHOOD

7.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how context along with men's subjectivities map out the ways in which men redefine, renegotiate and reconstruct contemporary township masculinities. To illustrate this, I begin the chapter by critically reflecting on a controversial painting by South African artist Brett Murray, which was exhibited in Johannesburg during the time of the field research. The painting is a useful entry point for considering the key markers of masculinity that men refer to in talking about their masculine identities. In Alexandra township, these continue to be aligned to perceptions, representations and symbols of traditional masculine ideologies, which have been reinvigorated through the election of President Jacob Zuma and Economic Freedom Fighters party leader, Julius Malema. These characterisations embody a hegemonic masculinity that promotes and endures traditional expectations of men's social roles/norms and identities. The ways in which this influences and shapes multiple masculinities in Alexandra township is also considered. Despite the perceptions and expectations of a hegemonic masculinity, men construct multiple masculinities in diverse situational contexts, which at times conflict and contrast with social norms or with men's individual interpretations of their masculine identities.

7.2   Navigating contemporary masculinities in Alexandra

During the field research, a controversial painting by South African artist Brett Murray was exhibited in the Goodman Gallery, located in the rapidly developing art epicentre of Rosebank in Johannesburg. The painting, entitled 'The Spear' and part of the artist's satirical exhibition 'Hail to the Thief II', depicted a popular 1967 Soviet-era propaganda poster of the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin and featured the

face of South African President Jacob Zuma, referenced with the language of the

military wing of the African National Congress, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* - the 'Spear of

the Nation'. The painting sparked widespread criticism and public outrage which, it

was widely felt, had insulted 'the nation' and attacked 'African culture'. At the heart

of the divisive controversy was the graphic portrayal of South African President

Jacob Zuma's genitalia, superimposed on the image of Russian revolutionary.

President Zuma's very public private life has been the subject of much national and

international scrutiny. In 2006 Zuma was charged, and controversially cleared, of

rape. He has been widely criticised for fulfilling his cultural status as a polygamous

Zulu man through his multiple marriages to six women (two since divorced, one

deceased), and fathering more than 20 children, with others born to women outside

of his marriages.

The painting reignited lingering wounds of the country's violent and racist past, while

at the same time sparked a debate on gender politics in South Africa. For some, the

painting reflected the "personification of hyper-masculinized elite power" (Hassim

2014:5), which is claimed to permeate South African society. The significance of the

symbolism of the sexualising of the president is critical in understanding the

perceived dominance of the masculinity that it is claimed he represents in

contemporary South Africa. Some argue that the strength of the support for the

2009 presidential election, which Zuma won with an overwhelming majority, was his

reassertion of traditional masculinities of the past and the remobilisation of

Zuluness, that exposed the popularity for a return to traditional cultural values and

ideologies, which Zuma is seen to exemplify. This is popularly demonstrated

through his performances of traditional warrior dancing at public events and wearing

traditional Zulu warrior animal skins, publicly reciting warrior chants and actively

evoking and promoting his cultural rights to polygamy with his multiple wives and

access to multiple girlfriends. Zuma reaffirms a stereotypical hegemonic masculinity,

which as Morrell captures, as deeply "heterosexist, patriarchal, implicitly violent and that glorified ideas of male sexual entitlement…and conspicuous sexual success with women" (Morrell, et al 2012:17). This is in direct contrast to the liberal, modern democratic values that former president Nelson Mandela attempted to encourage in his post-apartheid vision for gender equality.

On the morning that the painting was publicised in local and national newspapers, I was, as usual, at Brown House in Alexandra with some of the men. The men were discussing a newspaper article that displayed an image of the painting. The public debate that dominated social and mass media focused on issues race and African culture. For the men in Brown House the discussion focused almost entirely on their distaste for the indignity and lewdness of the "pornographic" representation of the African male body, the public exposure of a penis, which is considered "taboo" - and in particular that of a nation's president, despite acknowledging the public nature of the president's sexual inappropriateness. Within the context of South Africa's repression of all things sexual during apartheid (Walker 2005), the associated debates around the emasculation of black men during that period, or the ways in which the painting further stereotypes black male sexuality, the men's reservations and prohibitions of the image as obscene is unsurprising.

Critically, however, the painting characterises some of the prevailing features of a dominant masculinity defined and constructed within the context of township living. One dimension that has received minimal attention, although crucial within the historical context of Alexandra, is the militaristic symbolism of the original image of Lenin transposed through Zuma. In the painting, this is portrayed through the colour and language of the spirit of revolution, resistance and war that can be seen to encapsulate the struggle for political freedom that preoccupied generations in South Africa, and which was pivotal in moulding township masculinities. The significance of the struggle and "the spirit of fighting" as Abel describes it, is represented in the

multiple masculinities constructed through symbols of heroism, violence, the struggle and the street that evolved during this period, which are further discussed in this chapter. Struggle and heroic masculinities evolved from the warrior masculinity within the context of urban township living. Today these are deliberately promoted through the representation of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) political party. Through the EFF 'Commander in Chief', former National Youth League president Julius Mulema, the party promotes a return to militarism through symbols such as the wearing of red military berets and referring to themselves as 'fighters'. Furthermore, like President Zuma, the EFF are also viewed as promoting traditional patriarchal ideologies of the past, which continue to dominate the ways in which men subjectively construct their masculine identities.

In the next section, I explore some of the influencing factors perceived by the men as dominant features of a township masculinity in contemporary Alexandra. The concept of Zuluness that emerges from the men's narratives is presented, followed by an exploration of the characteristics perceived to represent this hegemonic form.

7.2.1   Constructing the contemporary urban warrior

The stereotype of the Zulu warrior, popularised by the legend of Shaka Zulu and exploited by the IFP (chapter 2), is pivotal in understanding the socially anticipated hegemonic masculinity that is perceived to dominate within Alexandra township. For Tihokomela for example, the stereotype of Shaka Zulu and his army of warriors has shaped an influential ideology among young men of a superior masculinity perpetuated through Zuluness:

> *"There came Shaka who wanted to make them all Zulus...He left them with that mentality that they are superior in everything…That's why there's this superiority in Zulus that they like to take themselves that they are above*

everyone… But let's say if someone calls you a Zulu, you won't be

offended".

Expectations of Zulu manhood is exemplified through warrior strength, violence and

pain, which is interpreted by Tebhoho as "Zulu culture" that dominates all others.

Critically, the idea of Zulu culture and the related warrior masculinity stereotype is

allegedly favoured by women in the township, as Teboho further explains:

"You know the Zulus. They don't think that other cultures are equal to them...

There are those Zulu young people that they think are better than other

cultures…Now these people, you know, especially Zulus here [say that] 'I'm

a Zulu, you can't tell me anything. Who are you to tell me? I'm also killer'.

So, now the women see the stereotype and look at all men in the same way.

They see the Zulu as the shape of men".

This socially anticipated 'shape of men' is claimed to guarantee "many girlfriends",

since women are perceived to gravitate to this dominant form. The associated

reputational status is maintained through the accrual of "plenty money", typically

through crime. Within the community, this socially anticipated and preferred

representation of manhood, publicly and ostentatiously flaunts its wealth and

women and in return is enabled to "have a voice" and to earn the "respect" of the

community. For Kabelo, this was illustrated through the perceptions of the 'big man'

who flaunts his material wealth and social positionality throughout the township:

"People will listen to you if you are driving a big car… wearing expensive

designer clothing. It doesn't matter where or how you got your money. ...It

has been projected especially to us, my generation, my age group…"

The dominance of this masculine stereotype demands displays of strength, virility,

endurance, sexual promiscuity, risk-taking, crime and violence, satisfying the

ingredients for men's reputational stature. For some men, a demanding feature of

this expectation is the *pressure* to have "many" girlfriends. Having only one or no

girlfriend is precarious terrain, a "taboo" for men as Boipelo points out. Elijah, along

with other men in the focus groups demonstrates:

> "… *if I got many girls they say to you 'you are a man'. But when you have*
>
> *only one, you are not man enough. You have to get more women in your*
>
> *life".*

The reality, however, is that not all men have the capacity, either financially or

aspirationally, to achieve this masculine ideal. Some may turn to crime, as Teboho

explained, to attract and maintain girlfriends. Some of the taxi drivers I talked with

on journeys through the township, discussed the ways in which taxi drivers would

"share a leg", meaning that they share women for sexual encounters, which would

save money and ensure a guaranteed 'pool' of women, and perhaps be seen to fulfil

a reputational status. Some talked about "playing the field" in response to women's

material demands from relationships. They perceived girlfriends as "money

magnets" and would demand sex in return for "gifts".

Some men, however, refused to follow the dictates of this social stereotype and

instead, waited to meet women with shared values, who had shared interests and

who were not looking solely for material benefits from an intimate relationship.

Meeting this 'type' of woman in Alexandra township is considered a challenge for

many of the men. For those with continuing rural ties, one strategy is to return to the

village to find a wife, who they consider as having different values, morals and

interests to urban women, as Teboho discusses:

> "… *when I go back to Limpopo, I want to marry there. It's then I can pay*
>
> *lobola. But here if I find a lady in Alexandra I can't pay lobola. Why? Their*
>
> *behaviour. You can pay lobola say maybe this month and after 2 months*
>
> *she's gone. I want a village girl. They don't behave the same. They don't*

drink. Most of them they don't smoke. They behave like a human being. In

Alex? They go to the bars, today he's with me, tomorrow he's with Dumisani,

tomorrow is with another boy. You see that life? How you going to marry

such girl?".

Teboho's narrative demonstrates the diverse ways in which men perceive and

(re)define their gendered relationships, how some consider their familial aspirations

and reflect on their agentic process of (re)defining what this is and how to achieve it,

despite reputational pressure. Of course, Teboho's narrative also negatively reflects

the demeaning perceptions of women in a township context and men's subsequent

reluctance to secure and provide for *lobola* or to marry urban women.

The controversial issue of lobola is further discussed in 7.4.2. In the next section, I

consider the defining characteristics of a dominant masculinity in Alexandra that is

infused with perceptions of Zuluness and the image of the warrior and how these

have mutated into contemporary constructions of masculinities.

7.2.2   Interpreting the warrior image through markers of strength and pain

Key markers of the warrior, along with heroic, struggle and street masculinities are

strength, pain and fighting skills. From an early age, boys are taught that to be

'strong' is a necessary characteristic of being a man, something which disassociates

him from the perceived weaknesses of the feminine, as Boipelo explains:

"As a boy child, you are not taught to be weak…[or] to cry…to be strong…If

you show you are weak, you would be called a woman…But, I'm not a

woman, I wouldn't want to be associated with women, to be called a woman

or be told that when you cry, you'll be behaving like a girl. But I'm not a girl"!

But what if, as Boipelo says "*you are not strong, or they don't see your strongness*"?

For some of the participants, this is where men become violent, as Boipelo reveals,

"*you become violent… so that they can understand now that he's strong*". Violence, therefore, becomes a marker of a masculine strength, aligned to hegemonic notions of masculinity. Masculinities constructed during apartheid and in response to township living including heroic, struggle and street masculinities, which are defined and negotiated through displays of strength, violence and endurance for pain.

Linked with the importance of the marker of strength is the public evidence of a man's endurance for pain. The men in the research talked about having to endure pain as a necessary part of the process of becoming and being socially recognised as a man, as Kabelo explains:

> "*The African way, the black African group of people, they believe that to be a man you have to endure pain…To be regarded as a man*".

One avenue for men not of Zulu origin to publicly display their 'strongness', is to 'go to the mountain' to partake in the rite of passage to manhood through circumcision. Nelson Mandela calls this tradition an "essential step" (Mandela 1995:33) to manhood, after which a man's "words will be taken seriously" (ibid.). Once traditionally circumcised, a man can "marry, set up home and plough [their] own field…" (ibid.). Despite the association between pain and masculinity, from discussions and interviews, the idea of becoming a man through initiation is, in fact, alluring to boys, as Tihokomela outlined, "*...we also enjoy it…to be a man...only that pain*". Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography the *Long Walk to Freedom*, talks intimately about the importance of becoming a man through the process of initiation for Xhosa boys:

> "An uncircumcised Xhosa man is a contradiction in terms, for he is not considered a man at all, but a boy…I count my years as a man from the date of my circumcision" (Mandela 1995:30).

The prerequisites for the manly markers of strength and pain are also referenced in the same book:

> "Flinching or crying out was also a sign of weakness and stigmatised one's manhood…Circumcision is a trial of stoicism…a man must suffer in silence…conceal his pain" (Mandela 1995:32-3).

In recent years, media coverage has highlighted the complexities surrounding, the sometimes fatal, initiation experience for boys. Young boys who survive the process with complications are subjected to intense social stigma for having shamed their society and "*brought it into unrescuable disrepute*" as Thando Mgqolozana (2009:3) explained in his book, *A Man Who is Not a Man*. Receiving treatment for a botched circumcision exposes the sacredness of culture and the resultant shame bestowed on a young man and his family. As Mgqolozana writes, "there I was, defying the customs and tradition and destroying the whole culture. What guilt could be greater than the guilt of destroying the culture of your people?" (ibid:9). Not only had Mgqolozana brought shame on his 'people' and the cultural tradition of manhood initiation, he will never be regarded as 'a man'.

For some of the men in the research, 'going to the mountain' was talked about as a 'choice' that a boy makes. Tihokomela, who was born and raised in Alexandra and considers himself a modern, urban young man. Yet, he talked of the importance of the ceremony of initiation that takes place at 'the mountain' in terms of the local community's recognition of a boy's transition to manhood, confirmed through markers of strength, stamina, endurance for pain, the approval and commitment to ancestral ties and critically, the future implications, or stigma, that could result in not going:

> *"That was a choice I took. … Like if you don't go to the mountain it's like, there's this thing that you're not man enough. I just made this decision that I*

> *wanna go there… They also involve ancestors and stuff, but I don't believe*
>
> *in that. I just wanted to know all that values and respect and stuff they gonna*
>
> *teach you… Let's say if you haven't gone to the Initiation school, when the*
>
> *men are having their meetings, you not allowed to go in there, you can't just*
>
> *go in".*

Kabelo who rejected the 'traditional' route to circumcision and "ran away" from his opportunity to experience going to the mountain, opting instead for Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) at a local Alexandra clinic. He reflected on the implications of this decision on his social positionality as a man. Kabelo recognises that by not having traditionally transitioned to manhood, his claims to the cultural and social rights ordinarily afforded to men are compromised:

> *"I know it's an honour for the family…I know you have to endure pain to be a*
>
> *man in Africa, to be regarded as a man … You still have to do things*
>
> *according to tradition. Because I am not circumcised [traditionally] it is a*
>
> *problem if I want to get married. At the initiation, they are taught a way to*
>
> *identify yourself, words that must be said… they sing praises that are the*
>
> *background of your surname, each individual is taught the same thing…how*
>
> *and when, why to say it, is necessary to know. …you say words in a*
>
> *traditional way, say words that have been said generations, through*
>
> *generations…There is still pressure to go to the mountains…"*

However, while going to the mountain may publicly affirm a young man's qualities of strength and endurance, it is but a stepping stone to manhood with all its associated advantages. For Zulu men, who do not go to the mountain, manhood is recognised through markers of strength, becoming the provider, finding work and establishing the homestead, as Elijah demonstrates:

> *"Because in Zulu we don't go in the mountain. They just teach you. Because some of our Zulu from KZN they used to go to the forest to take some cattles to bring it at home. That's our roots, start the work. To be strong".*

The true test of manhood lies in conforming to the traditional, cultural and social expectations and norms anticipated of men in a society that fulfil men's respectability. For the men in this research, these expectations and associated behaviours were grounded in their understandings of men's undisputed social role of provider realised through securing *ilobolo* (bride wealth), marriage, 'fathering' children and fulfilling the material responsibilities associated with this, along with the establishment and protection of the homestead. In the next section, I explore the ways in which men identify and interpret these key social norms and expectations and the pressures associated with their attempts to achieve them, applying Wilson's (1969) framework of respectability and reputation.

7.3   Markers of respectability

7.3.1   Man as protector

""*You know to be a man, you must be somebody who love your family and who protects. A man is a protector",* stated John when asked what it meant to be a man in Alexandra. Strength therefore, correlates with men's social role of protector. Throughout discussions with the men during the field research, the issue of protection was highlighted as a quintessentially male role, closely aligned with displays of strength and endurance for pain. The social obligation for men to protect their families and community was deeply ingrained in the concept of a respected masculinity. Within the context of the country's political history, daily life in South African townships cultivated an obsessive need for strength and protection. Many men were engaged in militaristic activities, protecting their communities in support of the liberation struggle opposing apartheid. The internal daily conflict and mistrust

between the ANC and the IFP compounded men's obligation to protect. The reality of township living during the apartheid years and in the run-up to the democratic elections meant that comrades were responsible for the protection of family and communities. The issue of protection was paramount in Abel's discussions of his life. He talked of the centrality of his responsibility to protect as an active member of the Self-Defence Unit, during the years leading up to the demise of apartheid and importantly, in protecting the new political 'freedom':

> *"Life just after the release of Mandela was bad. You have to sleep at least an hour or two. If I didn't protect, who was going to protect my family? You never knew when someone might come, so you sleep during the day. [You] would hear the sound of a gun and you jump up. [You] must make sure people are protected. Role of SDU is to protect… some still fought to protect the freedom".*

The role of protector with its accompanying masculine characteristics of strength and violence, is a quality that Abel most admired about his biological father, who had a widespread reputation for violence throughout Alexandra township. While their own relationship consisted of extreme violence, the fear of his father's reputation around Alexandra, along with his role of protector in the community, would at times protect Abel from the violence of others:

> *"[my father], he would say he's my real father. If I had any problems when I grow up, everyone was afraid of my father. 'Your father is dangerous', everyone would say…it make me feel strong and protected. My father was doing good things for people, giving them protection…I wanted to be like my father. Everyone knew my father… I love my father because he was beating me…Even though he was beating me, I loved him. I loved him because he was my father. I loved him because of protection. He will protect me".*

The role of protector is associated with the established traditional male position of 'head of household' which is characteristic of men's social roles. This is despite the physical absence of men in day-to-day family life and the reality of the increasing number of women provisioning the responsibilities of household heads (Campbell 1990, Morrell 2005). This social expectation of men as the 'head' of the household is perpetuated by men, women and the wider community through a sustained patriarchal ideology that continues to facilitate masculine dominance and authority. An interesting explanation for this was posed by Elijah, who associated the role of the head of the household as biblically inscribed and which, he claims, takes precedence over men's social responsibility to provide yet also includes the role to protect:

> *"In the bible, there are no words that say 'the man must provide'. He is just the head of the house. He is the one who brings the instructions in the house, to make sure that the kids are good".*

However, the actuality of the family structure within the township environment means that few children have access to their fathers, relying solely on their mothers or grandmothers as household heads, protectors and providers. Despite this reality, the sustained common perception within the community is that in the absence of a male head, a family is 'without protection' (Campbell 1990:8).

Despite South Africa's efforts at enshrining gender equality and the (limited) progress that has been made towards women's improved access to education, employment and increased financial independence, at least at a legislative level, the traditional, patriarchal social expectations of men's social roles in society remains firmly entrenched and monitored by both men and women. However, the daily realities of township living for men challenges their capacity to fulfil these obligations. Unemployment is a key factor in this experience. Not earning an income

was seen as the primary source of pressure for the men, which James described as the "first priority" in a man's life:

> *"[The] only problem that faces men is income. Unemployment. Income basically...[t]hat's life. Money is not the only thing, but it's the first priority."*

A man's reputation and the social responsibilities and expectations around this, continues to be directly linked with their social roles to protect, be the head of the household and to provide, which is discussed in the next section.

7.3.2   Man as provider

In South Africa, democracy encouraged definitions of a 'new man', as portrayed and promoted by the country's first black president, Nelson Mandela. Pivotal in this change was the peaceful transition to democracy after centuries of violence. Mandela in his attempts at building a 'rainbow nation', proposed a new way to live that advocated peace and equality across all races and genders. While a new masculinity was considered non-violent, caring and considerate, it continued to be aligned with deeply ingrained traditional social roles and norms.

In nearly every research setting and informal discussions with men throughout the township, the issue of having money to provide was resolute. James captured this reality when asked to consider the key factor that adds pressure on men's lives men in Alexandra today: *"it is only if you are able to provide…"*. This gendered social role continues to dominate expectations of men in contemporary Alexandra society, despite women's increased income earning potential and their financial contributions into the household. Rather, women's increased visibility (real or perceived) in employment and educational opportunities, is viewed by men as challenging the traditional gendered divisions of labour and men's capacity to provide. Men and women's social roles and identities in Alexandra continue to be divided along traditional gendered lines as Elijah discusses:

"Because in South Africa I don't know if it's a law or a constitution. Women supposed to work as a domestic worker. [She] is not supposed to work in an office or some kind of things. And then the woman must take a responsibility for their child. Sitting at home, doing the chores at home…The [man's] role is to work hard. To make sure he provide [for] his family".

Elijah refers to the commonly assumed gender roles that continue to place women within the home and men outside of it. His comments suggesting this is viewed as a 'law' or 'constitution' confirms the embeddedness of this traditional, patriarchal ideology.

For James the provider role defines manhood within his Zulu culture,

"[w]hat determines that you are a man, is if you are financially independent and you are able to provide for your family and kids".

The resilience of the provider role is illustrated through Elijah's life narrative. Elijah has engaged in gender sensitisation trainings for many years and is also a peer educator in promoting gender equality throughout the township. Yet, despite his exposure, Elijah continues to consider the role of provider as remaining firmly ingrained in his understandings of masculinity. Elijah has four daughters. The eldest recently completed her university degree with UNISA. Another is about to embark on hers. His third daughter is in school, while his youngest child is in receipt of a scholarship to study at the prestigious Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, a prized achievement for any young woman from an economically challenged background. Despite positioning his girls for independence, he remains entrenched within traditionally assigned gender roles. A woman, he asserts can *contribute* to a household income, but the primary breadwinner is still considered to be the man, and this pressure is his alone:

"we grow up under pressure, so we have to accept… if you are not

working…maybe your wife is working. But he can still be providing".

Therefore, being the provider is seen as necessarily a man's gender role and is

translated as financial provision. However, in an environment with high rates of

unemployment (37 percent), and poverty, where 1.4 percent of the population lives

on less than US$1 a day (Morrell et al 2014:13), the reality of men fulfilling their

provider role is increasingly problematic and contributes to what the men in the

research label as "man pain" or "pressure". However, having a job may not

necessarily satisfy men's role to provide either, since the employment options for

many men in Alexandra township are limited to low-skilled, poorly enumerated,

casual and precarious work. This, as Latsego outlines, adds to men's social pain

and has implications for gender relations:

"Especially right now where I'm working. Many, many, many guys are

crying…They say 'whatever I'm working for here, that money is not enough.

Now my kids are needing this and that. My wife on the other hand she's

fighting… while on the other side I'm trying to [provide]".

A man's struggle to adequately provide places additional strain on their intimate

relationships and the ways in which they perceive women's expectations within

these relationships over time. Latsego discussed this dimension in his narrative:

"When you sit down you say, 'I love you. And I want to take care of you.' And

she will stay with you…because you are working. But come the day of

saying 'I'm not working'. The moment you say those words, she will tell you,

'how I'm gonna eat? What I'm gonna wear?' At the end of the day, you are in

the stress. You, yourself are under stress because …You are in a tight

corner, but she thinks of her own. She doesn't say 'no, you know what,

because of you lost a job let's see what we can do'".

The pressure, or "man pain" as the men labelled it, associated with fulfilling the requirements of socially defined masculine gender norms dominated discussions and interviews throughout the research. Focusing on girlfriends and intimate relationships, some of the younger men talked about the ways in which they perceived women in Alexandra to be perpetuating the role of men as providers by engaging in relationships solely for material benefits, despite aspiring to gender equality or "love". Within Alexandra, younger men would assign themselves job titles to these economic expectations, such as "*Minister of Finance",* who provides for hairdressing and clothing demands, *"Minister of Transport"* for travel, or "*Minister of Communication"* for *'airtime'* (mobile phone credit). Some were frustrated by this and resorted to becoming what they termed, "players" or "playing the game" expecting sex in response to material demands from girlfriends, claiming that women were aware and complicit with this. One respondent explained that, "*even these women they know this. They have many men also".* Finding and keeping a girlfriend was also pressure for many of the men, particularly in the absence of their capacity to provide, as one of the men explained during a focus group discussion:

> *"I don't think that we enter relationships because of love…I must make sure that I can provide. We are used to economic relationships. If you don't provide money as the key, you won't get a girlfriend. You can't provide. It's an arrangement…Some of the ladies will tell you about their needs and that if you are not working, they will tell you 'how can you provide for all my needs'?*

For Latsego and some of the other men, securing money to provide may result in turning to crime. Whereas, for Elijah and James, their families 'understood' that they were actively seeking work and were prepared to be patient during this process. For financial reasons, Elijah's family live in the rural area in Mpumalanga where it was

less expensive to survive, while he continues to seek work in the township. Finding a job was his priority:

> *"For me I can say right now, at the moment, what I'm thinking [is] about to create the job…to put the money on the table, to support a family. That's my vision for right now... Because, for at the moment I need a job".*

The anxiety of being out of work and not being able to provide continues throughout a man's life, as Paul explained when discussing his father's experience of retirement:

> *"And he always come to me to say 'Hey Paul, I still wake up in the morning and not doing nothing. And then that thing that bothered me a lot because I feel like I'm not man enough, I'm not providing for my family'".*

For the men, the role of provider extends beyond a man's life. Abel discussed the need to provide for his children's future so that they could grow up experiencing a better life than he did:

> *"money can sustain my family even though I am no longer here in the world, If I'm dead, I've got money [and] my children won't suffer".*

One of the key areas of discontent for men is their reduced capacity to provide for the cultural demands of *ilobolo* (bridewealth), or *lobola* as the men in the research called it, which is a common phenomenon throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Jeffrey 2010). The ways in which this is experienced and the implications for masculinity in the township context is discussed below.

7.3.3   Providing for *lobola*

As previously noted, circumcision through a traditional process is recognised as a first phase of the transition to manhood. It is not until the man has negotiated and paid for *lobola*, has had children and acquired a homestead that he can be identified

and respected as a man who could become the head of his homestead. As Hunter (2010:2) explains, the "gravitas", that is, the importance of *lobola* in black South African society, should not be underestimated. He finds that "[i]ndeed to dismiss *ilobolo* as simply a patriarchal tradition or a sign of the commodification of relationships (i.e., a bribe) is to miss the way it marks respectability…" as a defining expectation of manhood (ibid.). Today, the issue of *lobola* remains controversial, as evidenced throughout conversations with men in Alexandra. Despite the controversy and the accompanying pressures that men allude to in trying to secure the increasing costs of *lobola* payments, the men in Alexandra remain overwhelmingly committed to the continuation of the tradition that solidifies men's provider status: "*Yes, yes. lobola is a matter of must*", as John and the others insisted. From discussions with participants directly engaged in the research and random conversations in shops, on the street, at the railway station, taxi ranks and in local taxis, it transpired that men unanimously support the continuation of the practice. For those men who claim to be indifferent about the tradition, such as Tihokomela, the social pressure to provide supersedes his aspirations to modernise the practice:

> *"If it's necessary. If the family wants it, ok. If they do, I'll have to. Coz I can't force you to practise a culture which you don't believe in".*

With increasing migration to urban areas, wage earning became a dominant marker of masculinity and signalled young men's independence (Carton 2001, Hunter 2010). Cash payments became the new mode of *lobola* transaction, and indeed some of the men in the research indicated that bank transfers were increasingly becoming the popular medium of exchange in contemporary South African society. The capacity to provide *lobola* signals a man's commitment and capacity to provide for his prospective wife, linking 'love' with material provision, which Hunter (2010:37) terms "provider love".

In contemporary South Africa, as women have greater access to education and employment, the negotiations around *lobola* can be significant and can take many years to accumulate, if at all. When I visited the rural home of one of the men from the early focus groups discussions, he talked about the current negotiations that he was engaged in for the *lobola* for his younger sister. With a degree and career in engineering, and her future husband a recently qualified (albeit unemployed) architect, *lobola* negotiations were averaging at R65,000 (around £3,500), an enormous amount for rural based families. Similarly, whilst travelling in a local taxi in Alexandra township, I experienced the pressure of the taxi driver, a Zulu man, who was struggling to secure the *lobola* payment for his girlfriend, a woman who was working in an advertising agency and who commanded a *lobola* payment of R40,000 (£2,200), which he was desperate to secure before "some other man take her". For James, securing *lobola* for his longstanding girlfriend and to be able to marry and live together is beyond his immediate reach.

Many of the men were disgruntled with the increasing commercialisation of the practice of *lobola,* which they viewed as the receiving family's greed for material benefits. Tihokomela talked of the competition between young women, their families and the community regarding payments for *lobola,* which reflected on the man's social status and positionality within society. The more a man paid, the greater his social and cultural status and his respectability. Another dimension that was discussed surrounded the inequalities within the gendered dimensions of the practice of *lobola,* with concerns focused on the injustice of repaying a family for a girl's education, despite a man's own educational achievements. This rationalisation is indicative of the ways in which *lobola* may evolve and mutate in the future, as Tihokomela demonstrates below:

> *"Let's say you get lobola. There's one thing that people are gonna look at: what did that girl's family receive as payment? That's also part of your*

> *status. Let's see how it's gonna look in the community. Let's say there's 2*
> *girls getting married and there's lobola to be paid. One gets 150,000 one*
> *gets 3,000. What does it say about that other girl? And I'm not gonna take*
> *into consideration that the girl is educated. I'm educated also. My parents*
> *paid my school fees. You can't expect me to come repay the school fees*
> *that you paid for your girl. She's your daughter, it's not my responsibility. You*
> *brought her into this world. I'm gonna tell that fact to my uncles. When they*
> *go for lobola, education is not something they should take into consideration.*
> *Ah-ah. I went to school also. She's not marrying someone who's dumb."*

The high and rising rates of unemployment, women's socioeconomic 'freedom' and
the evolving commercial and individual nature of *lobola* in contemporary society is
placing increasing pressure on young men, who want to get married but at the same
time desperately want to satisfy and maintain both the requirements of their
tradition. Without *lobola*, a relationship is not traditionally recognised and for a man,
the implications of this are immense. Not only is the payment of *lobola* an indicator
of a man's respectability, it fulfils his social and cultural obligations and affirms his
masculine positionality within a society. An example of men's respectability in
contrast to women was discussed by Latsego, who demonstrates the essential
linkages of *lobola* to gendered norms and roles, the wider social and cultural
expectations associated with these and men's (and women's) subjectivities and
their understandings of their social identities:

> *"She sometimes tells me 'now, you know, when I'm here Latsego. Please*
> *don't expect me to do much for you, like in terms of ironing, in terms of*
> *washing, in terms of cleaning. I mean in my culture, I'll be insulting or spitting*
> *in the face of my people if I have to do that without you following the right*
> *procedure, which is to lobola me in order for me to qualify to do those things*
> *for you'".*

No longer supported by the family in financing *loblola* payments, men are increasingly feeling pressured into sourcing the required capital alone. The ways in which *lobola* has evolved over the years, the modern interpretations and associated rising costs (perceived or real) is a primary source of dissatisfaction among the men that I met in Alexandra township. The realities of unemployment, low wages and insecure work imparts a sense of failure to fulfil their roles as men. Morrell and Richter (2006:7) called these "men without *amandla*, men without power, diminished men". This concept of powerlessness in the context of changing socioeconomic experiences for men in contemporary Alexandra society is interesting, in particular since much of the focus on gender relations and inequality is firmly rooted in men's power positionality over women and other subordinate groups. Yet, what Latsego's quote above also demonstrates is women's agency in renegotiating intimate relationships, facilitated by traditional notions of gender norms.

Directly linked to *lobola* and a key defining characteristic of a respectable masculinity is marriage. The men in the research identified marriage as a key objective for their future, as James confirmed: *"Marriage is the first priority … to be recognised in the society and community as a couple".* Despite the link with marriage and male social and role identities, rates of marriage among black Africans in South Africa remain low and are declining (see Hunter 2006, 2010, Morrell et al, 2012). Recent research linking *lobola* and marriage, reported that over half of men interviewed cited their inability to secure *lobola* as a reason for co-habiting and not getting married, potentially explaining the low and decreasing rates of marriage in South Africa (see Posel et al 2011, Posel and Rudwick 2013, 2014).

The reality of men's capacity to provide for *lobola* is increasingly becoming more complex. For Abel, who was finally achieving his dream of becoming a father with the pregnancy of his new girlfriend, the reality of not paying for *lobola* meant that he was unable to visit her in her village in Mpumalanga and could not be present at the

birth of his child. As he explained, *"We blacks we are living according to the tradition… they won't allow me to sleep there except I pay the lobola".* An added difficulty is the recognition and rights of children to a father's lineage, which is secured through the payment of *lobola*, as outlined by Abel: "*You can marry without the parents knowing, here at the court [for example]. But, traditionally… a child has no family… does not inherit the father's lineage, because the lobola says that child is mine".*

For two of the men in the research, a successful *lobola* payment and marriage had been possible, leaving them with a huge sense of achievement that they could observe their social role. The respect that this commanded was obvious within group discussions. When Kabelo, for example, realised that Elijah was traditionally married and had four children, the way he greeted, addressed and referred to Elijah altered throughout subsequent meetings. He was addressed as a man with seniority and respect, demonstrating the social importance for men to fulfil traditional male roles.

With the escalating complexities needed to procure the required *lobola*, the decreases in marriage rates along with the realities of single parenthood and absent fathers, has evolved into a requirement that men should contribute to *damages* for 'impregnating' a girl/woman to acknowledge the child as his own. The costs associated with providing for are lower than *lobola,* and enables a man to limited rights to his child, such as lineage and to be viewed as aspiring to the provider role.

7.3.4   Providing for *damages*

Due to the rise in the prevalence of premarital pregnancies in recent years, along with the difficulties in providing for *lobola* payments, men have been increasingly unable to secure the lineage of their child/ren. With the introduction of the payment of *damages* (*inhlawulo* in isiZulu) to the mother's family, a man is now able to claim

some rights to his child(ren) and for them to inherit their father's name although it does not permit the child to live with the father, as in James' situation. For James, saving for *lobola* was beyond his immediate reach and he saw this as secondary to ensuring that his young son would be able to recognise him as his father, since he himself did not know his. His son was four years of age before he was able to pay for *damages*, which was provided for by James's mother. Once *damages* were secured, his son was able to be introduced to his family in KwaZulu Natal and remain with the paternal grandmother.

Recent research indicates that the expectation of providing *damages* may be weakening, as young mothers are increasingly accepting the surnames of the child's father without the payment of *damages* (see Hunter 2010, Posel and Rudwick 2014). Another explanation for this may be the intensified government action in enforcing the formal maintenance grant (child support) payments that men are expected to pay to the mother of their children. ADAPT staff working with men in prisons cited defaulting payments of maintenance grants as one of the main reasons for men being sent to prison. Discussions around the maintenance grant were often heated, demonstrating dissatisfaction among about payment of maintenance money direct to the mother, whereas payment of *damages* as a cultural demand was preferable. However, men's subjective understandings and internalising of the social expectations of *damages,* indicates its continued association with masculine norms, obligations and respectability.

Both the provision of *damages* and the culturally anticipated requirements of *lobola* fulfil the respectability of men's provider roles and confirms the expectations of this role as inextricably linked with materiality. It also relates with the 'man pain' that many of the men discussed, as associated with the challenges of men's provider role in increasingly uncertain socioeconomic settings.

Linked with men's social identities is the social role of fatherhood. Becoming a father in contemporary Alexandra continues to elevate a man's social status and contribute to his respectability. It also compounds the demands and stresses of the provider role. While this was confirmed in my own field research, the focus of much of the men's narratives was the man pain associated with the absence of their own fathers in their lives and the ways in which this lack of recognition from a 'male figure' impacts on how they experience their masculine and social identities.

7.3.5   Father as a marker of respectable manhood

"My father got pride. He will show off his children". Abel's quote demonstrates how having children was referred to as accentuating and fulfilling the obligations of manhood, regardless of the reality that Abel did not live with his father or that his father did not provide for him. This idea of manhood, seen in terms of impregnation and having 'many' children is promoted within a dominant form of masculinity in Alexandra. During pre- and early colonial periods in KwaZulu, fatherhood was associated with a man's socially defined role of building a 'successful' homestead (Hunter 2006). During this time, the demand for agricultural labour was supplied by children and therefore the more children a father had, the greater the availability of labour to work on the land. This ensured respectability within the household and community and confirmed the man's status as the head of his homestead. The reality of migration to urban areas mutated this role, although there remains the continued expectation of men to father children as a demonstration of their masculinity. While this makes a man a biological father, however, it does not as Morrell (2008) states, necessarily qualify him for the social role of father*hood* which considers the wider associated relationships and responsibilities and the man's choice to be a father (Richter and Morrell 2006). While some fathers were absent in the lives of their children, some would at least acknowledge them despite not being actively engaged in their lives. Abel's father is an example of this: while he had

fathered many children, and had acknowledged some of them, this remained the extent of his engagement and therefore he could not be seen as fulfilling the wider social role of fatherhood.

The issue of the relationship between fatherhood and masculinity is "a complex subject", since they are often defined within kinship ties decided upon by elders in an environment where "not all men *accept* the role of fatherhood" (Morrell 2001:14, my emphasis; see also Richter and Morrell 2006). Abel, for example, did not accept the role of father for his stepchildren, since *"they are not my children".* Abel's narrative was clear in this dimension. When I re-interviewed him about his future with his new girlfriend, he talked of the need to disassociate himself from her children. Abel was not prepared to take on the responsibility of his girlfriend's children and he did not want them to "*have my house",* by which he meant that he would not acknowledge these children as his own and they would not have his 'name'. This, he recognised, would all need to be negotiated and agreed upon according to tradition:

> *"The family has to decide [who has the children] …Then there is a part of the uncles there. They are the one who should say we are marrying the girl with the children or we are marrying the girl only, the girl with our own child. That will be negotiated during the lobola. Is not just I'm going to marry her then I must take the child and give them my surname. No, no, no, no. They've got their surname. They've got their father. They know their father …and they know their father's surname".*

Being a father is translated and accepted in different ways according to different contexts. For the men in Alexandra, the role of a father was seen in terms of an economic 'provider' role: *"[f]athers are like money cows",* Boipelo describes. Boipelo talked incessantly about growing up in a single parent family, brought up by his mother and lacking in contact with his father. He attributes his poverty and absence

of opportunities in life as the result of his father not taking responsibility (providing) for him. Perhaps, had his father been around, *"things may have been different"*. Research shows that the masculine role of provider has been defined and interpreted by, and inextricably linked to, material rather than emotional involvement (Bhana and Nkani 2014, Shefer et al, 2010). The realities of the hardships and spatial limitations of township living, supports an environment where male involvement in familial affairs is statistically low or non-existent (Campbell 1990, Hunter 2010, Morrell 2001, Richter and Morrell 2006). For many men in township contexts, poverty and unemployment are seen as the primary factors that negatively impact on their capacity to fulfil their obligations and social expectations of the father as provider and protector. What is interesting is that, while all of the men I talked with were clear about the unique role of a father to provide and protect, their narratives revealed that for many of these men, their mothers or grandmothers were the primary caregivers, heads of households and providers. This was observed, yet rarely acknowledged by the men, since it is not considered to be an agreed female social and cultural role.

Many of the men talked of having fathers who were either temporarily or permanently absent, not knowing their father at all, or having fathers at home who were emotionally absent. James' father for example, left when he was a young boy and migrated to the urban area. He described growing up without his father as distressing for him. James was particularly preoccupied in discussing his overwhelming need for his biological father to recognise him, or to simply "*know that he is alive",* so that James could accept himself, his life and carry on with his future. Without his father's acknowledgement, James felt that he was misguided in life and unable to plan for his future. He felt vulnerable to 'witchcraft' and thought of himself as lacking in his social identity as a man in his community. Through a translator, James discusses the impact of not having a father in his life:

> *"He still needs his father even though he is a father himself. For guidance around being a parent and to help him perform cultural and ancestral roles, because you can't do that without a parent. You need your father to guide you, because your father knows what to say, which words to choose, how to go about doing the rituals…He needs his father because the only way they are going to use witchcraft, the only way it will be successful, is if we have no parent and you are on your own…For example, since he does not have contact with his dad, whoever wants to do anything miserable or wants to use magic can easily do so…He just needs his father to play his part…. He just needs him to know him, because he's the one who gave him life. And he just wants to know for instance, if he happens to die, where should his final resting place be?... So, it becomes difficult for him to prosper in life".*

Each of James's interviews were dominated by discussions that focused on feelings of loss, isolation and lack of identity as a result of being unable to reconnect with his father since his early childhood. Each attempt I made to circumvent the issue would always return to his absent father and the repercussions of not being acknowledged by him. James explained that he found it difficult to move on with his life as a "*chapter is left unclosed*". Without this acknowledgment, James described how he is unable to participate in traditional rituals. Culturally, James feels that he has no identity, which becomes an issue for him bringing up his own children in the future and partaking in ceremonies such as funerals. Locating absent fathers, then, is something that many young men in particular, will endeavour to undertake. Regular calls for individual searches within the local newspaper, the *Alex News* and on the paper's Facebook page, are evidence of this continuing need.

The men talked about how they felt that, without their father's present in their lives, they lacked leadership and direction in preparing them for their role as men. The fact that the label *parent* was associated with father, is an indication of the expected

social role of the man in relation to his family. There appeared to be a deep sense of uncertainty or confusion in how to move on in life and the perception that only a father could fill this gap, as Paul explained:

> *"I think in the absence of a father you grow up a bit confused. Because there is always a question, when you see somebody with their fathers you ask yourself 'what about me? Where is my father?' … You try to look around for a role model. And when you don't find one, what do you do? …So, I think there's a lot of confusion and the longing of having them. And when they are not there you become desperate".*

Likewise, in terms of fatherhood, only two of the men in their life history narratives could recall their fathers being present in their lives, which they regarded as having a positive impact on their future. For Aaron, memories of his father indicated that he was a provider and protector *"all round".* He fondly remembers how his father was "*present*" in his life to give him direction, advice, a sense of belonging, in addition to fulfilling some of the more caring social roles traditionally reserved for women, such as cooking and cleaning. Aaron recalled that:

> *"He took very good care of me. He let me receive better education until I reach where I am today. Because even when he died, he died having planted a seed of prosperity in me. He was so caring because he was the one who was cooking. He was the one who was washing my clothes, my school uniforms, ironing them so that I could go to school neatly. You understand? And he could provide me everything I wanted by the moment…"*

Elijah also referred to his father as a friend and someone who provided advice and direction. He described his father as a "role model*… [t]eaching me how to behave*

and also the attitude of how to change", a quality that James was so desperately seeking from the person he considered to be his father.

7.4   Conclusion

Men's experiences and subjectivities significantly map out the ways in which urban masculinities have been shaped over time. Alexandra township's historical context has facilitated perceptions of a prevailing Zuluness linked with ideals of warrior strength and virility, which have influenced on how men shape their urban identities. Perceptions of this dominating masculinity and its associated traits forms a hegemonic masculine norm that establishes the core social and cultural norms and expectations of an idealised manhood within Alexandra. The key characteristics of this masculine norm are typified through the key social values of reputation and respectability, realised through the social roles of protector, provider and head of the household. In contemporary South Africa, this dominant warrior form is promoted and maintained through the symbolism and representation of President Jacob Zuma, along with the militarism of the struggle endorsed through the EFF leader Julius Malema, which is in direct conflict with the more modern masculinities encouraged by former presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki.

Critically, living up to the ideals of a hegemonic masculinity and its associated social and cultural demands is not a fulfilling experience for all men. Today, South Africa's political agenda for gender equality, alongside the realities of unemployment and poverty for black men in townships, are claimed to be destabilising men's traditional social roles and diminishing their capacities to fulfil these expected roles. While these roles and norms continue to be linked to a material base in increasingly complex economic conditions, men will fail in delivering on these roles. This further aggravates the pressures or 'man pain' that men are increasingly describing. Within the confines of social and cultural norms and expectations, men are struggling with

change that continues to align to traditional ideologies that further burden expectations of masculinity.

However, change in South Africa since 1994 has enabled opportunities for men to engage with issues of masculinity. Changing social and political contexts have facilitated the ways in which men have evolved and mutated their masculinities over time, confirming its flexibility and fluidity and the multiplicity of masculine identities. This is also evidenced in the ways in which men in Alexandra township are beginning to reconsider their understandings of masculinity and seeking to redefine who they are as men. Democracy, Mandela and an equality agenda have created space for individual men to reflect on their own interpretations of masculinity and to reconsider the ways in which they can reconstruct their masculinities within the context of their lives. This is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8   'PAUSING' MASCULINITIES

8.1   Introduction

In contemporary South Africa, where an equality agenda is constitutionally enshrined, there is evidence to suggest that some men are in a process of reflecting on their masculinities and contemplating alternative ways of being a man, although at the same time are unsure how to effect those changes. In this chapter, I consider masculinities in transition through the experiences of those men who are actively exploring and redefining the ways in which they can reinterpret and renegotiate their masculinities. Critically, this has included a process of self-reflection as men contemplate their lives, relationships and identities. This includes for example, exploring how the equality agenda in South Africa (referred to as "50/50" by the men) translates into their everyday lives and their identities as men. How do/can men renegotiate their masculinities alongside established traditional and cultural ideologies of manhood that remain firmly aligned to patriarchal values and norms? Important to understand in this reflective process are the challenges that men may encounter during their transitional process, both through their own internal self-reflection and external pressures from other men, women and the wider society. Some men in South Africa are taking on the challenge to change and are working through the specificities of how/where they 'fit' as men in society, despite the absence of a benchmark or clear models that redefine and guide what change means for men or how to respond to it.

Beginning with Abel's narrative, I demonstrate the complexities of change for men and illustrate some of the contextual and situational challenges that men face in their attempts to evolve their masculinities and transform their masculine identities. Abel's life reveals the ongoing efforts to redefine and transition his masculinity and

social positionality in conflicting and challenging environments. His narrative also demonstrates the multiple identities that he adopts in diverse situational contexts. Also, and critically, despite the restrictions Abel's life story shows his continuing determination to 'be a better man'.

8.2   The struggle to renegotiate the parameters of masculinity

8.2.1   Envisioning change

For much of his life, Abel has been a member and gang leader of a local street gang. While this gained him the respect of others in the township, through fear and violence, at the same time he realises that this life was unfulfilling and distancing him from his future aspirations. It also instilled fear in him personally. As I have previously discussed, for many young people, gang membership is often viewed as the only option for survival:

> *"…when you are gangster it is respect because [people] are scared of you. Even gangsters, if they see that you are not scared, then they won't respect you [as a gang member] … As member of the gangster you don't enjoy life. Always, you are afraid of maybe tomorrow I'll be dead…You don't live your dream…"*

A key turning point in Abel's life was when he was detained as a "political prisoner" for fourteen months. He vowed that on his release he would change and become "a better man", leaving his life of crime and settling down to family life. When he left prison, Abel moved out of Alexandra and relocated to Braamfischer, near to Soweto township. Initially, Abel survived as a street hawker selling a variety of foods and clothes. However, he soon realised that this was unsustainable and subsequently reverted to crime, earning money by dealing in drugs. Realising the escalating 'hidden' costs of paying bribes to the police to overlook his illegal activities and

understanding that this life was undermining his 'dreams', Abel decided to return to Alexandra to live with his mother. For a short time, he worked in a Spaza shop, but once more he found that he could not sustain himself, or expect to be able provide for the wife and family that he wanted, given the meagre earnings from this work. So once again, Abel returned to crime, gang violence, alcohol and drugs.

Yet, Abel desperately wanted to get married, to settle down and to have a family that he could care for, protect and provide for, all which seem beyond his immediate reach. Like many of his other comrades who were committed to the struggle for liberation and who sacrificed their education to fight for freedom, at 40 years of age and unskilled with a criminal record, Abel's employment options are limited, thwarting his capacity to be 'a man' and to achieve his 'dreams':

> *"…I am no longer useful. But I can still work. I've sent CVs to many companies, but I am too old. They want [those] who must be under 35…I am getting too old now. I am a man. I want to settle down…[have] at least 2 children…be a caring and protective husband...Make sure my child is going to have a proper education…"*

While in Alexandra, Abel volunteered for 16 hours a month as a peer counsellor with the HIV and AIDS community organisation 'Lifeline'. It was during this time that he came across the local NGO 'Men as Partners' and began to reflect on his life. He was invited to attend a workshop that he recalled was entitled, "What Men Must Do", and that event re-energised his hopes of turning his life around. Abel explained that at this workshop he began to envision that by "*being a good man*" he would earn the respect that he had being trying to achieve. This gave him hope for a better future:

> "*I got [a] vision that if I can live according to these guys, then no-one will point a finger at me…They will respect me…If you leading a good life, they*

> *still respect you. Take you as a role model. They will even bring their*
>
> *children to you".*

Noteworthy in Abel's narrative is his redefining of the concept of masculine respect, which for him, has evolved from respect earned by force, to one based on '*leading a good life'*. Abel was unhappy and disillusioned by a life of crime and violence and was able to reconsider alternative ways of transitioning his masculinity. Abel's experience also signifies the positive impact of talk-based gender transformative workshops that are being facilitated at the community level.

In April 2013, his hours at LifeLine were reduced and Abel resigned. He was once again at a crossroads. He had no job, no money and no 'steady' girlfriend, which diminished his hopes of marriage, fatherhood and respectability. He made the decision to reflect on his life and contemplate the necessary changes required for his future. He expressed the freedom he felt in having made this decision:

> *"…I just told my mum, 'me, I'm going to Braamfischer. I'm going to think*
>
> *what I'm going to do'. I felt free...Coz now I'm on my own, everything I'm*
>
> *thinking. Coz when you are sitting alone, you can start to know that what*
>
> *went wrong. What can I do next?"*

For Abel, the solitude of moving out of Alexandra and the anonymity and freedom that this presented, facilitated a reflective space to reconsider his life's journey, to contemplate his future and what this means for transitioning his masculine identity.

Abel once again returned to Braamfischer and subsequently reconnected with a childhood female friend in a chance meeting at the local 'burial society' (a local, community 'savings club' for one's own funeral). The two began an intimate relationship and his girlfriend became pregnant. The news of the pregnancy transformed Abel's life and hopes for his future. His dreams of getting married, having children, being a good father and husband and creating a home, all now

seemed possible. The prospect of this dream manifesting gave him new vigour in realising his long-term goal to carve out an identity within local politics and he began to negotiate membership of the newly formed Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) political party:

> *"…I'm going to be a member of the political party, like I said. I'm going to join Julius Malema...And I've got what is needed there…It won't be easy…It's a new experience, new people".*

Abel secured a position within the EFF in Braamfischer at the local government level. He talked animatedly about how his dreams were beginning to take shape and how this new transition would ensure that his child(ren) would have a better life than he did. He resolved to be a better, more "caring and protective", father and talked about the necessities, challenges and dreams in fulfilling this responsibility.

At the same time, Abel was all too clear about the need to satisfy the traditional, cultural and societal requirements of a respectable masculinity such as paying *lobola*, to secure his children's lineage and provide a homestead, so that his child(ren) do not "feel any pain". Abel demonstrated an evolving masculinity that sought not only to protect and provide, but to become a 'new' and 'better' man who cares for and loves his family, and seeks happiness in their lives. Here, Abel is renegotiating an alternative masculinity that would co-exist alongside his interpretations of the social and cultural definitions and expectations of masculinity. In renegotiating a new masculine identity, Abel talked about his dreams of taking his child 'everywhere' and wanting to 'see the sea', to go 'camping' and attend 'festivals', being the father that he wishes his own could have been. Abel's narrative speaks of the lack of love growing up as a child and the need to display love as a father. The concept of freedom is therefore viewed in terms of liberating masculinity and of realising his dreams and aspirations – the freedom that he believed he had struggled for:

"…I will settle for lobola. I have to…because the lobola says that child is mine... I want him to live a happy life…I don't want him or her to grow like I grow…I would like to walk with him, take him to stadium, ask him anything. My father didn't ask me anything or what I would like to participate in...I want my children to live the way I wanted to live when I was young. To have your own freedom of doing what and what, to come and ask me to share my experience with them".

Hopes of travelling with family were referred to by several of the other men I interacted with. Some talked of foreign travel, yet most talked of travelling around South Africa, particularly to the coast. The context of poverty for many township residents often diminishes the capacity to travel further than the next township. Even those with rural connections do not earn enough to return to their village more than once per year. The 'dream' of travelling reveals the restricted lifestyles enforced on individuals under apartheid along with the realities of township living and economic disadvantage. Life in a township, as Abel and other men pointed out, is primarily concentrated at the house/shack, or on the street:

"Since in my life I never see the sea… I always been in Soweto, Alexandra. Alexandra, Soweto. I thought myself, I won't go to Durban or Cape… But since now I'm going to have a child I'm going to take him everywhere. The whole country…For travel, because for camping…I'm going to take her for picnic…I never go with my father to picnic or my mother to picnic…When we do something we have at the house. Everything started there ended there".

Abel understood that realising his dreams of employment, fatherhood, marriage and providing a home for his family would enable him to fulfil the traditional obligations of manhood expected of men in Alexandra township and importantly, bestow on him the social authority to encourage others:

> *"Because every time when I was with my friends here at Alexandra and*
>
> *Soweto, all my friends got children…If the topic can come, 'I say no, no, no,*
>
> *guys you're not treating that boy well'. They'll just say, 'How do you know*
>
> *about children coz you don't' have children, this the way children should be'.*
>
> *Now since I'm going to have my own children, I will tell them, 'guys, this is*
>
> *how to treat the child. This is my child. Ice-cream? This is how to treat the*
>
> *child".*

What is clear from Abel's narrative is what bell hooks calls the "*will* to change" (hooks 2004:15, emphasis added) and the contextual difficulties that frustrate those efforts, including unemployment, poverty, social expectations, masculine norms and political and socioeconomic constraints. News of Abel's impending fatherhood status met many of the ascribed gender social norms expected of men in the community, but also added pressure to Abel's life. While he was a local counsellor with the EFF in Braamfischer, he remained without a salaried position. In addition, he did not have the means of providing the necessary *lobola* to be culturally recognised as the father of his child. Traditional, socially defined expectations of manhood obstructed Abel's capacity and his dreams of being a caring father. Yet, what is critical is Abel's awareness of his choices and opportunities which continued to animate his quest to become a "*better man".* In the next section, I discuss some of the agentic challenges that men experience in attempting to transition their masculinities.

8.2.2   Transitional struggles

During a process of transition and change, men can experience confusion or challenges to their masculinities. The ways in which men are encouraged to seek alternative ways of being a man may be influenced by the constraints of traditional ideologies and social expectations and the conflicting values of manhood from a

political agenda that seeks gender equality. This is evident in societies like South

Africa, which have socially defined and monitored traditional gender norms and

roles that continue to be valued and promoted in contemporary settings.

Perceptions among some men in Alexandra show that the political transition to

democracy and the equality measures that have since been initiated have facilitated

shifts, or challenges to the established gender order and gender relations within

Alexandra. In group discussions, the implications of "50/50" were viewed by the men

as primarily benefitting women. One focus group discussion reflected the

frustrations faced by some men in aligning to an equality agenda:

> *"… In South Africa, most of the things are for women. Take a girl-child to*
>
> *school. They don't say take the children to school, they say take the girl-child*
>
> *to school. They don't take nothing about boys. Go around Alex, most of the*
>
> *CWP [Community Works Programme] jobs created by the government, most*
>
> *working there are women…In our Constitution, when we are talking about*
>
> *rights, everyone is equal and free, but women's rights are above men. Also*
>
> *like women, men need help and the right to be heard".*

An equality discourse in the context of continuing economic deprivation and social

and cultural restrictions feed into men's subjectivities and the ways in which they

internalise perceptions and prescriptions of societal change. For some men aligning

to the patriarchal expectations of a hegemonic masculinity creates 'man pain' and

instead they explore different ways of being a man within this context. The "50/50"

(equality) agenda introduced with the democratic political transition, along with the

'new man' profile that the late ANC leader and South African President Nelson

Mandela symbolised, provides an opportunity for men to reflect on the wider

expectations of manhood and their individual positionality in relation to it. Many of

the men I interacted with agreed that changing definitions of masculinity was

necessary, but argued that the specificities of how this impacts on their lives and

relationships has not been "*well introduced*" and there is "*need to get information*", as Paul explained:

> "*…the New South Africa demands something…There is nothing wrong about our new South Africa and all the legislation that have been introduced. The unfortunate part is, it just came as a bang. After democracy, the legislation was introduced to us. Human Rights were introduced to us. Everyone [is] starting to realise that we have rights. Especially women. And some of them took it, misunderstood that rights and they abused it. And to us men, it's difficult because we never given enough time to adjust. I wake up in the morning and there's these rights of a woman. They have rights to work, which was never there. They have a right to education, which was not there. Women were expected to stay at home. Do house chores, bear children, raise them. Then when it happened she needs to go to school, she needs to go to work, and as a husband I have to face that challenge now*".

Recognising this mixed messaging is critical to understanding the tensions that men are experiencing between the cultural and social definitions and expectations of manhood steeped in a patriarchal ideology, on the one hand contrasted with the political message of equality for men and women, on the other. Elijah demonstrated this confusion as he attempted to clarify his interpretation of "50/50" and the ambiguities of defining a 'new' masculinity:

> "*The gender equality is like 50/50. People they don't understand the Bill of Rights, what [it] means. The Bill of Rights is talking about discrimination at work. Not at home. At home, the rules stay there. You don't change any rules*".

Despite men's frustrations with the continuing material demands on them, they recognise that an equality agenda impacts on both men's and women's social roles and as a consequence, the need for both to adapt to change, as Boipelo outlined:

> *"…when I grew up we were always taught that you need to be the head of the family. You need to be the one who'll be doing the providing. But in reality, now our girlfriends, our women, they are sharing the same dreams that we are having. She won't dream to be just a housewife. And maybe I won't want someone who'll say, 'no, don't worry I will stay home and look after children'. I'll want someone who I'll be able to be equal with. So now is an opportunity to share".*

The challenges remain in men's interpretations of how change impacts on their masculinities and the ways in which they feel that they are free to redefine and renegotiate the parameters of change in transitioning their masculine identities. There are many men who are "awakening" (hooks 2004:122) to the evolving realities of gender equality, including in South Africa. While a man may desire to change, it may not be acceptable within the confines of the traditional social and cultural expectations of that society. This is demonstrated in the next section through the narratives of Kabelo and Tihokomela.

8.3   Renegotiating tradition in contemporary Alexandra

The ambiguities of social and cultural expectations, which conflict with political mandates for gender equality are acutely evident among young men in Alexandra township. The younger men I interacted with talked about their frustration that, to be accepted as 'real' men in contemporary Alexandra, they are required to comply with the essential elements of the traditional and cultural expectations of manhood. This is apparent in Kabelo's experience of male circumcision. Born and raised in Alexandra, Kabelo is described by the other men as a generation of 'born frees',

young urban men raised in a political environment that promotes gender equality. Kabelo opted not to 'go to the mountain' as is expected from his Ndebele culture, instead making the 'modern' choice to be circumcised at a local Alexandra clinic. However, his future as a man, hinges on the omission of this single life event. Having not been circumcised in 'the traditional way' he is not recognised as a man in his cultural context, which complicates his future capacity to engage in social and cultural practises and rituals such as, for example, *lobola*. Kabelo has spent much time contemplating bypassing the necessary requirements of cultural ceremonies such as *lobola* negotiations and marriage, by "gathering up the stories" of other men's experiences. This, he feels, will provide him with the necessary information to fulfil his cultural requirements. While having initial "*regrets*" of dishonouring his "*uncle's name, my family name, my status in the village*", Kabelo has survived the social stigma. He asserted that *"I was still me"* and through a variety of support structures could move on with his life:

> *"…through prayer, talking with counsellors, my mentors, role models, I finally got over it. I realised I'm still a man. It doesn't make any difference the duties are still the same. The same guy who went to the mountains still has to get a job".*

What is interesting in Kabelo's narrative is his separation of the ritual of manhood from the expected social roles for men in traditional societies, primarily that of the provider role. For Kabelo, one can only be a man if he can provide. Kabelo's experience once again demonstrates the effectiveness of external interventions in men's transitional journeys.

Tihokomela also talked of his disillusionment with the traditional custom of 'going to the mountain' in which young Pedi boys can transition to manhood. At 12 years of age, Tihokomela 'chose' to be circumcised at 'the mountain' to fulfil his 'curiosity' and the expectations of his Pedi culture:

> *"… I made that choice. I don't know, maybe like every time I went to Limpopo, there's this thing…if you don't go to the mountains it's like…you're not man enough. Like maybe it was instilled in me, but I don't know how. I just made this decision that I wanna go there".*

While Tihokomela was initiated in 'the traditional way' he observed that nothing in his life had changed. He did not believe in the ancestral convictions of his elders and had a distaste for the continuing gender prejudice that is perpetuated in initiation ceremonies:

> *"…I was still me, there was nothing. All those values about respect, how a man is supposed to [behave], I knew that already… I don't believe in ancestors and that some other stuff… I don't believe that someone who died a long time ago is gonna help me pass my Matric, or gonna help me get a job. Like I believe that everything that's coming to me I have to work for it…and with initiation school, there's still that sexist mind that's still there that, 'Yeah, I'm a man, ah'…it's part of culture. Sexism is deep also, it's rooted… it's hard to remove that thing…"*

Tihokomela's narrative highlights the vulnerability of his 'choice' concerning his decision to go for traditional circumcision. Also revealing is the changing nature of young men's understandings of the role of tradition in dictating masculine values and gender norms.

However, unlike Kabelo, having fulfilled the expectations of a traditional initiation ceremony Tihokomela is afforded a respect that is associated with conforming to social and cultural standards. This is despite his preference to live his life along different, more modern values. Tihokomela disassociates himself from the peer pressure and the negativity of township youth, choosing to associate with those who promote positivity and progression:

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> *"…I know who I am. I'm not gonna allow someone to define who I am…no-one is gonna just say something off the street! You don't know me. You don't live with me…I need someone who come up with something positive...Don't tell me about socialising and stuff, I don't care for this stuff".*

What is clear in the discussions with the men is their awareness of a choice to be different and a need to confront and transform their masculinities. While change that opposes traditional masculine norms may impinge on their social and cultural acceptance as men and may perhaps result in being socially stigmatised, recognising that they have a choice can free some men of the burdens or pressures of masculinity. In the next section I explore further this dimension of 'choice' in men's approaches to defining alternative ways of being a man.

8.4   Journeying to the 'real self' – reflecting on being a different man

Andrew Tolson finds that a critical factor in adapting to change is for men to have an "awareness" and to be "conscious" of the limitations of their masculinity in order to transform it (Tolson 1977:142). This requires reflecting on "the real 'self'" as Connell (1985:263) states, which incorporates understandings of the wider interconnecting contextual realities that impact on men's lives (cultural expectations, relationships, and socioeconomic and political contexts, for example) and to which they attach meaning. Roger Frie finds that this self-reflective process, or "reflective understanding", which enables "reflective action…[to] imagine and create new ways of being and acting in the world" (2008:vii). In this sense, through self-reflection, men are facilitated with the individual freedom and space to contemplate their lives and to reconsider alternative ways of defining and constructing their masculinities. Frie identifies this process as a man's "psychological agency" (ibid.). This self-reflective process was referred to by the men that I interacted with and was often

prompted by a life changing event. Boipelo called this a *pause* in his life, which is outlined below.

8.4.1   A moment of *pause* in one man's journey of self-reflection

Boipelo's *pause* was prompted by an interruption in the payment of his salary and the potential loss of his job. As funding became scarce, the organisation that he works for was unable to pay his monthly salary and offered him the opportunity to move on and look for work elsewhere. As a response, Boipelo's put his life on hold. This enabled him to reflect on his life's journey, his achievements and the challenges that he experienced along the way, which all consolidated in his determination and struggle to become a 'different man'. Boipelo talked of the stigma he had experienced growing up as an only child in a single-parent family. He felt that this was compounded by him being 'different' due to his love of the arts, dancing, singing and drama, which he felt alienated from him from his peers. In response to the humiliation that he encountered, he chose to suppress his creative desires and submit to the peer pressure to conform to the dominant definitions of township masculinity.

Referring to his *pause*, Boipelo talked about his masculine journey as a "puzzle" and discussed the difficulties that he experienced in understanding how the pieces of his life could "*fit together*" or whose responsibility it was to do so. He claimed that it wasn't until his *pause* that he understood only he could connect all the pieces. Boipelo talked about his 'consciousness' and the limitations or complications for men in effecting change. For change to happen, he needed to experience what Elijah defined as "*knowing yourself and what you want*" as a man. Below Boipelo describes this journey in his own life:

> *"My life was a puzzle…No-one would come and connect the puzzle. There's*
> *wrongs that you see [in your life], but you don't have powers to change it.*

And for you to be able to have powers to change it, maybe you need to change yourself first… I'm the one who knows it… So now I'm in me, I know me…someone different. Someone who'll make a difference in other people's life…I never wanted to be that kind of a man, aggressive, wanting people to fear me… I wanted to be on the sweeter part… I always wanted to be different... I'm not my father, I'm not my uncle. I'm not whoever.

…if you are broke, it's a very challenging and difficult thing to deal with…And those were some things that made me think to say, 'now I'm at the crossroad, I can move out and try and go look for other greener pastures. But where am I going to start? Am I going back there to the bottom? Or, I should stay on here and try to fight to move forward?' It's another learning curve for me… I paused everything. It gave me time to look at my life and look at the things that I need to do. Coz there is a lot in my life that needs to be changed…Especially through drinking, through doing all these things. And while I was pausing, I did the rewind of my life to say, 'I fought to change and now here's an obstacle'…It was a process for me to stop drinking, it was a process for me to stop smoking. It was a process for me to stop most of the things. It was a process for me to change my life around. To say, I need to see things with a different eye now… cultural upbringing, traditional upbringing, peer pressure upbringing, societal upbringing. You mix up the thinking, and then you look at the journey… through having that pause, it was things that became powerful to you...it came hard, but I was not feeling like I've failed.

…So the pause made me start looking at the place that I'm in. The kind of friends that I'm having… when days are dark, friends are few…other people will celebrate the dark. They see the downfall…So me in the battle of life I don't want to be counted in the statistics of 'there was this man'…"

Critically, Boipelo views his *pause* as a necessary process in the evolution of his masculinity, rather than a negative reflection on his manhood or social positioning. He experienced his *pause* as facilitating a period for reflection on his life and aspirations. He identified that he had a choice in his life to redefine and renegotiate his masculinity within Alexandra society, despite his situation of poverty. Boipelo also demonstrates, that the responsibility for this change was his.

Similarly, Paul, in the discussion below, talks of his "choice", his agency in becoming a different man through his decision to reject dominant masculine norms. Like Abel and Boipelo, he identifies a critical moment in his life which challenged his understandings of masculinity and created a space to reflect and reconsider alternative ways of living as a man.

8.4.2   Choosing to be a 'different man'

"Yah, maybe he never like it. He didn't say that, but the environment he grew up in, he was modelled. He was created to be this person. But deep inside in him, there was a good part of him".

Paul's quote above highlights the 'pressure' that his father experienced "*being forced into being a very strong man",* or at least the ways in which his father subjectively interpreted this role. Paul described his father as "*mostly angry*" and often absent. Like many men at the time, Paul's father migrated from Venda to Johannesburg to work in the mines. When he would return to the village, usually around the December holidays, he would remain absent and angry, choosing to spend time with friends drinking in a local tavern, rather than spending time with his children. Paul felt that it was his father's ambition for him to become as strong as he was:

"…I was the first boy in the house and he wanted to raise a man of his character…He was trying to mould me to become that man…A man who

> *don't take nonsense. A man who always defends himself, fights with people.*
>
> *He used to do that a lot…"*

It wasn't until he was faced with the prospect of going to prison for seriously assaulting a man in his local tavern, that Paul began to reflect on his life. He talked about not wanting to become the man his father was, that he was ultimately in control of his behaviour and that it was his choice to be 'good' or 'bad':

> *"Then I realise 'I'm Paul, I'm not my father'… I made a choice. I realise that the way he lives was very much traumatising. So, I don't want to do that to my kids… at the end of the day, when you grow up you can choose the path for yourselves, like what I did".*

Being aware of this choice is evident in the ways in which the men told their life stories to me. Some men talked of how they made the decision to refuse to conform to traditional male stereotypes and idealised masculine standards, despite the social and peer pressure to fit in. For Tumisang, for example, it was the love for his son and the will to be a good father that influenced his decision. For Elijah, it was almost hitting 'rock bottom' after the death of his father and internalising the need to change that caused him to then reach out for help. Some referred to my research approach as supporting the process of their self-reflection and, as Tumisang and Teboho point out, facilitating a 'safe space' for men to discuss issues pertinent to them and to elicit the support of other men experiencing similar desires for change.

For Aaron the desire to be a 'different man' was by following the role model of his father (chapter 7), who he described as non-conformist. Aaron's father assumed a caring and domestic role as a single-parent in Aaron's life, fulfilling the 'provider' role along with the more caring 'domestic' roles and, indeed, shunning public opinion:

> *"He was a different man. As just as I'm a different man… the way he treated me is the way I am doing to my daughter…he didn't care about what people*

> *said about him…he was always focusing on his mission and his vision. He*
>
> *didn't have much time to concentrate on the sayings of the community".*

Men's roles and norms and their related activities dominated group discussions. Men who chose to challenge these norms talked of the 'social stigma' that at times influenced their capacity to commit to change. Men who engaged in activities that were considered 'women's work', such as washing clothes (an example often referred to by the men), experienced peer pressure and humiliation from other men and women in the township. Some of the frustrations that men experience in their attempts at diverging from traditional male roles were articulated by Boipelo who saw no problem in undertaking 'domestic work' and yet realised that a part of the 'man pain' in his life was in coming to terms with this:

> *"People sometimes, they still challenge me when I do my own washing. To*
>
> *say, 'eh what's happening? You must get a girlfriend'. That's what they tell*
>
> *you. Society, the neighbours, women and men, the elders, the community,*
>
> *'My man you must get a wife'. It's a stereotype to say because of I'm doing*
>
> *my washing I must get a wife. And then I get the wife, it means she's going*
>
> *to do my washing?"*

Tumisang also talked about the "matter of choice" to be a stay-at-home dad while his girlfriend was the sole provider in their relationship. His desire to be a 'better father' for his two-year-old son strengthened his resolve against the peer pressure to be a traditional township man. His peers stigmatised him for "being afraid" of his girlfriend and undertaking what was considered "women's work" in what the men termed the "domestic space". Despite the peer pressure, Tumisang took pleasure in the time that he spent with his son and the relationship the two were forming, which he viewed as important regardless of whether he is a working dad or not. His narrative demonstrates a man at ease with the equality agenda in South Africa and in challenging gender norms:

> *"…to me is a matter of choice and how much you love your son and being*
>
> *with him. Even if I am working and she's working, I think it's a matter of how*
>
> *much you love your kid… I believe no matter what anyone says, if you love*
>
> *your children you gonna have that relationship with him. You're gonna do*
>
> *anything. What if my son come to me and say, 'I want you to do my washing,*
>
> *not my mum'? I can't question him. [I'll suggest] 'Ok, maybe let's do it*
>
> *together'. For me it's normal. To other people maybe I'm not man*
>
> *enough…some feel it's uncool'.*

The men discussed the implications of "50/50" on their daily lives, debating and negotiating the boundaries of the specificities of socially defined gender roles. They carefully considered the gendered divisions of labour and associated detailed tasks, debating whether they would, could or should, for example, "wash women's knickers?" After much debate, it was agreed that women could wash men's underpants, but it remained unclear if it was appropriate for men to wash women's knickers and in particular, during menstruation.

Another critical discussion focused on earnings from wages and whether men should share their salary details with their girlfriends. Revealing payslips to a woman threatened the fear of humiliation should the man be seen to earn less than she did, demonstrating his inability to provide and threatening his respectability. The nature of these discussions indicates some of the confusion experienced by men who are trying to make sense of change and the ways in which it directly impacts on who they are as men in society. It also demonstrates that men are contemplating the fundamentals of their masculinities and renegotiating a blueprint for the specific day-to-day realities of change and how masculinities are shaped in the future:

> *"…things have changed. She goes to work, I go to work…if I'm going to stay*
>
> *with her, we are gonna have to come up with a solution to say, maybe when*

> *we do the washing, we do the washing the both of us. It's a choice and it*
>
> *depends on how you are raised again. Others they feel different than that".*

For Elijah, the choice to be a different man centred on a change of "mindset" from one that thinks of "negative things" to ones that are more "positive". He outlined this as a process of "*know[ing] who you are…you must tell yourself, 'I am tired of doing wrong things, I must learn to do right'".* Elijah attributes the changes in his "*patriarchal mindset*" to a reconnection with Christianity. It was common to hear narratives about men throughout the township who had once been "bad" but had since changed due, as it was understood, to becoming a born-again Christian. This included those who had ceased drinking due to their new-found religious adherence. In recounting his life, Elijah attributed his foundational principles to his father's life lessons, which he would listen to as a child. Elijah's mother left when he was a baby and he was raised by his father, whom he describes as his role model:

> *"He was a good man. I used to talk with him all the time…he used to play*
>
> *with me. Taking his time with me…He used to teach me about how to*
>
> *become a real man... Don't do the wrong thing. Change your behaviour and*
>
> *also your attitude…When you talk to somebody, a man or a woman, try to*
>
> *humble yourself".*

When he was 15 years old Elijah's father died. This devastating experience caused *"the trauma"* as Elijah describes it, which resulted in his seeking solace through alcohol, ("*15-20 bottles [of beer] a day*") and "*other vices*", such as girlfriends and drugs. For much of his youth, Elijah was "*a man doing the wrong things*". In 2002, he "*prayed*" for change in his life and, claims that he received divine intervention through an apparition of "*Jesus*", which encouraged him to seek counselling. Counselling support and reconnecting with Christianity enabled Elijah to reflect on his life and to transform his "*mindset*". During this self-reflective process, he was able to recal his father's life lessons, which he only recently began to understand:

> *"After 1989 the trauma start eating me …Not to talk with people. I just want*
>
> *to stay alone, because sometimes people they came with the bad attitude*
>
> *that I would end up beating [them]… After 2002 I start realising that I need to*
>
> *change. I realise that no, that something I [was doing] was wrong…Before I*
>
> *start to change myself with the beer I was telling God… 'Please God, I need*
>
> *a change of my life. Can you direct me where I'm going, where I'm gonna*
>
> *start? Then Jesus come to me in a spiritual [vision]…So I went to*
>
> *counselling… is where I'm changed…"*

For Elijah, counselling support, baptism into the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), his
faith in Jesus and membership of the ADAPT Men's Forum were the factors that
encouraged and enabled him to marry, have children and attain a respected
masculinity. Elijah talked about how he understood that others now perceived him
differently:

> *"They say, 'I can see that now you will change a lot. You a ZCC member*
>
> *now…you're a good person now... They invite me. Even introduce me to his*
>
> *wife. They say, 'No this is the man I was talking you about. Look and see,*
>
> *he's changed".*

What is revealing in Elijah's narrative in his masculine transition is the
complementarity of the support and guidance that he received from counselling and
the Men's Forum, which supplemented and clarified the teachings of his faith. He
critically points out that not all churches teach "*how* to be a man", (my emphasis),
but that counselling, and the Men's Forum have been instrumental in this
dimension:

> *"I was baptised in 2007… The church is another counselling. How to*
>
> *behave. To change your attitude and also the mind. To humble yourself.*
>
> *Respect other people's views...Not to manipulate a woman. Just have one,*

not many... But some of them [priest] they just open the scripture they don't

teach anything about how to be a real man…For me, I learn here at ADAPT.

Is very important for me. It's where is easy to understand when I'm going to

the church, for when I understand the priest when they are talking…But it

takes time to understand, unless if you [are] attending a workshop. The

workshop will guide you, what must I do and what you are gonna do".

Despite unemployment and poverty, which reduced his capacity to provide for his family, Elijah managed to support his wife and 4 daughters. He regularly talked of his love for his wife and his hope that one he would earn day earn enough money to pay for a 'white wedding', the Christian marriage that they both continued to aspire to. Since it was financially unsustainable to reside together in the township, Elijah had spent many years away from his family seeking work in Alexandra while they lived in Mpumalanga (although his more recent success in finding work as a carpet fitter enabled his wife and daughters to intermittently visit him in Alexandra).

For Latsego the journey to self-awareness continues to be a difficult one. He talked graphically about the physical violence which he perpetrated against women and other men. He attributed the pain and pressure in his life on the neglect of his father during his childhood. Like Abel, Latsego would escape to the anonymity of Soweto from his gang presence in Alexandra, only to return and reconnect with the crime and violence. Latsego explained his anger at being unable to escape his life of violence and his frustration with a life of poverty. Latsego's moment of consciousness was the prospect of going to jail and the news of the death of his fellow gang members, who were shot and killed by police while hijacking a vehicle, which encouraged him to contemplate his mother's warnings that he should distance himself from crime:

"One day, my mum just got me and said, 'you know what, my child? You will

end up in jail...She said to me, 'remember your friends? Four of them are

dead. They shot them'…I should have been in that car... Those words they changed me, because those words they came back to me when I got arrested… So, I stopped it and then I end up not doing that… suddenly you grow up... No more alcohol… or wrong people. So, I end up getting out little bit…I end up not going with them".

Latsego also found solace and support in the Church, claiming that it:

"…gives me energy. If I don't go to church, sometimes I feel like weak. …when I'm from church I will see a light and say to myself 'OK, this is what I must do'... It's where I'm gonna stand up and do those things. Sometimes, when I can stay longer not going to the church, it's like I'm not going home".

While Latsego confided with me that he continued to "get angry" he discovered coping mechanisms to control his anger and remain calm. Documenting his feelings and creating a safe space, enabled and environment for self-reflection:

"Nowadays when I feel angry I watch TV, radio, games, anything, in my bedroom. I just go, close the door. Open the radio, watch the television. And I'll take a book...I put on cool music on.…Take a pen. Sit down and write…I write it down. Whatever comes inside of me. Even the questions…And tomorrow I'll read it ...If I get angry, I'll cross it [out]. I can see myself that I'm gonna kill somebody. I'll just close my door. And they know. I'll put a sign 'Please don't disturb me'…It helps me a lot".

Latsego's self-reflective journey, prompted by the prospect of prison or death has encouraged Latsego to take steps towards becoming a 'different man'. He received counselling and became a member of the Men's Forum. However, his job as a long-distance truck driver makes it difficult for him to attend regular meetings.

For many of the men, their journey to the self, involved a reflective process which began with "*knowing who you are*" and "*knowing what you want*". Attending

workshops, counselling and church practice supported this process. Ultimately, however, agentic change begins with the individual, as Elijah discussed:

> *"sometimes something you can change your life forever. But if you tell yourself what you want. Especially here in this organisation in ADAPT, sometimes people they don't know why they are here [the Men's Forum]. Because that's from your own. Change yourself before you can change other people…people they see changes".*

Boipelo, in his role as the ADAPT Men's Forum assistant coordinator, reflected on this view, noting the complexities involved in working with men towards a process of transformation. Critically, he refers to the generational challenges that he experiences and the difficulties that he sees in men's transitional processes:

> *"Even the work that I'm working on, it's difficult coz I'm working with those men…I still see the things that we want to change…It's still happening in some of the men especially the older ones to say, 'we're working on this' and because of I'm still young, I cannot challenge them personally…"*

Some of the men had engaged in training and/or had been exposed to ADAPT or other gender sensitisation programmes, which highlighted gender equality and what they referred to as "the human rights of women", along with men's roles in supporting this. These men identified themselves as "reformed" men, but it was unclear to me what this meant. For some of the men, the choice to become 'a different man', was characterised as a significant process of self-reflection, a *pause* from some practices and contexts, which facilitated their journey to 'the real self' and enabled agentic change. However, their desires to understand and negotiate the "50/50" agenda, were increasingly difficult in a context like Alexandra township, a place that sustains patriarchal ideologies, masculine values and norms.

In the next section, I discuss the ways in which this conflicting environment impacts on those men in Alexandra who choose to respond to the call to change and reconsider their masculinities within the context of the "50/50", juxtaposed with the pressures of traditional manhood.

8.5   Masculinities in transition

As identified, in Alexandra township, the traditional, cultural and social expectations of what it is to be a man are widely acknowledged, encouraged and sustained. At the same time, modern and constitutional influences promote gender equality, which conflicts with traditionally prescribed masculine social norms. From the men's life narratives, it was clear that those engaged in an active process of contemplating alternative ways of being a man were unsure of what this meant for their masculine identities as men in Alexandra society. They were unclear how to transition to alternative and unfamiliar versions of manhood and indeed, what these should look like. For the men, they have not completely detached from the traditional and cultural expectations of a township masculinity, and may not fully want to, but are unsure what they are transitioning to. Their *pause* process enables them to reflect on their lives, their social environment, the pressures of manhood, their beliefs, their past and their future aspirations. It provides a safe space within which to redefine and renegotiate understandings of their masculinities and perhaps reconsider ways to modify their behaviour. It is therefore a critical phase in a man's journey to fundamental change, as he contemplates which aspects of the old he retains (such as *lobola* for example), and which he must relinquish (such as violence), in order to be able to transition or transform into his own self-defined masculine form.

This experience is best described by Boipelo, who reflected on his own *pause* experience and the challenges that this transitional status might pose for his masculine identities. He focused on the impact on his relationships, and in particular

the potential for more intimate relations, finding that alternative masculinities conflict

with the social and cultural masculine norms expected of men in Alexandra

township that are promoted by both men and women. This is indicated by the

reference to his single relationship status, which he referred to as a "*taboo*" status

for men, and demonstrates how this transitional masculinity limited his choice of

partner to "*a small pool*" of like-minded women:

> "*I've started thinking different. I've started opening up to myself to say, 'sure*
>
> *I'm single'…It's something that is…taboo for people. I've been single for 1*
>
> *year and few months. I've been staying alone. I've been thinking of me and*
>
> *my life…The kind of lifestyle that I've done, it is not a very big pond. It's a*
>
> *very small pool…and I think I'm also the same person that she's looking for,*
>
> *it's in that small pool…Coz I'm in the view, my thinking is different from most*
>
> *of the other men. And I think even the lady that I'm gonna date, she's the*
>
> *same, she'll be having the same thinking to say, 'I'm the few'*".

While Boipelo's *pause* may offer a safe space for men to reflect on their social

positionality and to reconsider their masculinities within it, they continue their

journey to an undetermined destination. Remaining in this *pause* phase may

become an additional pressure for men who become increasingly structurally

invisible to society and who may one day become socially excluded. The challenge

is for these men to redefine and renegotiate alternative masculinities to transform

who they are as men and to feel free to live out their chosen identities. The

challenge therefore is in how such men can reinsert themselves into an unchanged

social and cultural environment. In order to do this, they need to challenge the

stereotypical gender norms that aspire to hegemonic forms of masculinity and be

empowered to live as different, more caring men. For the men in the research yet to

transition and transform into new masculinities, the implications of their social

positionality remains unclear. What is clear is that they will face a constraining social

reality that continues to be entrenched in traditional patriarchal ideologies, practices and expectations.

8.6   Conclusion

In post-apartheid South Africa, gender equality offers opportunities for men to reflect on their understandings of diverse masculinities and explore alternative ways of defining and living out what it means to be a man. In contemporary Alexandra township, some men are responding to calls for change and are beginning to discuss and debate the pressures or man pain, which they experience in attempting to live up to dominant, socially and culturally defined expectations of a township masculinity. Through a *pause* process that encourages self-reflection, they are contesting social norms and expectations and exploring ways to redefine and reconstruct their masculinities. For many of the men in the research, contemplating change was a process initiated through life changing events that positioned them at a 'crossroads' and which created the space for them to temporarily put their lives on hold. While reflecting on their lives, they continue to exist as men within society, although their transitional masculinities remain 'unseen' or 'invisible'. They live in a sort of structural "limbo" (Honwana 2014), redefining their masculinities and waiting for a day in the future when they will emerge and be able to exist as 'new' or 'different' men in Alexandra society.

CHAPTER 9   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1   Introduction

In this final chapter, I discuss the key findings that emerged during the research and their contribution to the continuing discourse on masculinities in transition. Also considered are the implications for human development policy, programming, practice and research on men and masculinities in transition.

At the core of this study are a group of men living in Alexandra township who are reflecting on their own masculine experience and who are reconsidering alternative ways of being a man in this context. Through their life experiences, group and external support structures, counselling, NGO interventions (such as ADAPT or Sonke), this research, peer encouragement, etc., they are exploring what it means to be a man in contemporary Alexandra township. Their journeys envision ways in which men can transition or perhaps transform their unique masculine identities. These are navigated and negotiated within the context of the gender equality agenda, alongside persistent social and cultural expectations of township masculinities, which at times conflict with men's experiences of the socioeconomic realities of day-to-day living and their own masculine aspirations.

I acknowledge that this discussion is based on evidence gathered from an atypical group of men who were in some way linked with the local community based organisation ADAPT. To the extent that the men in the research are representative of all men in Alexandra township requires further consideration, particularly given the size and nature of the research sample. Through their involvement with ADAPT or indeed as participants in this study, this group of men were facilitated with an opportunity to reflect on the cost-benefits of the dominant social representations of township masculinity and the ways in which this has a bearing on their lives. While

conscious of the potential limits of this dimension on the data that was gathered among this group of men, my daily access and the special researcher-participant relationship that evolved through diverse situational contexts during the field research and beyond, presented unique opportunities for in-depth discussions, reflections and evaluations of the ways in which men rethink transformational masculinities. While I cannot assert the generality of the findings, I claim that this research contributes to and advances the continuing theoretical and programmatic interest in exploring men's lives within the context of gender equality and transitional masculinities. Within this assertion, I argue for the need to reconsider the intersecting contextual daily experiences and realities, their geographical context along with the social, cultural and expectations of men's lives that feed into their subjectivities and the ways in which these determine how men can respond to change and transform their masculine identities.

9.2   The struggle to reform masculinities in Alexandra township

In contemporary Alexandra, the idea of manhood continues to be defined and contested in terms of a series of juxtapositions: the rural vs. the urban and the traditional vs. the modern. These contradictions feed into men's subjectivities and their interpretations of what it is to be a man in each context, highlighting the complexities and challenges of transforming masculinities. At the same time, it demonstrates the diversity, fluidity and multiplicity of the ways in which men can renegotiate and reconstruct their masculine identities to respond to varying situational contexts. This reveals the adaptability of masculinities in their capacity to evolve and perhaps to transform masculine identities. While this conclusion is not revolutionary, it is important to reemphasise in the context of the continuing efforts towards gender equality and the current gender transformative initiatives that seek to include men in achieving this goal.

While much research that focuses on men, masculinities and change has highlighted the complexities of change for men in contemporary societies and the ways in which men are (or are not) coping with change, we still know very of little of the day-to-day realities of township men's struggles with contemporary socioeconomic change in unchanged social and cultural environments. For example, evidence suggests that male gendered norms are linked to the social values of protector and provider and that some men are struggling to fulfil these roles in increasingly difficult socioeconomic contexts. For many of the men, their experiences of these changing realities are considered far worse than the conditions they directly experienced or subjectively interpreted of life under apartheid. For many men, social and cultural gendered roles are embedded in the structure of their masculine identities and for some, are uncompromising. Yet, at the same time the daily realities of their experiences of the political programme for gender equality, rising poverty and reduced economic opportunities for example, are frustrating their capacity to fulfil these traditional social mandates and the ways in which men can redefine and reposition their masculine identities alongside this conflicting environment. The realities of these experiences can decelerate the vision towards transforming more gender equitable masculinities that gender specialists are seeking to achieve. Also, inadequate consideration is given to the transitional experiences or transformational attempts that are currently taking place for men. Conversations with the men in the research demonstrate these complexities and limitations in their struggle to redefine and renavigate their masculine identities in contemporary Alexandra township. It therefore remains critical to identify and acknowledge men's individual and group processes of self-reflection towards transforming, or as the men in the research labelled *reforming,* their masculine identities. This is reinforced through structures such as men's counselling services, or peer support through the ADAPT Men's Forum or gender transformative

workshops for example, which continue to encourage men in their journeys to redefining who they are, and who they can be, as men in Alexandra society, framed within a context of gender equality.

It is difficult to determine why some men engage in a self-reflective process and respond positively to change and others do not. However, it is important to note that the men who I interacted with throughout Alexandra in taxis, in shops, on the street, at the train station and so on, were genuinely interested in the topic of the research and would animatedly engage in discussions about the issues, struggles and aspirations that they faced as men living in the township. All of them talked of their disillusionment with the immutable social norms and expectations of men in Alexandra society. They were tired of the persistent associations between men and violent masculinities, along with the neglect of men's voices and efforts in condemning violence and men's attempts in working towards becoming 'new', more caring and inclusive men.

9.3   Revisiting the *pause* and safe spaces in men's transformative journeys

"People are reflexive; they reflect on what they are doing and often change their actions in light of that reflection" (Marsh and Stoker 2002:24). For the men in the research, the process of self-reflection is an important step in transitioning their masculine identities. It facilitates a consciousness of their masculinities which, agrees Tolson (1977), is a foundation for transformation. Two common features of the men's transitional journeys are a consciousness of their masculinities and the limitations that these may present, along with their willingness and capacity to initiate a self-reflective journey towards transforming their lives as men. The men talked of knowing yourself first which, I believe, is critical to the self-reflective process, the *pause* that Boipelo discussed in highlighting his own masculine journey. For some, this included accessing the necessary support structures

available to them in the township, for others it was a life changing experience, which initiated their reflective process, a moment to *pause,* reflect and re-examine their lives and to formulate plans for their future. The opportunity to *pause,* which many talked of, empowers the individual to make decisions about their future and perhaps initiate steps to achieve these plans. Somehow this reflective space signifies their difference from the conditioned masculinity that dominates perceptions of masculinity and places them in a process of transitioning their masculine identities. In the context of Alexandra township, this meant that the men had distanced themselves, at least emotionally if not structurally, from the negative elements of a hegemonic norm that is linked with violence and had begun to reflect on how this affected their lives and relationships. It also enables a space where men can redefine alternative ways of being a man. For some men, while in this phase, symbolic actions may include seeking counselling or support among like-minded men by attending gender transformative workshops such as those provided through the Sonke One Man Can campaign or becoming active members of the ADAPT Men's Forum or other support groups. It may involve detaching themselves from friends and family who do not share the same ideals. Some may move out of a parent's home or relocate to the anonymity of a new township. They may return for extended periods to the rural areas, reconcile with estranged parents or withdraw from old high-risk behaviours such as alcohol or drug abuse. For others, their journey of self-reflection directs them to church, which enables them to reconsider change while at the same time maintain their respectability within the community.

Recent research demonstrates the essential benefits of these interventions (Dworkin et al 2013, 2015) in working with men towards transforming masculinities and achieving gender justice. However, while this may predispose some men to recognise and reflect on their direct/indirect roles in perpetuating gender inequality, and perhaps differentiates them from other township men, it does not facilitate or

support their continuing struggles to make sense of the effects of political and socioeconomic change in their lives. Neither does it engage with the specificities of how to implement change. While current efforts to include men in the vision for gender equality through talk-based interventions indicate progression towards an awareness of gender based experiences and men's need to transform their associated masculine behaviours, I argue that this is not enough. Providing a safe space for men to reflect on their lives within the context of gender transformative work is but an initial step in supporting men's change processes. What happens after men recognise the inevitability of change and seek new ways to live as a man in Alexandra? What alternative versions of manhood are available to men? What do they look like? How do they coexist alongside traditional dominant expectations? Where are the support structures that these men can access once they have acknowledged the need to transform who they are as men in Alexandra society? In what ways can the safe spaces that men experience in reflecting on their lives also transform to support their continuing journeys? How do men implement their dreams of their unique masculine identities in a social and cultural context that remains staunchly opposed to challenging established masculine norms? Many of the men I talked with throughout the township demonstrated an awareness to the issues of gender equality and were not oblivious to the repressive elements of traditional masculinities for both themselves as men and the impact on women. What the men did not have was the physical, psychological and social space or support structures to effect change.

Whatever the adaptive strategy, it is critical to acknowledge that men not only access help, but that they are willing to talk about change, their masculinities, their fears and how these impact on their lives and their social and intimate relationships. Some realise the choices available to them and are willing to change (hooks 2004). As more men become conscious of their masculinities and begin their transitional

process, the hope is that this encourages other men to reconsider who they are and who they want to be as men in society. However, in the context of Alexandra living, men are also conscious that alternative masculinities premised on equality and the concept of the new man in post-apartheid South Africa, conflict with the embedded patriarchal culture that disapproves of men who fall outside of these masculine boundaries. The patriarchal ideology that infiltrates the wider social, political, educational, cultural, legal and religious structures continue to exert pressure on men to conform to its authority, undermining the individual self and masculine self-esteem. Added to this is the widespread association of masculinity with violence in South Africa and the crisis of masculinity discourse, which obscures the transitional attempts already taking place for men and perhaps further isolates them on their journeys. There is a danger that, in the absence of alternative blueprints that define different or new masculinities, added to the pressures of male social norms and expectations and lack of structural support, makes it problematic for men to transform. In the meantime, some men quietly assume a subordinate position in the masculine hierarchy, without having fully 'come out' to directly challenge the hegemonic norms that dominate township masculinities.

9.4   Reflecting on methodology

The idea that men are reluctant to discuss their lives, feelings or emotions is a common stereotype. This perception preoccupied my anxieties in developing the research design. How was I going to get men to expose their inner lives to me when they do not talk about their feelings? However, I found that men are prepared to talk about their lives if they feel it is safe to do so and that the listeners are genuinely interested, and do not impose their own views or prejudices. Since men are not widely encouraged to talk about their struggles, or the *man pain* that they may be experiencing, they are consequently not facilitated to do so. One of the limitations

for men to change, therefore, is the deficiency of support mechanisms, as Bernstein

finds: "For such men, there is little focused assistance in our society to help them

negotiate these crises…they are stuck heroes of the modern age" (Bernstein

1987:153). While the ADAPT Men's Forum was an opportunity for men to gather

together, it was just that - a place to gather. There were inadequate structures in

place to support the men in their individual journey of change. The lack of follow-up

after the Sonke training, limited engagement by ADAPT structures for the Men's

Forum and the fact that my research substituted the work of the Forum is an

indication of this.

I stress that taking time to evaluate research with the research participants is crucial

in data gathering. The final focus group discussion held in 2012 concentrated on

this dimension. It sought feedback on the research process itself and the ways in

which the research had made an impact on the men and their process of self-

reflection. The men were unanimous in expressing that they had enjoyed being a

part of the research and were disappointed that it was nearing completion. They

also talked about how they had appreciated the opportunity for self-reflection that

the research space provided. The men referred to the therapeutic value of

discussing their lives and the issues that mattered to them in a context that

understood and respected their input. Tumisang for example, talked of the

experience of the research setting as an enabling environment where he could

forget "out there" and enter a "safe and quiet space" where he could be himself and

not "have to pretend". Others demonstrated the benefits of not only talking about,

but challenging experiences and perceptions of masculinity through what Kabelo

called "thought-provoking questions". Also important is "sharing knowledge and

expertise" and the researcher "coming back to share". Kabelo was the most

articulate in his evaluation of the research experience:

"I'm very grateful. People they've come to do research and gone. But they never shared their expertise or their experiences in life. They had come to know about men in Alex, to specifically deal with men. But with you, I experienced that you'd ask everything – be it political, what we thought about this, football, clothing, food health, a lot of things…. You gave me an opportunity. I could feel that there was something every time I met with you, that day I would feel a change. That these questions got me thinking … 'what are you doing to better yourself to empower yourself?'…Even though I was facilitating and participating in the One Man Can campaign, but you coming is sort of like, you encouraged me to know more. Acquire knowledge. And not undermine or judge people because of their background, who they are, what they are wearing. But you know, whenever you came with questions, they asked 'ok, if this happened in my life and I'm in this state of life because of what happened in the past, what am I doing presently to better myself in future so that it's better'?"

Kabelo's feedback reiterates the importance of the researcher's genuine interest in both the wider context and the individual experiences of the men and the stories that they choose to share. Research in this human context should not be all about the findings and agenda of the researcher but also focussed intimately on the lives of the men being interviewed. Also of value is the researcher's telling of her own story as a trust-building exercise.

Research cuts across people's lives at specific points in time and at different stages in their life cycle. At various times during the process the outcomes may be different. The findings from the evaluation session with the men indicate that the research approach used in gathering the data facilitated an enabling environment for some of the men's self-reflective journeys, not all of who had previously accessed gender transformative training or workshops. This continued after I had

left Alexandra and was evident on my return 12 months later. Each of the men that I reconnected with on this return visit was at a very different stage in their life in comparison to the first time that I interviewed them. The most noticeable change was the confidence with which the men could reflect on their lives more deeply. Their unique stories and experiences exposed new challenges, but also greater opportunities and a renewed outlook.

Reflecting on the relevance and importance of flexibility, truthfulness, trust-building, mutual respect and returning to the research location, I consider once again Abel's life narrative, which evolved over many visits to Alexandra through individual interviews, general discussions and just 'hanging out'. In the first round of interviews, his narrative typified that of others of his age at a particular time in the life of the township. My return to Alexandra 12 months later gathered much richer and more in-depth data. Abel was in a very different location in his life's journey. He was happier and much more relaxed in talking about his life. He had spent the 12 months reflecting on his past and making plans for a future with his new girlfriend and the child that they were expecting together. In our final interview, Abel talked about the pain, disappointment, abandonment, regret and despondency of a life exposed to violence, torture, pain, hardship, survival and imprisonment. He also talked about love, hope, aspirations, change and the strategies for realising them and transforming his masculinity. I was curious to understand why he had not shared this information before. Being a veteran member of the ADAPT Men's Forum and called upon to represent the organisation in various public fora, this was not the first time he had been part of a research or community project. He had experienced being interviewed by other students, NGOs and various international donors in the scramble for solutions to the widespread sexual and domestic violence in South African townships. Abel initially suspected that I was another researcher delving into the violent lives of men in Alexandra. He perceived that I was interested only in the

violence that he experienced (and specifically, that he had perpetrated), his HIV status or his past high-risk behaviours. There were issues of trust – could I be trusted with his story; who/where might I expose it? He was keen to engage in local politics and was concerned how the information he shared in the research may reflect or impact on his chances for a political future. This was never disclosed in any of the previous interviews. Critical in building trust was my acting on the assurance that I would return to Alexandra. His experience was that no-one ever returned. I remained in contact with Abel during the 12 months I was away from the research site. In my absence from Alexandra, on the occasions that he was gathered with the other men in Brown House, the group would telephone and greet me. The trust had been built and Abel felt that I was genuinely interested in his life experiences and could be trusted with the details of his this. I was indeed interested in Abel's (and the other men's) story and I was honoured that I was rewarded with his trust.

Meeting up with and re-interviewing Kabelo also gathered very diverse data. Kabelo was in a different psychological, emotional, social and economic space than he was before. His desire to be a more caring man and to "follow his dreams" had been "put on hold" by the prospect of fatherhood. While elated at the news of becoming a father, he was disappointed by his lack of responsibility in putting himself and his new girlfriend at risk (of HIV infection) and was becoming a parent much sooner than he had planned for and with a woman he claimed not to love. He had no job and no capacity to pay *damages* or to provide for his new family. He felt alone and insecure, which contrasted with the very focused, determined and visionary man that I had met and interacted with a year earlier. Both Abel and Kabelo's narratives clearly demonstrates the ways in which men's identities are dynamic, flexible, context specific, responsive to change, characterised by considerable mobility and mediated by various stages and life events. They acknowledge men's adaptability to

change and the multiple ways in which men can define and redefine their

masculinities according to context.

9.5   Final remarks

I conclude this chapter by returning to chapter 5 of this thesis, to the men in

Alexandra township whose narratives have illuminated my understandings of the

daily realities that some men encounter on their transitional masculine journeys. The

men's stories critically demonstrate the multiplicity of the ways in which men

redefine, renegotiate and reconstruct their masculine selves with diverse social and

cultural contexts. Critically, they also show that despite stereotypical notions of a

hegemonic masculinity, men have many aspirations, hopes and dreams for

themselves and their immediate family that predicate on a masculinity positioned

within their understandings of a 'new' man who is caring, loving and supportive. On

the whole, the findings in this study suggest that identifying as a man in Alexandra

township is a complicated process, often characterised by feelings of uncertainty

and contradiction.

While political and human development interventions have attempted to challenge

existing oppressive masculinities and encourage more positive, inclusive and caring

ones, there is insufficient evidence to evaluate their effectiveness in engendering

long-term behaviour change, although there is some evidence that suggests their

limited impact (Barker et al 2009, Dworkin et al 2013, 2015). I find that current

interventions may perhaps serve as a trigger for men to consider change as part of

their self-reflective process. Without the continued long-term active engagement

with men, or additional support structures made available to those men that have

initiated a process of transitioning their masculine identities, they may become

disheartened or isolated in taking their journey further, particularly within challenging

social, cultural and economic conditions such as Alexandra township. If we are

serious about engaging with men in transition, then gender programming and

policies need to do more than acknowledge their 'inclusion'. We need to recognise

and understand men's individual and group experiences of change and the

intersecting realities that influence their subjectivities and the ways in which they

understand manhood in each context. This is compounded by the need to

acknowledge that some men are already in a process of redefining and

renegotiating their masculinities along the lines of gender equality and that they

need critical support in their transitional journeys of change to transform into their

own unique definitions of their masculine identities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A   Research information sheet

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

University of East Anglia/Human Sciences Research Council

Hello, my name is Toni Pyke. I am a PhD research student with the University of East Anglia in the UK. I am currently living in Pretoria. I have been interested in gender issues as they relate to women and men for quite some time. I am particularly interested in the inclusion of men in development and am trying to identify and understand some of the development issues that men experience in their lives. In doing this, I will be asking men and some women from your community to help me with this research in answering some questions that I hope will benefit your community in the future.

The research will provide me personally with the opportunity to explore some of the development challenges facing men in your community and will hopefully add to other research and literature concerned with gender issues. It is my hope also that the research will impact on gender and development planning, policy and practice in the future. The researcher is acquainted with Sonke Gender Justice Network and ADAPT, who are currently involved with community development programmes in Alexandra township.

Below is a description of what this study is about and an explanation of your rights should you become involved in this study. Please read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, please sign a consent form to show that you have read and understood the information on this form. You are entitled to receive a copy of the form.

What is the study all about and what will be expected of you if you engage?

During this study, you will be asked to meet with the researcher to talk about your life. The kinds of questions I will be asking you may be sensitive and/or personal that you may not have thought about before. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions.

The kinds of questions. I will ask may include your experiences growing up; the important events and influences in your life; the place where you are from; your ethnic identity; life in Alexandra township, how you think and feel about your future, etc. What I am asking you about is your individual story.

It is completely up to you if you would like to get involved. The methods that will be used to collect information for this study will include individual discussions and with your agreement, some may involve sharing more personal information about yourselves, and your place of origin. From this information, a research report will be written. My talking to you and the information that I record and write is confidential. I will not expose the information that you provide me to other agencies, your friends or family members.

When I write up the information for the report at the end of the research in Alexandra I will change your name if you are uncomfortable with using your own name.

With your permission, each conversation will be digitally recorded so that I can accurately record what you have said. However, it is not essential that I digitally record our meeting, so if you feel uncomfortable please say so and I will not digitally record our meeting. All the information that is gathered will be treated confidentially and will remain with me. It will be used for the purposes of the PhD thesis. The findings of the research when completed, may be shared with the wider academic community through journals, research papers and with agencies interested in developing programmes/projects focusing on gender issues and in particular in the inclusion of men.

If possible and only with your agreement, I would like to produce a resource pack that can be used for awareness and training by local NGOs in supporting men's issues. This pack will be written in an easily understandable and accessible resource, based on the findings of the research that will help local organisations interested in supporting men's development and gender relations. This may involve my taking photographs. If you feel uncomfortable with your identity being exposed, no photography will be used. If you are agreeable for you and/or your surroundings being photographed, you will be asked to agree to and sign a consent form.

Benefits of being involved

Possible benefits of being involved in this study include:

- being heard - exposing the issues that men living in Alexandra township experience in South African society

- potentially adding to international knowledge about men's identities and how this may impact on their lives and their relationships

- finding out the impact of development and community projects on men contributing to the development of initiatives in supporting men and women

There are no immediate benefits to you personally from participating in this study. However, the information gained from the study may provide information that is very important to your community, local and national organisations and possibly government agencies concerned with gender and human development.

Risks of being involved

There are no known or anticipated physical risks of being associated with this study. However, as the topic may involve sensitive accounts of your lives, some people may feel emotional pain, discomfort or embarrassment. You have the right to change your mind at any time and decide that you no longer to be involved with the study. I will only use the information you provide with your consent.

What happens if you do not want to take part?

Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without any negative consequences.

What happens to the information?

The information collected in this study will be kept confidential. I will keep names of participants and data secure under lock and key for paper files and password protected for computer files. I and my research supervisors will be the only persons to have access to the

data. In all reporting on the study, names will be changed and all efforts will be made to

protect identities so as to keep your privacy.

How long will it take?

Each interview should last an hour to an hour and a half. For some participants this will take

longer, but each interview will not take more than 3 hours for each interview. You may be

asked to take part in 3-4 interviews with the researcher.

Will it cost me anything?

There will be no financial cost to you in taking part in the research.

At the end of the study

I will write up the findings from my meetings with individuals and groups throughout the

study. The final report will be available for the public to read. The study will also be used to

inform my PhD thesis and articles may be published from it too.

Any questions?

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any time about the study and the methods that

she is using.

What if I change my mind during the study and do not want to take part any longer?

You may stop your participation at any time. You should also understand that the researcher

has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

Contact: Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the HSRC Research Ethics Committee. If you have

any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in

any way by participating in this study, please call the HSRC's toll free ethics hotline 0800

212 123 (when phoned from a landline from within South Africa) or the REC Administrator at

the Human Sciences Research Council on 012 302 2012, e-mail

research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za

I can be contacted at 082 955 2229.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact the University of East Anglia Research Ethics Committee, c/o Professor Janet Seeley, School of International Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, United Kingdom. Tel: +44 1603 593370.

Thank you for your participation with this study.

Appendix B   Participant informed consent form

Name of participant: _____

I have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Toni Pyke.

		Yes ✓	No ✓
1.	I have read/or have had read to me, and understand the research information sheet		
2.	Anything that I did not understand was made clear to me		
3.	I understand what the study is about, and what the findings will be used for		
4.	I am fully aware of all of the procedures involving myself, including any risks of my involvement in the study		
5.	I understand that this is a research project and its purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally		
6.	I know that my involvement is voluntary and that I can withdraw myself and my information from the project at any stage and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively		
7.	I agree to be audio-taped		
8.	I agree to have my photograph taken and have been made aware and understand how and why the photographs will be used		
9.	I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.		
10.	I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview		

I understand and give consent to the above terms of my participation in the research:

Signed: Respondent _____   Date   _____

I agree to a tape recording of my interview(s):

Signed: Respondent   _____ Date   _____

I agree to being photographed as part of the study:

Signed: Respondent   _____Date   _____

I agree to the terms:

Signed: Researcher   _____ Date   _____

Appendix C   Sample Table (life histories)

Name	Age	Relationship status	Children	"Parent"	Ethnicity	Level of Education	Employment status
Aaron	28	girlfriend	1 (female)	father	Venda	degree	volunteering with local radio
Elijah	39	married	4 (females)	father	KZN (associates with wife's ethnicity - Mpumalanga)	Secondary (without matriculating)	carpet fitter (2013)
Abel	39	girlfriend	0	grandmother	Alexandra (Swazi - grandfather)	Secondary (without matriculating)	volunteering (2012)
Kabelo	22	single	0	mother	Alexandra (Limpopo)	Matriculation	volunteering (2013)
Latsego	34	single	0	mother	Alexandra (Orange State)	Matriculation	causal truck driver
Tihokomela	21	single	0	mother (and father)	Alexandra (Limpopo)	Diploma	volunteering (2013)
Paul	36	married	1 (boy)	mother (and father)	Venda	Degree	employed
James	28	girlfriend	1 (boy)	mother	KZN	Secondary (without matriculating)	unemployed
John	59	married	2 (boys)	mother (and father)	Alexandra	Secondary (without matriculating)	unemployed (receiving disability benefits)
Teboho	24	single	0	grandmother	Limpopo	Matriculation	unemployed
Boipelo	32	single	0	mother	Alexandra (Gauteng -Tswana)	Matriculation	employed

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