

**Impotence and Vulnerability:
Exploring the relationship between rape and masculinity**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment consists of my own original work, and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

SIGNATURE

DATE

Abstract

This is an explorative literature study of the theoretical relationship between rape and masculinity. It is aimed at understanding how rape can be used by men to construct their gender identity. Its focus is only on this relationship and not the two phenomena in themselves. It approaches the topic from a social constructionist theoretical perspective. I found through my research that men do tend to use rape as a resource to attain a desirable or hegemonic masculinity when other economic or social resources are not available. The picture of a rapist, which emerged, was that of a man who was disempowered either economically or socially. This impotence influences men to seek power through sexual means.

Opsomming

Hierdie is 'n eksploratiewe literatuurstudie oor die verhouding tussen verkragting en manlikheid. Dit poog om te verstaan hoe verkragting deur mans gebruik kan word om hulle geslagsidentiteit te konstrueer. Die fokus van die studie is slegs op hierdie verhouding en nie op die twee fenomene in sigself nie. Dit benader die onderwerp van 'n sosiaal-konstruksionistiese teoretiese perspektief. Ek het in my navorsing gevind dat mans geneig is om verkragting as 'n manier te gebruik om 'n begeerde of hegemoniese manlikheid te bewerkstellig wanneer ander ekonomiese of maatskaplike middele nie beskikbaar is nie. Die beeld van 'n verkragter wat te voorskyn gekom het, was van 'n man wat of ekonomies of maatskaplik ontmagtig is. Hierdie ontmagtiging beïnvloed mans om mag deur middel van die seksuele te probeer verkry.

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Introduction

We are almost able to ignore it. We all know that it is a common occurrence and we have all heard stories. These stories usually comment that someone known to the victim usually commits rape. Although this may be the case, our minds usually conceive of the perpetrator as some “dark figure” in the shadows.

Stories of rape have become commonplace in the media. These stories have become more varied and grotesque. They vary from the drugging and rape of young women in nightclubs, date rape, the robbery and rape of old women and even the gang rape of young girls and babies. Although the situations and contexts vary, what is common is that men usually commit them.

This essay examines more closely this theoretical relationship between men and rape. Rape is a complex phenomenon. I wish to examine the nature of rape with a focus on its theoretical relationship to masculinity. I aim to explore how rape and masculinity theoretically and experientially intersect and interrelate. What role does one play in the construction of the other? How does the act of rape sustain and is part of being a particular type of man? Theoretically, what can be understood about how perpetrators may ‘use’ rape to help them experience themselves as particular types of men?

How rape should be defined has remained ambiguous. Legislatively, the definition of rape differs in the details throughout various countries. For the

purpose of this essay, I will define rape as non-consensual sex. Sex here includes any sexual act involving two or more people including molestation and sodomy. I will generally refer to rape as an act perpetrated by a man with a woman as the victim. I am aware that this is not always the case and I only do so for practical reasons. A female perpetrator of rape is an interesting topic and does provide some interesting theoretical questions but I will not deal with these in this essay.

Purpose and Methodology

It should be made clear that the purpose of this essay is only to explore the theoretical relationship between masculinity and rape. In particular, I aim to explore this relationship from a social constructionist view of gender, rape and other social phenomena. There are other perspectives from which I could have viewed the phenomenon of rape. Ellis (1989) reviews perspectives such as the evolutionary, feminist, social learning theory, psychological, etc. but I decided to focus on one perspective only. There were three reasons for this. The first reason is that I have an academic preference for the social constructionist perspective. I have analysed other social phenomena using this perspective and have found it to be effective and useful. I also align myself with its political and epistemological foundations. The second reason was that upon examining some of the more recent literature on rape (particularly South African literature), I found that the social constructionist perspective was frequently used (Walker & Ried, 2005; Niehaus, 2005; Sideris, 2005; Posel, 2005 and Moolman, 2004). The third and most influential reason was that I approached this thesis from a critical psychology epistemological orientation for which a social constructionist theoretical perspective is most useful. A critical psychological approach necessitates an awareness of the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production. The political effect of one's research upon the object of study is to be carefully considered. Therefore, the departure point of this thesis is an aim to criticise existing power hierarchies especially in gender relations and the effect of socio-economic structures upon this.

The study of rape is a large undertaking. It is a multifaceted phenomenon, which could be understood from many theoretical perspectives and analytical approaches. An entire thesis could undertake just to understand what constitutes rape and how it should be defined. One could attempt to understand from the perspective of the victim or the perpetrator. I only wish to attempt to examine how the act of rape intersects with masculinity both theoretically and also the lived experience of men. For example, when a man rapes, how this act affect the manner in which he understands his own masculinity. Does rape make him feel like a man? I also aim to understand the interplay between rape and gender relations, particularly in the realm of heterosexual relationships.

More specifically, the thesis of this essay will be to examine how the positions created within the rape scenario are gendered. I wish to examine the capacity for men to use rape as a means to create their own sense of masculinity. This then brings into question how masculinity is created or defined. According to the social constructionist theory, gender is not something inherent but rather multiple and performative. Gender is not something that we have because of any biological markers, but rather something which we do or behave into being. We “do” behaviours, which have been ascribed gendered attributes. I will elaborate on this at a later stage.

This theoretical discussion is structured in four parts. I will move from a broad social focus to a more experiential and interpersonal one. The four sections

are: Masculinity in South Africa, Rape and masculinity as a bodily encounter, the Violence and Crime of rape and Heterosexuality and rape. "Masculinity in South Africa" as a section is intended to provide a context within which these dynamics take place. I also examine changes in broad social structures and their effect of men in South Africa. I also review themes identified by research into current and past South African masculinity.

"Rape as a bodily encounter" is aimed at understanding how the social and political is imbedded in the physical. Specifically, how do interactions between people when the body is most salient (sport, labour or sex), have a power dynamic. These interactions have the capacity to empower or disempower another person using physical means. A fight is a very obvious example. I will also examine how the physical comes into play, particularly, in the social conception of masculinity. I will examine the idea that the body is the last resource available to persons. Despite all other social, class or racial resources available to a person, the body has the capacity to act and do. It allows those who may not have other resources (money, status, class, etc.), available to them to exert power and influence in the world. The interaction between the body and the social meanings assigned to it will also be explored.

I will argue that there are two aspects of rape. The one is that it is a violent crime and also a violent sexual encounter. "The Violence and Crime of rape" undertakes to examine, by drawing upon criminological studies, how the criminal aspect of rape functions to construct masculinity. It also examines how depending on the context of the rape and the man involved the

expression and degree of violence of that rape varies. This context includes variations in class and race, and how these affect the manner in which the rape occurs.

One cannot ignore the sex within the crime of rape. I decided to focus on heterosexual relationships only. I considered male-male rape, child rape, etc. of which the dynamics I identify may or may not be relevant but for practical reasons I focus only upon heterosexual rapes with a male perpetrator and a female victim. I explore how heterosexuality and its current construction are coercive in nature. I examine how this coercion is taken to extreme lengths in the act of rape. I aim to understand how anxiety and vulnerability inherent in a sexual encounter can be removed through rape. It becomes clear that rape indeed seems to have its roots in powerlessness and therefore vulnerability. Men seem to use rape as a means to empower themselves and also avoid risks, such as rejection, which could further disempower them. It is a resource, which can be used to achieve masculinity through sexual empowerment. Men seem to use rape to construct themselves as sexually powerful and virile. By using rape to make them feel more sexually potent, men come to feel more masculine. These themes and dynamics will be explained in greater detail in the sections to follow.

I wish to reassert that this essay is not concerned with the origin or explanation of rape alone. My key focus is rather the relationship between rape and masculinity only. Rape itself is a vast topic, which would require much more extensive research and varied theoretical perspectives. The area

of literature research, which I have conducted, is very narrow. I have aimed to keep my focus on masculinity and rape in South Africa. I understand that men commit rape for various reasons and that this depends also on the theoretical viewpoint which one takes.

Methodologically, I aimed to access recent South African research in the areas of rape and masculinity. I consulted with a few experts in the fields of gender research and used their advice to guide my research. I focussed on salient and recent works in the areas of gender, masculinity, criminology and rape. I aimed not to present a large overview of various researchers but rather structure the presentation of the literature as an argument. This argument was informed by the research consulted and the critical psychological orientation, which I attempted to adhere to.

“Same playground, different rules”: Masculinity in South Africa

Masculinity in South Africa is in a state of flux. Apartheid masculinity was based on “the struggle” and the resultant violence. Luyt (2002) writes that the masculinities of Apartheid were militarised as defending against the ‘Swart Gevaar’ or as a freedom fighter. The country was divided into various racial groups and these groups were opposed to each other. There existed an atmosphere of paranoia and defensiveness. Each group had to guard against the other.

Whether one was black or white, there was always an enemy against which one had to fight. If you subscribed to a belief that the then current Apartheid system was legitimate, then there was a host of other men whom you had to defend your ideals against. If you were opposed to the system then one would have to join others in an attempt to overthrow those who supported that system. Luyt (2002) writes that Afrikaner masculinity lost its power because of the socio-political changes, which occurred after Apartheid. He also writes that black masculinity also lost its power because it had no monolithic white man to define itself against. This lack of definition in the ‘other’ (enemy) resulted in confusion and ambiguity in masculinity in South Africa.

This enemy and ‘other’ aided in providing an object against which one could define your masculinity through opposition, which included violent means. Walker (2005) writes that the Apartheid masculinity was steeped in violence and authoritarianism. These masculinities valued violence over negotiation,

defiance over cooperation and rebellion over submission. Walker (2005:165) describes it as “heroic struggle masculinity”. Whether one identified as freedom fighter or defender of Apartheid, ‘the hero’ was the exalted or hegemonic masculinity of that time. The masculinity of that time was also described as authoritarian. This ‘man’ was in charge. This masculinity favoured rules and leadership over discussion and negotiation. ‘Toughness’ and ‘decisiveness’ were what mattered most.

The context of our country has altered in the past twelve years. The ideological atmosphere of this “new” South Africa is one of tolerance and reconciliation. Our new constitution opposes all forms of discrimination and inequality. It provides equal status and opportunity for all, including all races and genders. This has changed the ‘schoolyard’ in which men have to define their masculinity. This is a country, which replaces the conservatism and patriarchy of the old government, for liberalism and gender equality. The old masculine ideals of ‘toughness’ and ‘decisiveness’ are no longer exercised in the same manner and contexts as before.

There is no longer any enemy with whom to fight and compete. There is no longer an opposite other to measure one against. Against whom are these men now able to define themselves? Luyt (2002) writes that there was a shift in the salience of race and the socio-political in identity to that of class and socio-economic status. Identity and masculinity was no longer defined by themes of the ‘hero’, rather more first world conceptions of a male were emphasised. “The dominant notion of South African masculinity is embodied

in a white, middle/upper class, heterosexual, breadwinner, provider, father and husband role.” (Moolman, 2004: 112). These ideals are focussed upon economic and social roles rather than political. Luyt (2002: 21) adds, “working class men are said to often experience a disjuncture between their lived reality and societal expectation surrounding ‘real’ masculinity”. Therefore men in economically disempowered contexts do not have access to the resources required for this ideal masculinity. What do these men use to construct a powerful masculine identity? It is understood that men in these contexts, take whatever resources is available to them and exaggerate it. Moolman (2004) writes that violence and physical strength become alternative means of establishing a desired masculine identity. Luyt (2002) writes that aggression, group rivalry and control over capital becomes emphasised. The capital referred to here may be land, property, money and other people. This is illustrated in the gang culture of townships and the Cape flats among others. The point is to have power and control over this capital and this is usually maintained through the use of force.

This phenomenon is not only common in the South African context, but throughout the world and at different times (Luyt, 2002). The South African Apartheid culture does, however, normalise militant and violent masculinity. With this as a base, the use of violence as a means defining one as a man was a natural option. Walker (2005) writes that some ex-members of self-defence units have made the transition to crime. Kadalie (1997) noted that there was a 60% increase in the number of reported rapes in 1994 compared to the previous year. This trend is also noted by Walker (2005:165) who

quoting Xaba writes:” The heroic struggle masculinity of the 1980s has been delegitimized and, without the prospects of jobs and having lost the political statues they formerly had, these young men have gone on the rampage, robbing, killing and raping.” Therefore, the ideological and legislative changes in this country have sought to reconstruct the existing violent masculinity, but these changes have also resulted in a backlash and increase in this type of behaviour and masculinity.

Some men are becoming reflexive and are actively engaging with their struggle to find a ‘way of being’ that leaves them feeling empowered without having to disempower another. This involves becoming self-aware and re-thinking new ways of being. One of Walker’s (2005: 175) respondents remarked that “Before 1994, a real man was one who beat; now a real man is one who understands.” These men are attempting to relate differently to their career, sexuality and other men.

Luyt (2002) in his study on masculinities in South Africa conducted focus groups and interviews where men were encouraged to talk about their experiences as men. In his analysis, he identified themes, which made up masculinity in South Africa.

Masculine physicality and toughness as a theme emphasises bodily strength and ability (Luyt, 2005). The ability to use your body to perform at sport or work or fighting, etc. was prized as more important than any other attribute of a man including intelligence, verbal ability and emotional sensitivity. A real

man has to be able to use his body to command his environment. This was extended to the area of work as well. Participants described how a man who used his physical strength when working, was doing a real job and was probably satisfied at the end of the day. One's body is a resource with which to perform things. According to an 'ideal' standard of masculinity, a man's body needs to be powerful and skilled.

A second theme to emerge was the need for men to be successful (Luyt, 2002). They need to be independent financially and in their careers. 'Real' men are required to be self-sufficient. The more successful, the more of a man one is. Tied to this, a man was described, by participants, to be competitive (Luyt, 2002). Men were described to be almost naturally competitive and constantly measuring themselves against other men and other things. This is also said to "foster aggression and risk-taking behaviour in men." (Luyt, 2002: 53). This is particularly evident in the areas of work, sport and sexual performance. Another man, team, ideology, symbol is constructed as the enemy and competed against. This enemy is used as a measure to rank oneself as more or less powerful, skilled and male.

A fourth theme was that men are meant to be unemotional (Luyt, 2002). Men are meant to control the expression of their vulnerable emotions. Men are meant to be rational rather than emotional. Another theme to emerge was that men are meant to be responsible (Luyt, 2002). This is connected to the notion that men are meant to be the breadwinner and be dependable. Here men were described as a provider for those for whom they are responsible like a

family. Whether a man is able to accomplish this or not defines him as a success or a failure.

A critical theme in relation to the topic of rape and masculinity is the theme of masculine control (Luyt, 2002). A man is constructed as one who conquers and controls. It was spoken about by participants in the same manner that one would describe ruling a country and subjects. A man is meant to always be in control of him and others. This theme is echoed in the other themes as well. It is evident in the themes of competition (control over others), unemotionality (control over your emotions), physical toughness (mastery over one's body), success (financial control), responsibility (mastery as provider and protector).

The participants in Luyt's (2002) study emphasised this control particularly in the heterosexual arena. Sexual intercourse was described as a site where dynamics of power and control were displayed. "Intercourse was clearly understood as something a man had to 'do', a performance that required an active 'doer', as well as a passive individual that was 'done'." (Luyt, 2002: 40). Therefore, within the realm of sex, men have to be seen as the dominant individual and the female is the in the submissive position. This is said to be the case because of the nature of the sexual act itself. Who, is penetrating whom, who is active and who is passive ("getting done") are the central questions. A man needs to be the one in control, the active and powerful participant in sex.

The last theme explored which ties in well with the theme of control, is that men are heterosexual (Luyt, 2002). Homosexual sex disrupts this concept that men are always in control and in power in the realm of sex. Participants became uncomfortable at the idea of a male being “bent over” and passive and felt that this would lower men to the “level of a woman” (Luyt, 2002: 41). This hints at the idea that a woman is less powerful than a male in sex and of a lower position. This extended to other areas such as finances, business, breadwinning, etc. Therefore, heterosexual sex is constructed, by some men, as an act, which degrades the woman or passive participant. Women can then be used as objects against which men can express and enact their position of power.

Another theme, which comes into play, is that of male competitiveness. A woman has the power of ranking a male according to his performance. The male is always uncertain of how he has ranked as this knowledge lies with the woman. She is able to compare him to other males she has had sex with. This creates anxiety in the male and pressure to perform. A participant speaking about the achievement of hegemonic masculinity noted, “to be liked by girls ‘was almost more important than anything else.’” (Luyt, 2002: 66). The ability of a woman to rank or rate a man’s sexual performance is a trump card of power in a submissively constructed heterosexual role.

Men deal with this anxiety differently. It could explain the immense need through patriarchy, religion and other social structures to control female sexuality and the prize of virginity. Some cultures go through extraordinary

and sometimes cruel means of ensuring that a woman, particularly a wife, is a virgin. Another means of dealing with this is by changing the nature of the sexual encounter. The aim would be to remove or at least diminish the need to pleasure the woman. This could be achieved through owning the sex in some manner, either through payment (prostitution) or rape. These scenarios do not require any emotional investment from the male in sex and increases their sense of control and power.

These themes of power, control and ownership in sex (hetero or homosexuality) will be explored in greater detail in the section to follow. This section explored how Apartheid and our countries political and socio-economic changes have resulted in confusion and ambiguity in masculinity in South Africa. The hegemonic Apartheid masculinity was steeped in violence and authoritarianism. These themes have endured in the post-Apartheid era. Some men have been able to transform their identity to achieve a desired and powerful masculine identity easily through financial and social means, while others have exaggerated themes of control and violence. The social and racial differences between men have resulted in an unequal footing for men to define themselves. Variations in class, capital, status has caused men to use whatever resources they have available to construct their masculine identities. I have also looked at themes identified by Luyt's (2002) study of hegemonic masculinity in South Africa. I build upon these themes in the following sections, particularly the themes of power, ownership and control involved in sex especially heterosexuality.

Actors and Performances: Rape and masculinity as a bodily encounter

When does a boy become a man? I believe this question lies within most men no matter what age they are. Men do not have a biological correlate to the beginning of a girl's menstrual cycle. There is no real physical signifier for this transition. Certain cultures still practice some form of initiation ritual. The meaning of these has been mostly lost through the modernisation and dilution in this Western world. The markers of a man and how he is meant to behave has shifted throughout eras. Currently, with all of the changes to the roles and definitions of what it means to be a woman, men have had to adjust to find a new place for themselves in what has become an ambiguous concept. Moolman (2004) comments that young boys are struggling to come to a secure sense of what it means to be a man. Walker (2002) writes about how township black men are trying to redefine their masculine identities within discussion groups. Various social science disciplines have commented on a 'crisis' in masculinity that cannot be easily resolved.

What has also changed in this current context is that women's status and social power has increased. Now, women are less dependent upon men. Women are empowered politically, legislatively and financially. Women have the advantage of affirmative action. Despite this advantage not always being a reality, it does create a perception that women have more employment opportunities than men.

This change in the political status has also had an effect on the way men and women relate. Walker (2005) in her study of 17 black males in Alexandra found that men had come to view women as a threat to their sense of masculinity. These respondents commented that they did not feel needed by women any longer. They felt that their job opportunities were being threatened and that they were now weaker than their fathers and grandfathers (Walker, 2005).

These political, ideological and social changes have aroused conflicting and contradictory responses in men. What does seem clear is that South African men are trying to come to terms with a changing country with new requirements of them.

Connell (1987) writes about how gender has been theorised. He points out that there is a shift from the biological to the social. He argues that masculinity can be seen from an individualistic perspective or a relational perspective. From an individualist perspective, masculinity would be understood as fixed and essentialist in nature. Masculinity would be something in and of itself. The relational perspective would argue that masculinity is shifting and not located within or on or of one individual but rather that it is created through a relationship to other concepts. Masculinity is defined as relationally different from a boy or a woman. This perspective would argue that masculinity is bound up with the meaning of other related concepts, such as femininity. Therefore, if there were changes in the meaning of femininity and feminine roles this would cause a disruption in the understanding of masculinity. Not all

men are made equal. The differences between men also have a relational effect on other men. Men measure themselves against other men, both imagined and real.

By imagined, I am referring to the images of men depicted in the media, the 'Rambos' and 'Rocky's' of our entertainment industries. The media depicts various 'types' of men and the public either aspire to be or not to be like them. Some depictions are exalted, while others are rejected as 'not real' men. Here, again I am referring to the concepts of subordinated and dominant (hegemonic) masculinities.

Men also acquire their sense of maleness from their real lived experiences. Connell (1987: 84) writes: "The physical sense of maleness grows through a personal history of social practice, a life-history-in-society." What is meant by this, is that men come to know themselves as a man through their life experiences. A boy through sport and other physical activities, lived or perceived, comes to judge and compare himself with other men. The yardstick for these comparisons is the social conventions, which say how a man should be physically. The ideal of masculinity or hegemonic masculinity is defined by the social concept of what this is. This concept includes behaviours, mannerisms, visual markers (a "look"), attitudes and rules on how to relate to others in various contexts. These social sets of meaning and practices are known as discourses (Parker, 1992). These discourses are interrelated, complimentary, contradictory and changing.

Men and boys learn very early what these behaviours are and what their bodies are capable of or not. The most obvious example of this is organised sport. Connell (1987) commented that men are judged on a combination of the force and skill of their bodies. The two of these translates into power to accomplish activities with their body.

Connell (1995) writes that a physical performance is an integral part of the experience of one's masculinity or maleness. The hegemonic ideal of performance sets the standard of what a man's body should be able to accomplish. A man can increase his physical performance to outdo and exhaust or be stronger than those with him. Another may be more realistic about what the body, particularly his own body, is able to perform and continually aspire to the themes of hegemonic masculinity. Others may attempt to totally reject and criticize hegemonic standards of performance and subvert them. "The one thing none of these men can do is ignore it." (Connell: 1995:55). The body, therefore, is inescapable. Connell (1995) adds that the most salient areas where the body is a means to measure and judge one's masculinity is in sport, labour and sex.

In labour, the body and its masculine performance also have economic value. Labour or the physical use of one's body to earn money is also associated with a particular class, namely the working class. Connell (1995) writes that there are also class and race associations with a particular use of the body. Labour and force is associated with black people and the lower classes. Skill and subtlety in the employment of the body is associated with whiteness,

education and the middle class. Therefore, the body also embodies many social structures and concepts.

Sheets-Johnstone (1994) also writes that the political is inherent in the body. It is built into the body. Harre` (1991) argues that the body is involved our sense of identity and wholeness. Our sense of self and identity is tied up with our bodies. An extreme illustration of this is how someone's identity changes through plastic surgery or a sex change, but more commonly, it is evident when someone gains or loses weight and our gender. Therefore, our bodies have attributes of power as well as affecting our identity. Thus, physically overpowering someone, scoring a goal in soccer, satisfying a lover, doing construction work, or typing at a computer is expressions of power and affects one's sense of maleness.

Gatens (1996: 110) writes commenting on Spinoza's concept of bodies, "The human body is radically open to it's surroundings and can be composed, recomposed and decomposed by other bodies...'encounters' with other bodies are good or bad depending on whether they aid or harm our characteristic constitution." Gatens (1996) writes that we are open to and require other bodies in order to survive. She also writes that these bodies can be more or less powerful than others.

We are, therefore, constantly vulnerable and at risk of other bodies. As children, our bodies are not powerful enough to defend ourselves against attack or to support ourselves with food. We need and fear other bodies with

greater abilities than our own. This power dynamic changes as our bodies age and grow. Fortunately, our bodies are 'protected' through the moral rights, which we impart to bodies and the persons whom they embody. As Harre` (1991) writes these bodies have moral rights to privacy and access. Who is allowed access to our bodies? We, in most cases, see ourselves as owning our bodies; we speak of exclusive rights to it. These rights are enforced through our own physical ability to keep others away from it, social norms and customs, as well as legislation.

According to this political understanding of the body, the body becomes a site where social meanings can be ascribed. What is clear is that the body becomes a tool with which to enact or perform various behaviours, which ascribe social meanings to that body. Men are able, if their bodies are capable, make themselves into the men that they want to be and are.

Also, bodies act upon other bodies to create meaning. These bodies, which are acted upon, whether male, female or transsexual, in turn have meaning ascribed to them through this interaction. These interactions affect identity, both personal and gendered, of the bodies (persons) involved. Men playing a game of squash or even chess, there is a victor and a loser and this result affects their identity. A simple example is that of a handshake. There are meanings surrounding what a handshake means. Is it a sign of respect, greeting, agreement or all of these and more? The particular social understanding of this "bodily" gesture depends on the social context. The firmness, duration, method, etc. of a handshake all have specific meanings

and depending on how an individual shakes hands with another individual it says something about them. These interactions also involve power.

If this handshake occurred between two men, and say that one of these men squeezed the others tightly, this could be interpreted as a means to intimidate the other man. This interaction positions one man as more powerful than the other. These interactions between people occur all the time. Connell (1987) postulates a gender-based hierarchy between and among men. He writes that this extends beyond class and race. Hegemonic (culturally exalted form of) masculinity exists only in relation to other subordinated or marginalised masculinity. These masculinities can only be on top if they are resting upon other “less desirable” masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is also able to attain this position through the subordination of women (Connell, 1987).

Kimmel (1994) discusses Freud’s process of the Oedipal project through which a child attains his masculine identity. Freud theorized that a boy firstly identifies with his mother, and desires her. The problem is that the father stands between the boy and his desire for his mother, and the father is much more powerful and larger than the boy. The boy then fears his father. Freud argued that this forced the boy to renounce his identification with his mother and identify with his father, in order to attain his male gender identity. The boy is then able to find a mother substitute (later on in life), another woman, and his sexual identity will resemble his father’s. Kimmel (1994:127) writes “the boy has to come to identify with his oppressor; now he can become the oppressor himself.” Kimmel (1994) goes further to argue that although the boy

becomes the oppressor, his fear still remains. Men fear that they will be exposed as weak or little boys underneath. Men, in this sense, fear other men who are more powerful than them and as their father did, expose them as frauds. Kimmel (1994) argues that men, therefore, constantly need to prove their masculinity throughout their lives. Connell (1987) adds that this original power disparity in the parent-child relationship is psychologically entrenched and can outlast changes in the physical and social context.

This need is expressed in the bully at a school, who constantly has to pick on those less powerful than him. In other words, he has to oppress them and so become the father-figure and empower himself. Men have to meet this challenge to be powerful, by constantly taking on the role of oppressor. It would follow that those who are the most insecure or impotent would need to assert themselves more desperately. Therefore, fighting and overpowering another (not only by physical means) stems not from a place of power, but rather from fear. Kimmel (1991) writes that this fear concerns being dominated by stronger men and being perceived as weak and thereby not male. This fear, thus, is a fear of losing one's masculinity. As stated earlier, Walker (2005) writes that this fear also extends to women who have now become more socially and politically empowered.

Why is there this experience of powerlessness? Although, it is commonly held that men are in power and control, rather the experience of most men is one of powerlessness. "I have no power at all. My wife bosses me around, my kids

boss me around, my boss bosses me around. I am completely powerless.”
(Kimmel, 1991:viii).

As has been discussed above, masculinity is a fragile identity. It is, according to psychodynamic theory, formed through fear and this fear remains throughout a man's life to varying degrees. Men, thus, experience this as an insecure identity, which needs to be proved through their ability to control their environment and others, using power. Masculinity has also been very narrowly socially constructed as needing to be powerful. The 'role' of a male is, therefore, not easy to pull off, because it does not allow for much improvisation. Masculinity remains something that one does and not something that one inherently is (Gutterman, 1991).

Another reason for this experience of powerlessness, in some males, is the social structures of race, class and status. Kimmel (1991) explains how men are in power relationships with other men. Men who are in power, and giving orders and those who are taking orders. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1991) argue that structural positions of men cannot be ignored. Men, because their identity is wrapped up in power, will experience these dynamics in relation to their identity.

How do men, who are in these oppressed positions, protect their identity? Hondagneu-Sotelo et al. (1991) points out that violence has a higher occurrence in areas of low socio-economic status than areas of higher status. This, in my opinion, is evident in our country, with the prevalence of violence

in previously disadvantaged areas, in the form of domestic violence, child abuse, and gangsterism. Hondagneu-Sotelo et al. (1991) goes further to argue that this is a defensive reaction on the part of men, who are structurally oppressed, to empower themselves.

“Using props”: The Violence and Crime of Rape

Moving away from the body, with the understanding that actions of and against other bodies can be used to construct masculine identity and empower men, I wish to focus upon a form of bodily encounter. This form of encounter is rape. Before looking at the sexual aspect of rape, I will examine rape as a crime. Understanding that disempowered men use violence as a resource to attain masculinity, I wish to focus more specifically on rape. I will now examine how crime and particularly violent crimes against the bodies of others can be used to empower men and help them attain a hegemonic form of masculinity.

“Crime by men is not simply an extension of the ‘male sex role’. Rather, crime by men is a form of social practice invoked as a resource when other resources are unavailable, for accomplishing masculinity.” (Messerschmidt, 1993: 85). As has been discussed in the previous section, men use various behaviours to construct their masculinity. Crime can be used to create a masculine identity. As stated in the above quotation, crime becomes a resource to perform and create masculinity.

As it seems, crime is a particularly popular resource for men to use. Messerschmidt (1993) writes that men constitute the vast majority of perpetrators of crime. This has been shown to be true throughout various and cultures. Rape, in particular, is portrayed as the domain of men. What are crimes meant to say about these men and how do they use it to construct

their identity. Messerschmidt (1993) writes that the crimes performed by men depend greatly on the social circumstances, which they find themselves. Therefore, with varying class, race and educational characteristics, the choice of crime varies. These specific social situations “produce configurations of behaviour that can be seen by others within the same immediate social situation as ‘essentially male’.” (Messerschmidt, 1993: 117). Therefore there is an interrelationship between the environment, social structures and the individuals involved, which validate certain forms of crime and associated behaviour as being male. These behaviours become signifiers of a male. They say that if these “acts” are performed then the individual performing them is a “certain type” of male. This becomes even more specific.

“Analyzing masculinity as behaviour situationally accomplished under specific structural constraints is crucial to understanding men (e.g., by age, class, and race) are most likely to engage in which types of sexual assault (e.g., gang rape vs. wife rape).” (Messerschmidt. 1993:116). Therefore depending on the social conditions in place, the behaviour, crime and variation within that crime change to meet those requirements. Therefore crime becomes specified according to the context in which it occurs.

An example would be a boy, who ‘skips classes’ and smokes in full view of teachers during a lunch break, would be viewed as ‘strong, defiant’ male in that school. This is dependent upon the reaction of the other persons in that school and if that type of behaviour was in that context exalted as ‘essentially male’. This boy’s masculinity would be hegemonic. This same sort of

behaviour holds no weight in an organized gang. This behaviour would either be ignored or have the opposite effect as it would in a school. In a gang context, other behaviours would be required to be performed in order to elevate an individuals' masculinity.

The choice of the behaviour is based on which behaviours or 'acts' have become social defined as male. These behaviours become resources, which can be accessed to perform masculinity. The choice of "essentially male" behaviour depends on what resources are available and how they can be used. These resources include the environment which if schoolyard, specific options become available and the same for a community, dark alley and home. It also depends upon the "props" available and how they can be used. This would include other persons and their bodies. Another aspect, which influences the choice of which behaviour, is who is viewing or witnessing the crime.

The viewing could be literal but I am referring to it conceptually. Whether the act is a prank, school fighting, being a member of a gang, gang rape or bedding many women, it is both viewed by others and completed using others. Other people are required to accomplish masculinity. Messerschmidt (1993) writes that masculinity is accomplished in relation to other men and women. This could also be seen in the research conducted by Luyt (2002) where the respondents generally spoke of their masculinity in relation to other men. One required a man to compete with, a family to support, a woman to be your sexual conquest, etc. Generally, hegemonic masculinity was established

through the subordination of another person, male or female. The same dynamic is present in crime and for the purpose of this essay, specifically rape.

Clark and Lewis (1977) discuss forms of behaviour, which illustrate this interaction. They describe rape as an ultimate symbol of male domination of a female (or another male). Gang rape is described as a display of masculine prowess to the other members within that group. It also builds group cohesion and the presence of other members helps to decrease anxiety. The woman or man who is the rape victim is the body or object used as a “prop” in the performance of masculinity and the act is viewed by others who witness the maleness of their fellow gang members as they rape. There exists also room for support and competition in this interaction. The men in the group also rank themselves against each other and the group provides support to aid in overcoming performance anxiety. I would argue that the same dynamic is present in team sports. This example is very illustrative, but the dynamic can be seen in other examples. The viewer can be both real and an internalized judge of masculinity based upon the media, personal history or any social standard which the actor adheres to.

These behaviours or “acts” are chosen because of the resources available, but also because these men are attempting to attain a specific type of masculinity. They attempt to attain hegemonic masculinities or the most culturally exalted masculinity. Connell (1995) writes that hegemonic masculinity is produced in relation to subordinated masculinities and women. Other masculinities and women need to be placed in a lower position of power

in order for hegemonic masculinity to be produced. This disempowering can occur in many ways. Now we have not only “acts” which produce masculinity but also oppressive or disempowering “acts” in order to produce a specific type of masculinity.

Men would need to aspire to exalted constructions of masculinity, which are powerful. Power would imply control and ownership. These are the themes identified by Luyt’s (2002) research on the masculinity in South Africa. Moolman (2004) writes how the gangs of the Cape Flats fight to have ownership and control over land and other capital. This capital also includes bodies, the bodies of members of a rival gang through ‘turf’ designation, other community members through intimidation and women through rape, including gang rape. Clark et.al. (1977) writes that a man’s control over women is an assertion of his masculine prowess. Men aim to possess the most desired/attractive girl, have many women and have control over these women.

Connell (1987) writes that rape is not purely between a person and another person, but is rather a reflection and enforcement of an existing social structure. This is a social structure where men are always more empowered than women. I would argue that it is also an enforcement of a desired social structure (Niehaus, 2005). Niehaus (2005) writes that men use violence and rape to reassert a gender hierarchy that is shifting. He also comments “violence reconfirms the nature of masculinity otherwise denied and represents a struggle for the maintenance of certain fantasies of identity and power.”(2005:70). Clark et.al. (1977) argue that the women who are targeted

for rape are those who are perceived to be threatening these “fantasies” and social structure. These include women who refuse their advances, are perceived to think highly of themselves, who openly challenge them, need punishment for cheating, wear revealing clothing, perceived virgins, etc.

Walker (2005) writes that men have come to feel threatened by women’s current social and economic empowerment. Connell (1987: 187) writes that “the option of compliance is central to the pattern of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support at present,” and that this quality is geared towards the satisfaction of men. Women are meant to be compliant in relation to men. They should be accepting of their discriminated social position and not attempt to disrupt it. Women who do attempt to empower themselves are seen as a threat. Men respond by punishing these women using means that are unavailable to women. They respond by using force and overpowering or rather reasserting their dominant social position and control over women. Moolman (2004: 113) explains, “A woman ‘gives’ permission to be raped by not abiding by the stipulated ‘rules’ associated with each of these restrictions as defined by gang members. Gang rape is used to punish this ‘undisciplined’ behaviour and to reinforce male control over women.”

Rape then becomes a means to assert male control over a woman. Clark et.al. (1977) in their research into the profile of a rapist, found that a picture of the rapist as a “loser” emerges. They found that the rapist is someone that in some way feels disempowered. This could either be through economic or personal disempowerment. This depicts rape as a bit of a class war with

economically disadvantaged men attacking women who are attempting to become or who are more empowered than themselves. This, though, is usually not the norm. Messerschmidt (1993: 113) writes “Rape, like other violent crimes, is basically an intraclass and intrarace phenomenon.” This tends to disrupt the notion that lower class, non-white men are usually attacking upper class, white women. Although this is the case, class does have an influence upon rape.

Messerschmidt (1993) writes that those who are far from other available resources use violence. Clark et.al (1977) also writes that violence is more prevalent in group settings. It appears that there is a negative correlation between the degree of violence used in rape and the social economic status of the perpetrator. As discussed in the ‘Masculinity and the body’ section, violence is one of the more essential resources available to men to perform masculinity. If a man has an able body, he will always have the resource of violence available to him. Therefore, the more disempowered he is in other spheres; the more this ability needs to be exaggerated and emphasized.

Messerschmidt (1993) found that in middle class homes where there is a dual income and an equal division of labour, rape usually is only as forceful as necessary to subdue the woman. These scenarios usually involve wife rape. These are model non-traditional homes within which the power relationship between the husband and wife is equal, but in this is not true for the sexual relationship. Here, men still aim to be dominant and it remains an area for men demand/require submission. The theme of heterosexuality, like violence,

remains an area within men still aim to be in control (Luyt, 2002). Heterosexuality, sexual performance and the sexual 'conquest' of a woman still remain an integral part of hegemonic masculinity (Luyt, 2002). These two areas of violence and sex come together in rape. Niehaus (2005: 69) explains, "marginal men who fell short of meeting masculine ideals were more likely to perpetrate rape. I argue that rape can also be seen as a violent attempt to symbolically assert – and sometimes even mimic – a dominant masculine persona. Through rape men demonstrate their heterosexual virility, humiliate economically successful women or enact an ideal of patriarchal rule within households." Power and control over women in these areas are used when the role of "breadwinner" and other forms of dominance are not available. It is also clear from Messerschmidt's (1993) research on middle class and professional men and Kimmel's (1991) psychological perspective that this powerlessness can be internal as well. These men tend to have less of a need to use violence but still tend to rape to enact this dominance.

I have examined how rape as a crime can be used by men to reassert a positive masculine identity. It can be accessed as a resource to make them feel more male, when other resources are not available. I have also examined the effect of the lack or presence of economic resources on the manner in which rape is performed. What has not been examined closely is the sexual aspect of the crime of rape. By analysing sex, what more can be revealed about the crime of rape? Why is it chosen over just basic violence? I am also particularly interested in the themes inherent in any heterosexual relationship and how they are used in rape.

“Scared of a girl?!”: Heterosexuality and Rape

As I have asserted earlier, as a rule I will generally refer to an understanding of rape between a man and a woman. In other words, I have written as if rape is always a heterosexual exchange. I am aware that male-male rape and child rape occurs but I am not going to deal with these in this essay. For now, I am only going to concentrate on a heterosexual relationships and a heterosexual rape between a man and a woman.

Why sex? When looking at the nature of sex it is easy to note that it holds the possibility of power dynamics. It involves high emotions, bodily vulnerability, nudity, cooperation, negotiation and literal invasion of bodily boundaries. These aspects of sex are usually ‘played with’ within sex relationships. Sexual partners enjoy the possibilities of dominance and submission inherent in sexual encounters. Extremes of this ‘play’ are evident within sadomasochistic practices or fetishes.

Messerschmidt (1993) writes that heterosexuality is fundamental to hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1987) describes the heterosexual relationship as inherently unequal. Our patriarchal social structure defines men as more dominant within sexual relationships. Men are also meant to have insatiable and aggressive sexual appetites, while women are constructed as docile and submissive. Men are meant to take the initiative and women are meant to be reluctant (Clark et.al, 1977). Women also buy into this concept. Walker (2005) comments that women also still desire and

exalt the hegemonic ideal of the male seducer and aggressor. Therefore, any 'traditional' hegemonic heterosexual encounter is constructed as a fox and hare scenario. The man is meant to 'chase' the woman, until she submits. This is not always the case. Women are and can be the aggressor. Our social structures have shifted and women are definitely more sexually aggressive than before. As with shifts in the economic, occupational and domestic realms, women have shifted sexually. Reid and Walker (2005) write of crisis tendencies within masculinity because there have been shifts in both public and private spheres. They explain that changes in the public have occurred through shifts in economic and political power, and in the intimate and private sphere there are changes in what is expected of men both sexually and emotionally. Although this is the case, hegemonic masculinity is still constructed with the male as dominant and the female submissive (Connell, 1987).

Generally, men are supposed to coerce women into sex (Connell, 1987). Women are still objectified sexually through the media and fashion. They are also held in submissive positions through patriarchal structures such as religion. These roles are not as defined as before and I will discuss the affect of this at a later stage. For now, I wish to focus on the concept that for any consensual sexual encounter to occur a negotiation has to occur. Women are traditionally constructed as the 'chased' and men as the chaser. Men are constructed as dominant and the woman as submissive. This requires an exchange in which the man gains the approval of the woman, and she chooses to allow him to have sex with her. The man requires permission.

Wertheimer (2003) writes that men have to use various tactics to acquire sexual access to a woman. Because she is constructed as needing to give permission, this places the woman in an empowered position. She has leverage over the man (Wertheimer, 2003). Not only does the man require permission but also he is required to perform (Connell, 1987). He writes that men are under pressure to perform sexually. Hegemonic masculinity requires men to have sexual prowess and the ability to please 'their' woman (Luyt, 2002). These themes are evident in the responses given by Luyt's research participants. They spoke of needing to be able to perform and a fear of being "ranked" by their female sexual partners in relation to their past sexual partners. Women are able to 'legitimately' want their own pleasure and are able to expect that from 'their' man (Connell, 1987).

Men need to provide motivation for women to consent to a sexual encounter. "Poorer men were not only less likely to marry: they were also less likely to engage in casual sex. In Impalahoek, as elsewhere in South Africa, non-marital sexual liaisons have a large transactional component. Men are generally expected to provide lovers and paramours with gifts and to purchase beer for women they meet in drinking houses." (Niehaus, 2005:72). He goes further to explain that these men become outcasts and are given derogatory names. Walker (2005) also writes that it is difficult for men to attempt to change these expectations and try to relate differently. She writes that if men do not meet the 'macho' norm they tend to be received negatively by both other men and women. Men who choose not to or who are not able to

meet these expectations of heterosexual masculinity find themselves in uncomfortable and disempowered masculine positions.

Herein is where a man's vulnerability lies. According to Luyt (2002), women are objects upon which men define themselves through sexual prowess. Respondents in his research commented on their anxiety about their sexual partners' ability to reject and evaluate them sexually. Luyt (2002: 66) writes that one of his respondents "articulated the weight of heterosexuality in hegemonic masculine accomplishment when he (the respondent) noted that to be liked by girls "was almost more important than anything else."

Messerschmidt (1993) writes that men are their most vulnerable to women in sex. He adds that sex itself does not necessarily have to be oppressive. Men are exposed to the potential of rejection, judged and ranked. Men actually have a lack of control, without force and if it matters to them, over the response of a prospective sexual partner. Men are caught somewhat between society asking them to be powerful and in control, while in the reality of a 'normal' sexual encounter they cannot be without desirable resources or force.

Messerschmidt (1993) describes incidents where men beat or rape their wives following a rejection. He writes that some men are so sensitive that many men beat their wives and girlfriends when they are pregnant. It seems that they interpret the new baby as an intruder and threatening the love his wife has for him. Wertheimer (2003) writes, "men consistently evaluate withholding of sex by their partners more negatively than women." Niehaus (2005) writes that

sexual violence occurs more frequently in where sexual entitlement is a strong feature of the construction of the masculinity in that context. Men then feel that it is right that a woman should be sexually available to them and if they are not are justified in using force. Violence or rape is used to regain a sense of power or control over their vulnerability and reassert their masculine status. These are men who are not assured of themselves and who experience a disruption between the ideals and expectations of the hegemonic masculinity in that context and their lived experience. They do not have the resources to meet these expectations. "Many young rapists were insecure and unable to assert their masculinity by other means. Many were described to me as mentally retarded youngsters and cannabis (dagga) smokers who were undesired as lovers and suffered humiliating rejections during courtship. Others were simply said to be 'scared of girls'." (Niehaus, 2005: 72). Resources can here be seen to be economic and/or social. Sex is not that simple for men. It is an area that is undefined and holds the possibility for feeling potent or impotent. The problem with the definition of hegemonic masculinity is that it sets very high standards.

Here follows another example of how a man can be disempowered in ways other than economically. This is an extract from a middle-class businessman who repeatedly raped his wife. "She was standing there in her nightie. The whole thing got me somewhat sexually stimulated, and I guess subconsciously I felt she was getting the better of me. It dawned on me to just throw her down and have at her... which I did. I must have reached out and grabbed at her breast. She slapped my hand away. So I said, "Lay down.

You're going to get it." She replied, "Oh no, you don't," so I grabbed her by the arms and she put up resistance for literally fifteen seconds and then just resigned herself to it. There were no blows or anything like that. It was weird. I felt very animalistic, and I felt very powerful. I had the best erection I'd had in years. It was very stimulating... I walked around with a smile on my face for three days."(Messerschmidt, 1993:151). This occurred during an argument which he was having with his wife about sex. He was losing the argument and felt controlled. In this home, both husband and wife had professional careers and there was an equal division of labour and income. It appeared to be a model of gender equality functioning in a home. This man still felt disempowered in relation to his wife and used rape to regain that power and control. From this account, it is clear that it need not be economically disempowered men who are the only perpetrators of rape.

It is clear that this experience made him feel very powerful and restored his sense of control. This is not only control over his wife, but it extends to other areas of his life, sexuality and marriage. It made him feel like a man again. Moolman (2004: 113) comments that "On a personal level, it appears that gang rape is a way for gang members to deal with emotions of hurt, anger and rejection they may experience in the family or elsewhere in the social sphere." Men use rape as a means of dealing with uncomfortable feelings of impotence, regardless of their origin. Reid et.al. (2005: 13) writes "it is often socially marginal and weak men who engage in rape in a futile attempt to assert painfully unrealistic ideals of masculine prowess and heterosexual prowess." Men, through rape, are attempting to restore a sense of power and

an ideal of what they understand a man should be but which they do not internally experience themselves to be.

The source of this powerlessness can be either internal or external or both. Connell (1987) discusses that according to Freud and Adler masculinity is based upon an original disparity of power between the child and the parent. In a previous section, I discussed how the Oedipal complex requires men to identify with their oppressor in order to attain their masculinity. Despite this achievement, they maintain a fear of being oppressed and being made to feel weak and lose their sense of masculinity. Connell (1987) writes that this fear can endure within men despite external achievements such as a strong physique or financial success. This need to oppress is legitimised through hegemonic conceptions of masculinities. Niehaus (2005) writes that for men who rape, the desire for sex becomes inseparable from the desire for power. Sex and rape then become the resources which men use to attain a 'desired' or hegemonic form of masculinity by oppressing another in that sexual encounter.

Globally and more recently in this country, patriarchal systems are changing rapidly and women have far more control over their own careers, choices and sexuality. As discussed prior, men see women's economic advancement as a threat. I would argue that men also experience women's sexual advancement as a threat. Now that 'traditional masculine' roles, such as sole breadwinner, are not exclusive to men, they find themselves in a position of needing to change or find other routes of empowerment. Reid et.al. (2005) writes that

when traditional roles are not available, alternative routes to attaining masculinity, such as sexual prowess and violence, take on exaggerated importance. Both violence and sexual prowess is encompassed in the act of rape.

Rape is not only a means to power, but it is a route, which holds little vulnerability for the perpetrator. Consensual sexual behaviour requires a negotiation. A woman can be seduced through various means to give this consent to access to her sexuality. As has been discussed before, this opens a man to being rejected and/or evaluated or in some way made to feel less powerful. This vulnerability is usually accepted or dealt with by men in non-violent ways. Men who already feel disempowered through their circumstances cannot tolerate this vulnerability and use rape to surpass the negotiation usually associated with a sexual encounter. The use of force and violence removes a woman's power and her sexuality and objectifies her. The man can then use her as an object, which he can use as a "prop" to enact his masculinity. This removal of power allows the man to regain his sense of power and achieve a hegemonic masculinity.

Rape then becomes a route with which to achieve power and avoid vulnerability. This sense of impotence and invulnerability allows these men to achieve a hegemonic masculinity. The variety and particular manner in which a rape is carried out, such as degree of violence, becomes a function of how structurally disempowered the man may be. It also depends upon the construction of hegemonic masculinity in that particular context. Change in

this regard can only occur when there is a change in the hegemonic construction of masculinity. Femininity has shifted and infringed upon masculinities turf.

Masculinity has not yet redefined itself in a manner that does not require it to disempower another. Walker (2005) writes of men's discussion groups within which men are able to use reflexivity to come to understand them and make different choices about how to deal with their powerlessness. Moolman (2004) writes that men who have attained financial and other successes are empowered enough to move into these reflexive spaces and not need to be exclusively defined by their sexuality or physique. Some men have been able to access other means of being empowered and others still have not been able to redefine their own masculinity through reflexive processes. For large-scale change, a change in social structures, gender and sexuality will have to occur. Perhaps an accumulation of individual awareness will bring about large-scale change. I would argue that this process is already occurring.

Conclusion

Before concluding this essay, I wish to point out some limitations of my research. It was limited in that it has a very narrow scope and cannot be described as extensive. I believe that it does represent an overview of the literature within the boundaries (South African, recent, salient, social constructionist perspective) of enquiry, which I have set. The length of the essay also limited the scope of the research.

When exploring the relationship between rape and masculinity, I initially decided to view it through a broad social lens. Looking at masculinity in South Africa, it is clear that it is in flux. Masculinity in South Africa has a violent, authoritarian history. Race was also very salient to these masculinities. Currently, the political change in South Africa has resulted in a change in values. Current values are those of tolerance and equality. These political and ideological changes have led to confusion and a need for renegotiation in how men define themselves. There is also a greater focus upon class than race.

I used research conducted on masculinity in South Africa and explored the themes identified through it. These themes involve strength and power, power over money, one's body and other bodies. It also involved control over emotions, the self and others. Ownership was also identified as a key theme. Important for this essay, was the theme of heterosexuality. This involved dynamics of dominance and submission as well as vulnerability and anxiety.

I then considered the relationship between masculinity and the body. Masculinity is difficult to define through biological signifiers as well as difficult to define conceptually. Therefore, masculinity is inherently conceptually ambiguous. With the changes in society and femininity, men find that they have lost a traditional sense of their role in society or in relation to women.

Using a social constructionist perspective on gender and masculinity, I used an understanding that masculinity is not fixed and is performative. I also explored the concept of hegemonic masculinity and how men can attain it. I particularly focussed on the body and its ability (or lack thereof) to perform and attain hegemonic masculinity. This is especially evident in realms of sport, labour and sex. Power is also inherent in the body and in bodily interactions. I explored the ability of the body to overpower and to be overpowered. This is an important concept in relation to the body and with regards to the topic of rape.

Hereafter, I moved to the understanding that crime can be used as resource to overpower and perform and so attain masculinity. With regard to this, there is a need to attain hegemonic masculinity. Class also tends to affect the degree of violence in the crime of rape. Rape is also used by economically empowered men who feel disempowered in other spheres. It is clear that other bodies, in this case female bodies, are used as 'props' to perform masculinity through the crime of rape.

Lastly, I considered how the power dynamics in heterosexuality affects the crime of rape. The accomplishment of heterosexuality is essential to hegemonic masculinity. The roles of dominance (male) and submission (female) in traditional heterosexuality are taken to the extreme in rape. Normal consensual sex usually involves the female giving the permission and approval to the male. This possibility of rejection and possible disapproval with regards to sexual performance results in sex being a vulnerable space for men. Rape it seems removes this negotiation and vulnerability. Men are able to have the empowerment through a sexual encounter without any of the risk.

A combination of a changing socio-political climate and change in femininity has caused masculinity to be in a state of confusion. It seems that given our previous Apartheid conceptions of masculinity some men have resorted to crime and rape as a means to attain a hegemonic masculinity. Heterosexuality and sex also holds power dynamics, which can be abused in order to empower one over another. Many men seem to experience a painful distinction between the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and their lived experience. It seems that when men are unable to access “traditional” routes to hegemonic masculinity, due to a lack of economic and/or social resources, men resort to violent or sexual options. Rape encompasses both of these options and provides a resource to attain empowerment and a desired form of masculinity. In order for change to occur, men have to find alternative, non-violent routes to an empowered form of masculinity. Our countries economic inequality limits these possibilities. Reflexive spaces within which men can

explore their own masculinity need to be opened. Men have to find new meanings for “being a man” that does not require them to overpower others.

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