

# **IMAGES OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES WITHIN CULTURAL CONTEXTS: A PASTORAL ASSESSMENT**

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by

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**To Carina and Anna Catharina,  
for your patience, understanding and encouragement.**

“In the vicious circle of poverty  
it can be said: God is not dead. He is bread.  
In the vicious circle of force  
God’s presence is experienced as liberation for human dignity and responsibility.  
In the vicious circle of alienation  
his presence is perceived in the experience of human identity and recognition.  
In the vicious circle of the destruction of nature  
God is present in joy and existence in peace between man and nature.  
In the vicious circle of meaninglessness and god-forsakenness,  
finally, he comes forward  
in the figure of the  
**crucified Christ, who communicates the courage to be”**

**- Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (1974: 337-338) -**

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### - SOLI DEO GLORIA -

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## DECLARATION

I declare that, *Images of men and masculinities within cultural contexts: a pastoral assessment* is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Jacobus Stéphan van der Watt; Aliwal North, June 2007.

## Table of contents

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: PREAMBLE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1. INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCHER.....	17
2. INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME OF STUDY.....	19
3. THE GOAL OF THE STUDY .....	21
4. PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	23
5. HYPOTHESIS .....	24
6. RESEARCH TERMINOLOGY, METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE.....	27
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN IDENTITY, GENDER AND MASCULINITIES – THE CULTURAL-HERMENEUTICAL DIMENSION .....</b>	<b>32</b>
1. INTRODUCTION.....	32
2. THE MOVEMENT FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM.....	34
2.1 Postmodernism, deconstruction and hermeneutics – a pastoral perspective.....	36
3. PASTORAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION	38
3.1 Globalisation and its impact on human identity.....	40
3.2 Globalisation and gender challenges practical theology and pastoral hermeneutics .	42
4. A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INTRODUCTION ON GENDER.....	45
5. GENDER IDENTIFIED AS ESSENCE OR CONSTRUCT – OR BOTH? .....	48
5.1 Biological models.....	50
5.2 Anthropological models .....	51
5.3 Psychological models.....	51
5.3.1 Male and female (sex) roles .....	53
5.4 Sociological models .....	55
5.5 Precursory summary of the four models’ depiction of gender.....	56
6. LANGUAGE AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER .....	57
6.1 Binary logic as linguistic interpretive framework of gender.....	59
6.2 Gender identity.....	61
6.3 Gender roles and stereotypes.....	62
7. THE GENDERED CONTEXT WITHIN A GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE	64
7.1 Perspectives on (sexual) violence against women and HIV in South Africa.....	66
7.2 Globalisation and the issue of gender mainstreaming.....	68
7.3 Feminism/s and theories on gender.....	71
7.4 African women’s Theologies’ contribution .....	73
7.5 Men and the struggle for gender equality (in South Africa) .....	75
8. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN GENDER AND MASCULINITY/IES .....	79
8.1 Changing conceptions of men and masculinities – globally and locally .....	83
8.2 Some terminological clarifications.....	84
9. A SCOPE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MASCULINITY STUDIES .....	84
9.1 Global reactions to feminism/s.....	85
9.1.1 The first generation of reactions.....	85
9.1.2 The second generation of reactions .....	88
9.2 The question of hegemony .....	90
10. MASCULINITIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE AND/OR CRISIS?.....	92
10.1 The dynamic interplay between fatherhood and manhood as an example.....	95
10.1.1 Fathers in society (specifically the media) and the politics of fatherhood.....	98
10.1.2 The reconstruction of fathering capacities .....	100
11. CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY.....	102
11.1 Perspectives on (black) African masculinity in South Africa .....	104

11.2 Post-1994 views on (white) “Afrikaner” masculinity in South Africa .....	107
12. MEN’S MOVEMENTS .....	111
12.1 Defining remarks on some men’s movements .....	111
12.2 The mythopoetic men’s movement .....	114
12.3 Meaningful critique on the mythopoetic men’s movement .....	116
12.3.1 South African perspectives on the mythopoetic men’s movement .....	119
13. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	120
<b>CHAPTER 3: IMAGES OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES IN THE MASS MEDIA</b>	
<b>CULTURE–THE PRESCRIPTIVE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ...</b>	<b>124</b>
1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER .....	124
2. THE INFORMATION AGE AND ITS CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS .....	127
3. ANALYSING THE MEDIA CULTURE IN A POSTMODERN PARADIGM.....	130
4. THE MASS MEDIA .....	132
4.1 Mass media (communication) defined .....	132
4.2 The power of the mass media.....	134
4.3 Mass media in a globalising world.....	136
5. MEDIA INFLUENCE ON GENDER REPRESENTATION AND RELATIONS.....	137
6. MEDIA AND MASCULINITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXTS.....	140
7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE MEDIA .....	144
7.1 Theological incentives to view films as texts of life meaning .....	144
8. EXPLORING SOME FILMS ON MASCULINITY – IMPLICATIONS FOR VIEWING	
MASCULINITY AS PERFORMANCE.....	150
8.1 Depictions of masculinity and men in films in the 1920’s and 1930’s .....	150
8.2 More recent depictions of masculinity and men (in films of the 1980’s-1990’s)....	152
9. THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES .....	156
9.1 Recent typifications of men and masculinities.....	156
9.2 Interpreting discourses and images from men’s magazines.....	159
9.2.1 Some British men’s magazines .....	161
9.3 <i>Men’s Health</i> Magazine (MHM) – something different (or not!?).....	162
9.3.1 A closer look at men’s health .....	163
9.3.2 The harmful roots of hegemonic masculinity in MHM’s focus.....	165
9.3.3 The ideal man further defined .....	169
9.3.4 Messages in the bodies of men in MHM’s focus.....	170
9.4 South African MHM – an empirical analysis.....	171
9.4.1 Introduction .....	171
9.4.2 An empirical analysis of 60 South African MHM issues.....	172
9.4.3 Branded masculinity as main feature of MHM.....	178
9.5 Fashion shaping masculinity .....	179
10. OTHER NEW TRENDS IN POPULAR CULTURE’S VIEW OF MANHOOD .....	183
10.1 The Metrosexual.....	183
10.2 The Übersexual .....	186
10.3 Masculinity performed in popular advertisements.....	187
10.3.1 Beer commercials as a “manual on masculinity” .....	187
11. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	189
<b>CHAPTER 4: EMBODIMENT AND POWER – CHALLENGES TO ENCOUNTERS</b>	
<b>OF MALE INTIMACY .....</b>	<b>191</b>
1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER .....	191
2. MALE BODIES .....	193
2.1 Gender, differences and men’s bodies .....	193
2.2 Materialising men’s bodies and masculinities .....	195



2.3 Male bodies in the media – an introduction .....	197
<b>3. MEN, MASCULINITIES AND POWER.....</b>	<b>199</b>
3.1 Patriarchal power.....	200
3.2 Power in terms of Michael Foucault’s conceptualisation .....	203
<b>4. MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY AND THE QUESTION OF POWER.....</b>	<b>207</b>
4.1 The impact of power on sexuality: the crisis of human dignity .....	207
4.2 Male sexuality in a globalising, media-saturated culture.....	209
4.3 Sexual biotechnology and the masculine body as technological product .....	212
4.4 The creed of ‘big, hard and up’ remains intact .....	214
<b>5. INTIMACY-VOID CAUSED BY AN EXACERBATED ACHIEVEMENT-ETHOS</b>	<b>220</b>
5.1 Emotional mechanics of male intimacy: suppressing tenderness, self-acceptance..	223
<b>6. MEN AND POWER ABUSE THROUGH VIOLENCE AND CRIME .....</b>	<b>226</b>
6.1 Men’s talk about and agencies’ response to men’s violence .....	228
<b>7. POWER DISPLAYS IN THE DOMAIN OF SPORT.....</b>	<b>231</b>
7.1 Sporting bodies, power and its masculine idealisations.....	234
7.2 Sport, muscles and Christianity.....	235
<b>8. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS A PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND A MEANINGFUL THEOLOGY OF EMBODIMENT .....</b>	<b>241</b>
1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER.....	241
2. RATIONALE BEHIND A PASTORAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE....	243
3. BASIC DOGMATIC TENETS OF A PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY .....	247
3.1 Created in God’s image ( <i>Imago Dei</i> ) .....	247
3.2 The essential role of pneumatology in our eschatological re-creation.....	252
4. THE TRINITY AND HUMAN (GENDER) IDENTITY – POSSIBLE INTERPLAY	255
4.1 Contemporary insights on the relationship: Trinity and anthropology .....	255
4.1.1 The potency and peril of a trinitarian understanding of human relations via perichoresis.....	259
4.2 Possible re-interpretations of gender relations from a (trinitarian) theological perspective.....	267
4.2.1 The problem of (gendered) God-language .....	269
5. CORE PRINCIPLES OF A THEOLOGY OF EMBODIMENT .....	273
5.1 A holistic perspective on being a sexual (hu)man.....	275
5.2 An ethos of bodily integration that promotes justice and human dignity .....	278
5.3 Dualisms, sexual salvation and the significance of the body in experiencing God .	280
5.4 The transformation of men’s bodies (and men’s gods) in the quest for intimacy....	284
5.4.1 Body wisdom (listening to our bodies) and care (nurturing our bodies) .....	287
6. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN MALE SEXUALITY AND SPIRITUALITY .....	291
6.1 Getting to grips with spirituality as phenomenon .....	291
6.2 Contemporary attempts to integrate maleness and spirituality .....	296
6.2.1 Non-Christian attempts .....	296
6.2.2 Some less meaningful (evangelical) Christian attempts .....	298
6.2.3 Some more meaningful Christian attempts .....	307
6.3 Reconnecting sexuality and spirituality by making space for the erotic.....	310
7. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	315
<b>CHAPTER 6: RE-INTERPRETING MEN, POWER AND GOD ESCHATOLOGICALLY .....</b>	<b>317</b>
1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER.....	317
2. (PHALLIC AND PENILE) POWER IN TERMS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY.	319
3. DECONSTRUCTING AND RE-INTERPRETING NOTIONS OF GOD’S POWER.	324

3.1 Men and God-images in terms of gender .....	324
3.1.1 Problematic issues connected to God as Father .....	327
3.2 Men's (mis)conceptions of relational power within contemporary contexts .....	331
3.3 Looking for other meaningful ways of understanding God and God's power.....	333
3.4 An alternative understanding of God's power .....	337
<b>4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A <i>THEOLOGIA CRUCIS</i> AND A <i>THEOLOGIA</i></b>	
<b><i>RESURRECTIONIS</i>.....</b>	<b>340</b>
4.1 Spiritual health defined within a culture of 'healthism' .....	343
4.2 Spiritual health and vitality via an ecological orientation.....	345
4.3 The cross and resurrection of Christ: implications for the pastoral care of men .....	347
<b>5. TOWARD A HOPEFUL RE-INTERPRETATION OF MASCULINITY OUT OF AN</b>	
<b>ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE .....</b>	<b>351</b>
5.1 Neutralising the plea for performance with a spirituality of vulnerable courage.....	354
5.1.1 What does a spirituality of vulnerable courage then entail and envisage?.....	355
5.1.2 Christ as normative-critical counter-image to men's cultural power struggles	357
5.2 Restoring the intimacy void .....	359
<b>CHAPTER 7: REVIEW, KEY FINDINGS AND BALANCE.....</b>	<b>364</b>
1. INTRODUCTION.....	364
2. CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS.....	365
3. CHAPTER 3 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS.....	368
4. CHAPTER 4 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS.....	373
5. CHAPTER 5 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS.....	378
6. CHAPTER 6 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS.....	384
7. PIVOTAL INSIGHTS AND BALANCE .....	392
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>398</b>
<b>FILMOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>435</b>
<b>OTHER INTERNET SOURCES.....</b>	<b>436</b>
<b>ADDENDA.....</b>	<b>437</b>
<b>ADDENDUM A: ANALYSIS OF 60 MONTHLY SOUTH-AFRICAN <i>MEN'S HEALTH</i></b>	
<b>MAGAZINE (MHM) COVER-PAGES COVERING THE PERIOD FROM APRIL 2001</b>	
<b>TO SEPTEMBER 2006 .....</b>	<b>437</b>
1. MHM <i>FRONT COVER PAGES in 2001</i> .....	437
2. MHM <i>FRONT COVER PAGES in 2002</i> .....	438
3. MHM <i>FRONT COVER PAGES in 2003</i> .....	441
4. MHM <i>FRONT COVER PAGES in 2004</i> .....	444
5. MHM <i>FRONT COVER PAGES in 2005</i> .....	448
6. MHM <i>FRONT COVER PAGES in 2006</i> .....	451
<b>ADDENDUM B: MEDIA ARTICLE – Wasserman (2006) .....</b>	<b>456</b>
<b>ADDENDUM C: MEDIA ARTICLE – Reuters (2004) .....</b>	<b>458</b>
<b>ADDENDUM D: MEDIA ARTICLE – Viall (2005).....</b>	<b>459</b>
<b>ADDENDUM E: MEDIA ARTICLE – Davis (2005).....</b>	<b>462</b>
<b>ADDENDUM F: MEDIA ARTICLE - Joubert (2007) .....</b>	<b>465</b>
<b>ADDENDUM G: MEDIA ARTICLE – Cox (2005) .....</b>	<b>466</b>
<b>ADDENDUM H: MEDIA ARTICLE – SAPA (2006).....</b>	<b>470</b>
<b>ADDENDUM I: INFORMATION REGARDING CBMW AND CBE .....</b>	<b>471</b>



## ABSTRACT

Hierdie studie is 'n navorsingsreis op die snykant van die veld van praktiese teologie. Dit neem deel aan 'n pastorale ondersoek van hedendaagse mans en manlikhede in die verskeie opsigte waarop hul verteenwoordig en beliggaam word. 'n In-diepte assessering van huidige interpretasie-skemas - oor die onderwerp van manlikheid - word gedoen binne verskillende kulturele kontekste, met die doel om dit hermeneuties in dialoog te bring met 'n pastoraal-antropologiese perspektief op manlikheid. Hierdie dialoog word geïnisieër ten einde dieper insig te verkry in diverse manlikhede en die uitdagings wat hulle die hoof moet bied in hul soeke na sin, intimiteit en vitaliteit. Die punt van hierdie dialoog is eerder om te beskryf as om voor te skryf.

Die dissertasie analiseer – deur 'n multi-dissiplinêre invalshoek - 'manlikhede soos dit ervaar en uitgeleef word' in die lewe asook 'manlikhede soos dit verteenwoordig word' in die massa media sowel as in ander vorme van populêre kultuur. Dit is verder gemik op die kontekstuele, teologiese dekonstruksie van hierdie kulturele verteenwoordigings, asook die tot stand bring en bevordering van betekenisvolle verbande tussen manlike identiteit, menswaardigheid en Christelike spiritualiteit. Die fokus in hedendaagse (sosiologiese en sielkundige) navorsing oor manlikheid val op die uitleef van manlikhede oftewel die 'doen' van manlikhede, eerder as om manlik te 'wees'. Die dominante kulturele beelde van manlikheid binne 'n geglobaliseerde lewensbestel suggereer en bevorder materialistiese waardes soos effektiwiteit, prestasie, meganisasie en funksionaliteit. Hierdie beelde word ge-evalueer en die interaksie tussen dit (die kulturele beelde) en moontlike konseptualiserings van God (Godsbeelde) word verken.

Hierdie studie voer aan dat mans se identiteit, selfverstaan en spiritualiteit op velerlei maniere gevorm word deur hierdie beelde, maar dat die beeld van die gekruisigde en opgestane Christus inderdaad kan dien as 'n betekenisvolle en normatief-kritiese kontra-beeld tot die "macho"-beelde wat deur meeste postmoderne manlikhede versinnebeeld word (maar wat baie mans huidiglik as verwarrend ervaar). Hierdie kontra-beeld van Christus kan die misbruik van mag, asook die fokus op prestasie en die kommodifisering van manlike beliggaming oorstyg in mans

se lewens – deurdat hulle deelneem aan ’n spiritualiteit van weerlose moed. ‘n Pastoraal-antropologiese perspektief word dus hier benut ten einde die klem op manlike identiteit in terme van gender en seksualiteit te verskuif, in die rigting van ‘n spirituele verstaan van manlike identiteit in terme van menswaardigheid en menslike bestemming (d.i. die soeke na sin).

Die belangrike vraagstuk van die verhouding tussen mag, manlikheid en manlike beliggaming word aangeraak. Essentialistiese idees oor manlikheid word gedekonstrueer, en ’n herinterpretasie daarvan word voorgestel binne ’n werklikheidsverstaan wat ’n aards-gesentreerde en beliggaamde spiritualiteit bevestig en waardeer. Manlikheid en manlike identiteit word in hierdie opsig “gered” van ’n kommersiële verskraling deur middel van ’n eskatologiese en pneumatologiese perspektief. Hierdie teologiese herinterpretasie van manlikheid bied ’n kritiese faktor op die kulturele opvatting dat manwees iets is wat gevalideer moet word deur middel van prestasie (veral op die gebied van seksualiteit).

Manwees, gesien vanuit ‘n eskatologiese perspektief, is dus meer as viriliteit wat gemanifesteer moet word deur doen-funksies. Die kultureel-bepaalde verstaan van manlikheid – in terme van brutale mag en beheer - word in hierdie opsig ‘ontman’ binne hierdie navorsingstuk. In die lig van Christus se opstanding is daar nuwe hoop vir die herinterpretasie van manlikheid. Die postmoderne man se opstanding word daarom nie gewaarborg deur die “Viagra tower blou pil” nie, maar eintlik deur die opstanding van Christus, wat daagliks nuwe sinvolle dimensies van hoop in die geglobaliseerde lewensmatriks vrystel en bevestig.

Die krag van manlikheid lê dus in die beliggaming van weerloosheid en wederkerige relasionaliteit, tesame met die weerstand bied teen unilaterale en hiërargiese verhoudings. Binne hierdie konteks is manwees nie gelyk aan die grootte van doelwitte wat bereik is of sukses, prestasie of kragtige penetrasie nie. Nee, manwees omvat eerder die kapasiteit vir liefdevolle, gasvrye verhoudings asook die afmeting van die siel se diepte van karakter, d.i. die kapasiteit daarvan om die ‘moed om te wees’ te beliggaam.

This study is an endeavour on the cutting edge of the field of practical theology. It engages in a pastoral assessment of contemporary men and masculinities in their manifold representations and embodiments. An in-depth assessment of current schemata of interpretation (on the issue of masculinity), is done within different cultural contexts, aiming to hermeneutically put this into dialogue with a pastoral-anthropological view on masculinity. This dialogue is initiated in order to gain deeper insight into diverse masculinities and the challenges they face in their search for meaning, intimacy and vitality. The point of the dialogue here is rather to describe than to prescribe.

The dissertation analyses ‘masculinities as experienced and enacted’ in life and ‘masculinities as represented’ in the mass media as well as in other forms of pop culture, through a multidisciplinary perspective. It is further aimed at the contextual, theological deconstruction of these cultural representations and the establishment and furthering of meaningful connections between male identity, human dignity and Christian spirituality. The focus in contemporary (sociological and psychological) research on masculinity is on enactment of masculinities or ‘doing’ masculinities rather than ‘being’ masculine. The dominant cultural images of masculinity within a globalising life-order suggest and promote materialistic values such as efficiency, performance, mechanisation and functionality. These images are assessed and the interplay between it (the cultural images) and conceptualisations of God (God-images) are explored.

This study asserts that men’s identity, self-understanding and spirituality is shaped in many ways by these images, but that the image of the crucified and risen Christ can indeed serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the macho-images portrayed by most postmodern masculinities (which many men presently experience as confusing). This counter-image of Christ can transcend the abuse of power, the focus on performance and the commodification of male embodiment, in men’s lives, as they engage in a spirituality of vulnerable courage. A pastoral-anthropological perspective is employed in order to shift the emphasis on male identity in terms of gender and sexuality, towards a spiritual understanding of male identity in terms of human dignity and human destiny (i.e. the quest for meaning).

The important question of the relationship between power, masculinity and male embodiment is addressed. Essentialist ideas about masculinity are deconstructed, and a re-interpretation thereof is introduced within a view of reality that affirms and embraces an earth-centred and embodied spirituality. Masculinity and male identity is in that sense “saved” from a commercial reduction by means of an eschatological and pneumatological perspective. This theological re-interpretation of masculinity presents a critical factor on the cultural notion that manhood is something that must be validated by means of performance (especially on the terrain of sexuality).

Masculinity, viewed from an eschatological perspective, is thus more than virility that has to be manifested by doing functions. The culturally-determined understanding of masculinity - in terms of brutal power and control – is in this sense ‘emasculated’ in this study. In the light of Christ’s resurrection, there is new hope for the re-interpretation of masculinity. The postmodern man’s resurrection is therefore not guaranteed by the “Viagra-magic blue pill”, but in actual fact by the resurrection of Christ who daily unleashes and affirms new meaningful dimensions of hope in the globalised life-matrix.

The power of masculinity thus lies in embodying vulnerability and mutual relationality, contesting unilateral and hierarchical relations. Within this context manhood is not equal to the size of achievement or success, nor performances or powerful penetration, but it rather denotes the capacity for lovingly hospitable relationships and the measure of the soul’s depth of character, i.e. its capacity to embody and affirm the courage to be.

## KEY TERMS

Cultural hermeneutics; deconstruction; eschatology; gender; globalization; human dignity; identity; images; intimacy; male bodies; male embodiment; male sexual identity; masculinity/masculinities; mass media; pastoral anthropology; patriarchal power; patriarchalism; pneumatology; postmodernism; relationality; sexuality; spirituality; sporting bodies; theology of embodiment; theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*); theology of the resurrection (*theologia resurrectionis*); Trinity; vulnerability.

## CHAPTER 1: PREAMBLE

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCHER

At the start of this dissertation, I<sup>1</sup> would like to note the following before endeavouring on this research journey with the reader, seeing that an integral part of this journey is informed by my social location as (co-)interpreter of the theme under discussion. Stating who I am as researcher is therefore a very necessary and integral part of the process of interpretation. I belong to a culture (and a church denomination) that accepted (and theologically undergirded) the patriarchal rule of men and the marginalisation of women in many ways and spheres of life<sup>2</sup>. This is also a part of my identity and it co-constructed my social reality, although I did not and do not choose to promote these oppressive practices and make it the norm in my daily life.

I believe that a trap that tempts many people is to assume, even for a split second, that my experiences are the norm for others. Men's experiences are as diverse as are those of women: poor and privileged, old and young, married and single, belonging to different cultures, races and religions. Although I take cognisance not to assume that my experiences are the norm for others, the reality of me being a Christian, white South African man remains the starting point from which I do research. I am also a young, able-bodied, heterosexual, Afrikaner<sup>3</sup> Christian (and Dutch Reformed<sup>4</sup>-affiliated minister) interpreting gender issues in a South African, post-apartheid context, and therefore I believe it is of vital importance that I state "my position"<sup>5</sup>.

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1 Later in this dissertation the third person mode of speaking will be used.

<sup>2</sup> |The nature and influence of this patriarchal rule of men and marginalisation of women - within different cultural contexts - will be explicated in detail later in the dissertation.

3 I am aware of the current debates regarding the concept "Afrikaner". It is a controversial concept which elicits huge varieties of opinion. A detailed discussion of this issue unfortunately transcends the scope of this dissertation. It will suffice to note that I here specifically refer to my being an "Afrikaner" (in the traditional sense) as an Afrikaans-speaking, white Afrikaner (male) person, without excluding other ethnic groups in South Africa's self-identification as being "Afrikaners".

4 The Dutch Reformed Church is struggling with her identity in a so-called new South Africa. Being known as the "apartheid church" has placed a lot of pressure on the church's leaders, theologians and members to come to grips with their sinful legacy of theologically undergirding apartheid, and of South Africa being the place par excellence where the segregation of white, brown, black and Indian citizens took on a very concrete form. Brown, black and Indian worshippers were not allowed to attend services in white Dutch Reformed congregations and sermons were the vehicles of communicating the Afrikaner "Volk's" separateness from the "heathen peoples" of the country. Since 1994, with the onset of a democratic dispensation, the church had to start answering difficult theological and social questions, such as the problem of the (theological justification of) apartheid. According to Bosman (2005) this



From my experiences in the so-called new South Africa I have realised that a respectful, tolerant and inclusive ethos (as proposed in the constitution of our country), with regards to gender identity and construction, does not flow automatically from positive changes in political identity (i.e. our new democratic dispensation). On a secondary level, my research therefore also takes serious cognisance of South African scholarly reflections which oppose unjust and degrading systems like apartheid (with its alienating patriarchal and subjugating ideologies of white - and dominantly male - Afrikaner supremacy)<sup>6</sup>, although this will not be in the main focus of this dissertation's content at all. This dissertation will however focus on the issue of masculine identity (within the field of gender studies) and the related questions of power (and its abuse), embodiment and intimacy within a Christian spirituality.

After approximately thirteen years of democracy in South Africa, I perceive (through cultural analysis) that many of the old divisions in our society still exist. This, of course, has many causes (and is inextricably bound-up with the economic realities of poverty, unemployment and the HIV pandemic), but one can be highlighted. Although, on a political level the identity of people in South Africa has changed (a democratic government and a liberal constitution), there are still too few examples of true reconciliation between groups, religions and individuals. I suspect that this is the case partly because the gendered social identity of people has not yet changed fundamentally. Understandably this process will take time.

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situation in white congregations in South Africa can be identified as a struggle “for a new identity” in which the old apartheid myths have to be exposed and challenged. Mainline churches in South Africa have shrunk and are experiencing a loss of power and marginalization. This inevitably leads to the importance of investigating the identity of Christian communities/congregations, and equally (specific in this dissertation) the need to explore the nature of the gendered identities within and around the cultures of such Christian communities of faith.

5 My “position” is a place with blind spots, boundaries and limitations as well as a place of uniquely lived experience – which constitutes my schemes of interpretation of life and my approach to this research in particular.

6 For some recent examples of the Afrikaner's search for identity in a new democratic dispensation, see Krog (1998), Durand (2002) and Giliomee (2003). Antjie Krog (1998), a well-known Afrikaans poet, in her book “Country of my skull” describes the journey that she underwent as a journalist covering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The book is more than journalism, it is an account of her own struggle with “Afrikanerhood,” and how Afrikaners should make meaning out of their history of being oppressors and culprits. Durand, in his book (2002) “Ontluisterde wêreld: Die Afrikaner en sy kerk in 'n veranderende Suid-Afrika” (English: “Tarnished world: The Afrikaner and his church in a changing South Africa”), addresses (in a more popularized way) the same problem of the transformation of the Afrikaner and the Afrikaner churches in a changed South Africa. Giliomee's “The Afrikaners: Biography of a people” (2003) gives an overview of the history of the Afrikaners and describes the process of oppression under the English, and the rise of apartheid as political segregationist system. It becomes clear that the Afrikaners are not only seen as culprits, but in a certain sense also as victims.

Being an Afrikaner and a theologian in a newly liberated South Africa opens one's eyes to the place of minority groups, to the question of ethnic and gender identity, to the reality and dynamics of a culturally and religiously pluralistic society. My personal biography has made me sensitive to these issues and influenced my choice of topic. Doing research on the construction of masculine identity - in different cultural contexts including South Africa - is therefore not a random choice of topic, but is born out of my own search for identity as a white, male, Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner living in the (so-called) post-apartheid South Africa. The questions rising out of dealing with the past and finding a new identity need to be faced openly and integrated honestly, also in writing academically. This is the arduous, but meaningful journey I believe we are on as partners in this research endeavour: the journey of finding a usable gendered future in our conflicted past.

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME OF STUDY

*The theme of the study is:*

**“Images of men and masculinities within cultural contexts: a pastoral assessment.”**

The question: “Am I man enough?”, is often one that is left unasked, but which dwells on the periphery of a large amount of men's levels of consciousness. Sometimes it is too daunting to verbalise, but it still stays of definitive value within dominant ‘masculinities’ in the modern West. Masculinity can nowadays not often be accepted as something evident and lucid. It is, on the contrary, rather something that must be proven within the globalising life-order of the Western culture. This knowledge creates an uncomfortable intensity in many men's lives, seeing that they can feel endangered by a sense of incompetence, namely that they are not good enough, but must prove that they are ‘man enough’.

This above-mentioned problem has relatively recently (in the late 1980's and early 1990's) developed (within sociological circles) into a so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’, where traditional forms of expression as confirmation of masculine identities, are often not readily available to or

recognisable by men any longer. The writer, Robert Bly<sup>7</sup>, in his well-known book *Iron John* (1991), viewed the crisis in terms of men who have lost something of the art to prepare boys for manhood<sup>8</sup>; he therefore draws on traditional forms of masculinity to override this drawback.

Masculine identity as global and local question has been placed in the focal point afresh by these above-mentioned developments<sup>9</sup>. It therefore appears that men (out of different class, racial and ethnic identities) have lost something of the sense of what it means to be a man. For example, it is perceived and reflected by the media that many men (for instance in South Africa) - especially those who are middle-class and heterosexually orientated - are often uncertain about what is expected of them, and what they can expect of themselves<sup>10</sup>. This uneasiness concerns many men who grew up with wholly different interpretation schemes of masculinity. It is furthermore also part of a much wider spiritual “uneasiness” which often reigns within a postmodernist culture – one that is not (any more) so sure of its values and place in the world. There is a supposed tendency that in certain areas of life, specifically with regards to intimacy and loving relationships, men has lost direction and don’t know exactly where to find meaningful guidance.

This (above-mentioned) crisis (for men) has been brought to the fore by the challenges and questions which were highlighted by feminism/s and the “gay liberal” movements. From the early 1970’s women’s movements attempted to let men revisit and reconsider their ideas about masculinity (later chapters will give more detail). This also contributed to the feeling of estrangement and disintegration between the dominant intellectual and moral culture, and the inner crisis which men experienced more and more in their lives.

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Bly is an American writer and poet, and famous founder of the “mythopoetic men’s movement”. He stood at the summit of the identification of the contemporary so-called “crisis of masculinity”, and has proposed as solution: the re-appreciation and re-claiming of the man’s suppressed “Iron John” masculinity. A more detailed discussion of his theories will follow in later chapters.

<sup>8</sup> See addendum D (Viall 2005) for a recent example of an article in a South African newspaper that focuses on this issue.

<sup>9</sup> These developments are only referred to here in a very cursory fashion. A more detailed discussion thereof follows later in the dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> Here is specifically referred to middle-class, heterosexually orientated, South African men because it is (in the researcher’s view) still this group that dominates the social perceptions with which the most people in South Africa live, and which in a certain way “determines” the majority of the population’s notions on what “manhood” means. It will be one of the aims of this dissertation to analyse, deconstruct and challenge these so-called normative social perceptions of (hegemonic) masculinity, specifically with regards to a South-African context and perspectives.

Men have also in recent times been depicted as the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence, and as captives between traditional and new ideas and perceptions about masculinity. Moreover (amongst others) new social prescriptions about fatherhood, within a framework of masculinity and child care, have come to the fore. The dynamics of change in masculinity therefore takes place within the greater arrangements of, and reciprocity between (big) changes within both the public and private spheres of the society. Changes in the labour market, on the political playing field and in domestic spheres (within a globalising culture) have forced men to explore and internalise new concepts of masculinity.

South Africa, as part of a globalising culture, is definitely not exempt from these shifts, seeing that many different men (and by implication many different forms of masculinity, regardless of ethnic boundaries), had to / have to rethink their original positions within the post-apartheid policy<sup>11</sup> of the 1990's, with the concomitant advancement in democracy and the culture of human rights. This specific cultural context will form one main framework within and out of which much of this research takes place.

### **3. THE GOAL OF THE STUDY**

A core motivation for this dissertation is to try and establish what the meaningful connections are between (on the one hand) sociologically and psychologically based cultural perceptions, and (on the other hand) critical-theological reflections, on the issue of diverse masculinities and images of men that are projected and maintained globally (and locally within South Africa) at present. A further goal is to ascertain how to deal with those connections from a pastoral-anthropological perspective.

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<sup>11</sup> This policy and new constitution which evolved (in South Africa) is strongly anchored in and establishes the human dignity of every civil citizen, by respecting it and building it up. Simultaneously, the implementation of human rights places a big burden on the society in the light of the realities of HIV, poverty and unemployment, which directly/indirectly influence the unique dynamic and claims within all the different (masculine) spheres. The South African constitution is based on a set of values which determines the nature of the country's democracy. In the constitution South Africans have identified the concept and practice of human dignity as the main challenge and core value, which is amplified by the ambition: "the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms". (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Act 108 of 1996, p 3.)

The diversity of masculinities within the South African society should therefore also be accommodated within the bill of human rights. A moral community does not act in exclusive or discriminatory ways; it respects the human dignity of all people. It is hospitable and sharing in terms of resources and should therefore respect and welcome all forms of masculinity.

This dissertation therefore investigates some of the changes that different men face worldwide and it explores the ways in which we can make theological sense of it. It is intentionally focused on a pastoral-hermeneutical analysis of the present (diverse) cultural images of masculinity. These images are projected globally through primarily the mass media. The basic presupposition in the researcher's hypothesis is that these cultural images influence men's self-perception – i.e. their gender construction and sexual identity - as well as their concepts of God. This study thus aims at the contextual, theological deconstruction of these cultural representations and the establishment and furthering of meaningful connections between male identity, human dignity and Christian spirituality – all within the context of escalating globalisation.

A couple of important questions which should come to the fore are: How do cultural contexts, particularly influenced by images and perceptions projected via the mass media, influence men concerning their interpretation of their masculinity (i.e. gender identity), and their (male) sexuality<sup>12</sup>? What are the dominant cultural images of masculinity within a globalising life-order, also specifically in the present<sup>13</sup> South Africa? What values do these images promote and suggest? How can one – within a Christian framework - assess these images and the interplay between it and experiences/ conceptualisations of God (God-images), which also shape men's identity, self-understanding and spirituality?

*More nuanced:* how should we think theologically about all of the above-mentioned? If the dominant values suggested and promoted by the mass-media are not affirming respect for diversity, human dignity, tender and life-giving intimacy, and nurturing care, what is the alternative? Is there possibly a normative-critical counter-image to be found in Christ's cross and resurrection?

In the light of these questions the researcher will - through an inter-disciplinary approach - attempt to give a critical-theological reflection on the general sociological and psychological

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<sup>12</sup> The terms "masculinity" and "male sexuality" are often used in closely related frames of reference, specifically because men very often link their masculinity (i.e. their gender identity) in an inextricable fashion to their experience of their own sexuality (i.e. maleness). This assertion is supported (and will be explicated) in the study at various places at a later stage.

<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that the focus of the dissertation is specifically on the so-called "new (political) dispensation" of South Africa, which took its onset after the dismantling of the system of *apartheid* in 1994.

cultural contexts – globally and locally - within which there is often debated about masculinity. Within these contexts the focus will fall on human dignity and spirituality as key concepts. The larger domain and relevance of this dissertation has already been highlighted by the introductory remarks in this chapter, and it will become clearer in the next section (discussing the problem statement and hypothesis).

#### **4. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The researcher suspects that the contemporary, globalising Western culture (generally termed postmodernism) has made the question of masculinity acutely problematical in many different cultural contexts. It is assumed that this is mainly because of a diversity of images and projected representations in the mass media that confuse men in their search for a meaningful masculine identity. The problem which will subsequently be addressed is the suspicion that the meaning of their masculinity is often not experienced in a coherent manner by many men. Rather, they experience confusion in terms of their role functions as men, also influencing attitudes within relational networks (e.g. within their families, and marriages where applicable). This, for many men, leads to a search for integration in terms of their spirituality.

This dissertation therefore indirectly wants to explore the influence of essentialist schemata of interpretation<sup>14</sup> on male sexual identity. This includes the cultural-hermeneutical<sup>15</sup> analysis of certain mass-media representations. Furthermore, the researcher seeks to assess the ways in which this also influences (many Christian) men's image/s of God and their experience of spirituality. The meta-question to be asked is thus: How can a pastoral-anthropological, and therefore theological perspective be employed in order to shift the emphasis from male identity solely in terms of gender and sexuality, towards a spiritual understanding of male identity also in terms of human dignity and human destiny (meaning)? For the healing dimension of theology,

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<sup>14</sup> Essentialist schemata of interpretation mainly contend that there is a basic “male nature” and a basic “female nature” which has stayed unchanged through the human history and across different cultures. This concept (and other related concepts) will be examined in detail in chapter 2, which will clarify it more fully.

<sup>15</sup> Within a postmodernist culture certain norms and values rule which are prescribed by the philosophical norms of the globalising world culture. The positivistic religious paradigm of the modernist era has dissipated and is estranged from postmodernist thought schemes which are grounded on deconstructionism. This estrangement often leads to an existential alienation between men's sexuality and their spirituality, in other words a disintegration of their identity. Consequently a hermeneutical approach to this research effort is necessitated and employed.

spiritual healing, the researcher will argue that pastoral care as a theological endeavour should shift from an incarnational paradigm to an inhabitational paradigm to apply a hermeneutics of human embodiment - i.e. a mature approach to interpreting male (and female) identity from a spiritual perspective.

Furthermore, the important question of the relationship between power, masculinity and male embodiment will consequently be addressed. This complex relationship is evaluated and re-interpreted<sup>16</sup> out of a pastoral-theological perspective. Essentialist ideas about masculinity (as presented and reflected by the mass-media), are deconstructed, and a re-interpretation thereof is introduced within a view of reality that affirms and embraces an earth-centred and embodied spirituality of vulnerable courage (within a theology of embodiment). This study will therefore grapple with the question whether such a spirituality for men (and women) facilitates a positive appreciation of intimacy, and stimulates faith-maturity and the experience of human dignity.

In essence this dissertation therefore attempts to gain more clarity on the tension between the impact of globalization, the mass media and traditional gender roles, from a pastoral-theological perspective. This is done in order to ascertain whether a theological understanding of vulnerability (and courage) can help pastoral care to address the problem of power within male identity, so that spiritual maturity and spiritual well-being/health in men are eventually nurtured.

## 5. HYPOTHESIS

It has been stated previously that there exists an inter-connectedness between male identity within a Christian context, and experiences of God as expressed in spirituality, i.e. men's awareness of God and the meaning of the content of their faith for life experiences. Therefore, the researcher suspects that (Christian) men's experience of their masculinity is integrally connected to their understanding of reality and their conceptions about God (in other words their spirituality), even if they are not always aware of that fact<sup>17</sup>. The question of masculinity in a globalising culture is

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<sup>16</sup> This re-interpretation of masculinity, power and embodiment partners up with the narrative paradigm within social-constructivist relations in pastoral care.

<sup>17</sup> "The way we think about ourselves as bodies will always find expression in the way we think and feel about the world and about God" (Nelson 1978: 20). This assertion will be developed and explained further at a later stage in the study (specifically in the last chapters).

henceforth primarily connected to sexuality, power and embodiment, and it is related to the influence of the media and the exploitation and stereotyping of male sexuality via the consumer-establishment. Masculinity and male identity have to be “saved” from a commercial reduction. How can this be achieved?

A reframing of masculinity can be established when the notion of identity is placed above its cultural impediments. In order to do this a pastoral (and therefore theological) anthropology should address the dynamic interplay between power, identity and religious belief systems. The hypothesis is that in a pastoral-hermeneutics, the interpretation of the power of God influences male identity. In order to move away from a merely cultural scheme of interpretation, a theological cultural-hermeneutical scheme of interpretation is proposed wherein pastoral care works with a theological reframing of the power of God; i.e. to move from the notion of power as force (control) to power as love (vulnerability, courage and woundedness).

In contemporary society it is lucidly apparent that men's roles are changing, but many traditional stereotypes persist. The adherence to traditional male gender roles creates a so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’ (in terms of masculine gender role identity). It is hypothesised that the issue of power (and power abuse), as well as rigidly socialized stereotypes about masculinity, could furthermore be a primary contributing factor in terms of the confusion, conflict and stress in masculine gender role identity. These stereotypes about power and masculinity could also hamper the process of spiritual growth, maturity and the fostering of spiritual well-being in men.

In this regard a *Theologia Crucis* and a *Theologia Ressurrectionis* can play a fundamental role. The re-evaluation of God’s power, as well as of the relationship between God and masculinity - out of the perspective of the *cross* and *resurrection of Christ* - can open up new possibilities within a pastoral-hermeneutical assessment of male identity. Subsequently, it can (and will) be argued that the image of the crucified and risen Christ might serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the dominating cultural messages many men presently experience as confusing.



This hypothetical contention is grounded on the assumption that the concepts of masculinity and gender are mainly sociologically and psychologically described in terms of cultural contexts. It is presupposed that in these descriptions, the notions of masculinity and gender have often merely been conveyed into a theological anthropology. But the problem that masculinity within a Christian-theological description (as such) cannot be precisely described and profiled was not kept in mind. This necessitates pastoral anthropology to look at other descriptive possibilities. In this regard the concepts of (Christian) spirituality and human dignity<sup>18</sup> can play an important role to re-describe masculinity out of a re-creational and an eschatological perspective. This will be done in this study after a cultural-hermeneutical analysis of the present images and representations of masculinity has been made.

The researcher is convinced that men's power to change, (in the light of the above-mentioned argument), should not come forth out of the patriarchal system, but out of a totally different resource. The power to change must develop out of defiance against injustice and inhumanity/undignified actions and behaviour. The main focus should be respectful and lovingly hospitable relationships with other people in order to create an alternative social reality. This power is therefore rather *spiritual* power, not patriarchal power. It can (amongst others) only be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in other words implicitly by an applicable and *integrated spirituality of vulnerable courage*. This type of spirituality can be facilitated only through an *appropriate theology of embodiment that promotes life-giving intimacy and vitality*.

The researcher suspects that this spirituality of vulnerable courage could be an important contributing factor to prevent the perceived crisis of masculinity of impeding on the growth of spiritual maturity and spiritual well-being in men. A theological understanding of vulnerability and courage can help pastoral care to address the problem of power within male identity, so that spiritual maturity and spiritual health/well-being in men is fostered.

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<sup>18</sup> Human dignity and human rights can play a decisive role by promoting equality as goal which can help us resist dynamics of dominance and subordination as well as dualistic assumptions about gender identities and roles.

## 6. RESEARCH TERMINOLOGY, METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This is primarily a research endeavour within the field of practical theology, and specifically pastoral care. Therefore, the focus will not fall on a systematic-theological or a historical or a Biblical-exegetical<sup>19</sup> analysis of maleness and masculinity, although some limited remarks will be made in these regards.

Furthermore, in order to avoid any confusion, an important *distinction* needs to be drawn at the outset between '*masculinity-as-experienced-and-enacted*' and '*masculinity-as-represented*' – it will allow masculinities to be examined later in various settings, including the media. *Masculinity-as-experienced-and-enacted* on the one hand refers to *men and male attitudes and behaviours*, whilst on the other hand *masculinity-as-represented* refers to *images and stereotypes/discourses of masculinity*. Although both phenomena will be explored, it must be made clear that the researcher is not talking about men when he is talking about images, stereotypes or discourses; and that he is not talking about images when he talks about men or male behaviours and attitudes.

Many approaches to studying masculinities are unsatisfactory because they do not actually throw much light on what 'masculinity/masculinities' actually is/are. A great deal more research is needed of men's actual lived experiences of masculinities before these difficult questions can be adequately addressed. This study aims to make a small contribution in this regard.

In this dissertation the problem which is addressed is conceptual in nature and consequently the methodology that will be followed to investigate the problem and test the hypothesis, will be conceptually-analytical. The basis of the exploration is therefore a detailed literature study of the available material which has been gathered on this specific theme. This literature study was done by a selection-process of relevant documents (books, articles and internet-abstracts), after which a collection of applicable data was obtained through the reading of the material. Furthermore a very small empirical investigation of a specific literary genre, namely (men's) lifestyle magazines, is integrated in the research. The rationale behind this component of the study is

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<sup>19</sup> For one of the most recent and detailed analysis of New Testament masculinities, as well as an extensive classified bibliography on masculinity studies, see Moore and Anderson, eds. (2003).

explicated in more detail in chapter three.

A critical analysis of all the data is done via a process of interpretation and philosophical and theological reflection on that which is related to the theme of the research. After the completion of the interpretation and the integration thereof into the dissertation, a review, balance and key findings are made on the grounds of the investigation's results. The researcher uses the Harvard referencing method in this dissertation.

***The procedure of exploration will be as follows:***

Firstly (*in chapter two*), the specific focus is on the cultural hermeneutical dimension of the interplay between identity, gender and masculinities. Some of the core pastoral-theological hermeneutic assumptions of this study are discussed in the light of influential mega-trends like postmodernism and globalisation. Furthermore the question of gender within a variety of multi-disciplinary fields is examined, in order to present terminological clarification as background. This sets the scene for the explorations in ensuing chapters. The implications of global gender issues for the field of masculinities are discussed in a cursory fashion. Attention is given to the influence of issues like international gender mainstreaming, as well as human rights perspectives on the links between violence against women, sexuality and HIV in a local South African context.

The above-mentioned discussion paves the way to examine the influence of the different forms of the feminist movement on different men, and their (the men's) contribution to gender equality. A broad scope is also given on the recent historical development of masculinity studies, globally and locally. Masculinities within the contexts of change and crisis are discussed, whilst relating it to the issue of fatherhood. Changes in South African conceptions of masculinity with regards to different cultural groups in the country, is henceforth also explored. The chapter closes with a cursory exploration and critical, defining remarks on some important men's movements.

The main aim of the next *chapter (three)* is to analyse the popular culture and mass media communications as settings within which masculinity is enacted and performed. In order to come to a better understanding of some of the problems surrounding manhood and masculinity in the third millennium, the researcher proposes that it is necessary to actively engage with the media representations that have influenced our schemata of interpretation. Therefore, after clarifying what mass media entails, selected examples from the media world, popular films, international men's magazines, the fashion industry and certain advertisements and latest trends will be made, in order to (at a later stage) give some theological reflection on the phenomena - as it is portrayed and mediated in a globalising world. This chapter also contains a small empirical component which verifies the main assumptions of the so-called commercialization of men and masculinities.

*Chapter four* focuses on men and masculinities within the realm of embodiment, sexuality and power and the challenges it puts to encounters of male intimacy. The first concern of this chapter is to explore some of the ways in which men's sense of themselves as embodied entities serve to inform their physical presence in, and relationship to, the world and to others. Furthermore, to consider the notion that the material form of the male body is inevitably inscribed with masculinities; and similarly, that masculinity by definition, speak to and of the male (body). In light of the fact that the most analysis of the body in men's studies has been a-historical and inattentive to the specifics of culture and to the operations of power relations, the male body is rarely seen as a product of power/knowledge. Therefore a second objective of this chapter is to explore male embodiment in order to give a critical analysis of how male bodies have been objects and sites of power.

Ultimately, *the broad goal of this and the next two chapters* is thus to make meaningful connections (within a hermeneutical theological framework), between a cultural analysis of the sociological aspects of masculinity, and the problem of power and embodiment within a Christian spirituality. One of the most dominating factors within this field is the abuse of power. Subsequently, this main objective will lead the researcher to explore (at the end of chapter four) the deep intimacy-void which is experienced by men as a result of an exacerbated achievement-ethos. And finally, also to explicate that men, in many instances, revert to power abuse through

violence and crime, as well as power displays in the domain of sport, as brute illustration of their manhood.

In the next part of the study (*chapter five*) the researcher considered the feasibility of a pastoral anthropology and a theology of embodiment to analyse stereotypical schemata of interpretation about men and masculinity. The chapter's main aim is to deconstruct these stereotypical schemata of interpretation - identified in the pastoral-hermeneutical analyses of the previous chapters - out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective. But before this is done the basic presuppositions of such a perspective on men and masculinities will be enlarged upon.

Henceforth a re-interpretation of manhood is envisioned, by describing men pneumatologically and eschatologically, in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the inhabitation of His Holy Spirit (in this and the last chapter). Men's spirituality will receive more attention here in order to establish and further meaningful connections between male identity, human dignity (created in the image of the Triune God) and experiences of authentic, life-giving intimacy (via a Christian spirituality).

More nuanced, the following questions will then be addressed: how should we think theologically about all that has been explored in the previous three chapters? If the dominant values suggested and promoted by the mass-media are not affirming respect for diversity, human dignity and life-giving intimacy, what is the alternative? Subsequently, it will be indicated that a responsible *theology of embodiment* is quintessential to facilitate a positive affirmation of and holistic perspective on male (and human) sexuality and identity. It should affirm embodied-ness and erotica as an integral part of the human being's existence in creation as a whole. This chapter will enable the researcher to indicate (in the last chapter) how a spirituality of vulnerable courage is essential in this quest, and specifically how a re-interpretation of God's power can facilitate this process.

The consequent goal of this chapter will thus be to explore the ways in which sexist and patriarchal dualisms can be transcended and a theology of embodiment can lead to integration

and establish or restore experiences of life-giving intimacy, vitality and human dignity in men. Furthermore, several other (Christian and non-Christian) attempts to integrate maleness and spirituality will be evaluated in the last part of this chapter.

In order to move away from a merely cultural scheme of interpretation, a theological cultural-hermeneutical scheme of interpretation is thus proposed in the last two chapters. The researcher asserts – in the final *chapter (six)* – that this implies: by creating a theological field of language we can possibly deconstruct and make suggestions to re-interpret masculinity in a very meaningful way. A deconstruction (from an eschatological perspective) can bring a theological reframing/redefinition of manhood in terms of the power of God - wherein pastoral care works with the shift from the notion of power as brutal force (control) to power as love (vulnerability and woundedness). This is God's power as revealed in the suffering and resurrection of Christ (*Theologia Crucis* and *Theologia Resurrectionis*) – a source of power that fosters the experience of authentic intimacy and life-giving vitality (*shalom*).

It is envisioned that the re-evaluation of God's power as well as the relationship between God and manhood - out of the perspective of the *cross* and *resurrection of Christ* - can open up new possibilities within a pastoral-hermeneutical assessment of male identity. Subsequently, it will be argued that the image of the crucified and risen Christ might serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the dominating cultural images (and narratives) many men presently experience as confusing. Men's power to change is therefore rather *spiritual* (i.e. relational) power, not patriarchal (i.e. unilateral) power, and should be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in other words implicitly by an applicable and *integrated spirituality of vulnerable courage*.

The final *chapter (seven)* then presents a balance of the key findings that were made in the foregoing chapters, and reviews the core insights that have been gained in the process. Lastly, the *bibliography, filmography, other internet sources* and *addenda* follow<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> It must be asserted again that all the above-mentioned investigations will be done out of the framework of the researcher's South African context where diverse masculinities - e.g. (white Afrikaans speaking) Afrikaner masculinities and (black) African masculinities – converge within a (globalising) culture where human dignity and human rights are deemed highly.

## CHAPTER 2: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN IDENTITY, GENDER AND MASCULINITIES – THE CULTURAL-HERMENEUTICAL DIMENSION

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The recent turns towards theories on globalisation and postmodernism in the social sciences and humanities has led scholars to re-evaluate basic categories of social analysis. Many theorists have started to rethink assumptions upon which identities have been constructed, especially the assumption that there exists essential selves. According to Petersen (1998) the concept ‘masculinity’ has for instance been essentialised and this development has provided a major impediment to theoretical and political work on the issue of masculinity. But, there is a strong anti-essentialist trend within contemporary social theory which has had a profound impact on thinking about (masculine and feminine) identity. This is evident if one views the rapid expansion of academic writings in the 1980’s and 1990’s on these issues. (Petersen 1998:12)

The search for identity<sup>21</sup> and concerns about ‘identity crises’ can be seen as contemporary manifestations of the preoccupation with the essential self. Notably, these themes are discussed widely in both scholarly and popular writings on men and masculinity<sup>22</sup>, and are a preoccupation of the mythopoetic and a number of other strands of the men’s movement. Given its subject matter, one would expect that men’s studies would be a vibrant field of new ideas on questions of identity. However, theoretically, the field has been rather restrictive and dominated by a few perspectives – notably sex-role theory, gender theory and Jungian theory – that were originally developed in psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy, and socio-biology, and then

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<sup>21</sup> According to Ackermann (2003:11) the term identity actually means sameness, yet it is often used to define our differences. “In fact it has a double meaning. It means sameness as in “identical” (Latin *Idem*) – a person’s identity as a woman or a Jew means belonging to the same identifiable group. But this term is also used to say how we are different from one another – a woman is different from a man, a Jew from a Muslim. So identity can mean both sameness and difference.”

<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most well-known extension of the popular writings is of the so-called mythopoetic variety, of which the main contributor is Robert Bly (as mentioned in the preamble). The authors of the mythopoetic works look to a mythical past to find the models for contemporary manhood, for example the warrior figure. Drawing heavily on Jungian psychology, they argue that men must reclaim their cultural heritage which has been destroyed by modern society.

often subsequently reworked by the so-called ‘second-wave’ feminists<sup>23</sup>. Many men’s studies texts do not acknowledge feminist studies at all, which is supposed to be perceived as a discourse<sup>24</sup> parallel to the study of men.

The concern with the link between identity and selfhood is reflected in recent sociological writings, such as in the work of Anthony Giddens who has explored the dilemmas posed to the question of ‘self-identity’ in a context in which tradition increasingly loses its hold. Giddens (1991) contends that in the post-traditional order of modernity<sup>25</sup>, self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour in which there is a wide variety of available options for shaping one’s own identity. According to him this broadens to the most personal and intimate aspects of one’s existence.

According to Giddens (2002: 51), “...among all the changes going on in the world, none is more important than those happening in our personal lives – in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family...There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections with others.”

Therefore, in modern societies – by which the researcher does not imply ‘societies today’ but ‘societies where modernity is well-developed’ – self-identity becomes an inescapable issue. People in these societies are inevitably compelled to make significant choices throughout their lives, from everyday questions about clothing, appearance and leisure to high-impact decisions about relationships, belief and gender identities. Whilst earlier societies with a social order based

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<sup>23</sup> A more detailed discussion of the men’s and feminist movement/s and both of their variants will be given later.

<sup>24</sup> According to Beynon (2002: 159) the concept discourse “designates the forms of representation, conventions and habits of language use producing specific culturally and historically located meanings. In recent times the term has been particularly associated with the work of the French philosopher Michael Foucault (1926-84) which drew attention to how things are written about, spoken about and thought about in a given society at a given time, who has the power to impose these meanings, and the sources of that power.” Discourse analysis can subsequently be defined as the term used in modern cultural theory to indicate any coherent body of statements that produces a self-confirming account of reality by defining an object and generating concepts with which to analyse it. The analysis of discursive practices and discursive strategies reveal how meanings are constructed, how they operate and from where they originate (Beynon 2002: 160). The concept discourse will be explained further and used extensively at a later stage.

<sup>25</sup> According to Giddens (1991) we are not in a postmodern era, but rather in a period of *late modernity*. He does not necessarily disagree with the characterizations of recent social life which other theorists have labeled as postmodern – cultural self-consciousness, heightened superficiality, consumerism, relativity, skepticism etc. Giddens does not dispute these changes, but he asserts that modern societies have not really moved beyond modernity. Rather, it is just developed. The researcher deems his insights valuable and uses the terms modernism and postmodernism with cognizance of this qualification and alternative scheme of interpretation.



firmly in *tradition* would provide individuals with (more or less) clearly defined identities and roles, in *post-traditional* (or *postmodernist*) societies people have to work out these identities and roles for themselves. As Giddens (1991: 70) states: “What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour.”

The researcher is interested in the impact of the current paradigms – labelled as post-traditional / postmodernist / globalising – on the issue of human identity, and more specifically on gender identity (focused on male gender identity or masculinity). Hence the following introductory remarks on the impact and meaning of these paradigms on human identity, followed by the cultural hermeneutical dimension of the interplay between gender and masculinities.

## 2. THE MOVEMENT FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a reality which infiltrates every sphere of society, but it remains a difficult task to describe the phenomenon. It can be viewed as the philosophy of the era that follows upon modernism. Modernism is basically the worldview which maintained absolute distinctions between science and religion, faith and reason, truth and falseness. It required technical, scientific answers to the questions of faith and science, and it presupposed that everything should be rationally verifiable, perceivable and repeatable. The primary place of human reason (after the *Aufklärung*) above faith, and the subject-object split<sup>26</sup>, represented the strongest pillars of the modernistic rationale. Within this milieu the Christendom flourished with its focus on apologetics and rigid fundamentalism.

The faith of modernism in the eternal potential of the human race (to develop evolutionarily), and to form a scientific utopia within universal societal frameworks, was however shattered by

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<sup>26</sup> Postmodernism also struggles with the subject/object split, but from another angle. Positivism, the epistemological approach of modernism, with the ideal of objective knowledge, now makes room for an approach with greater integration and coherence between the subjective and the objective poles. The postmodernist trend of socio-constructionism holds the conviction that **truth is neither subjective, nor objective, but relational**. In the words of Wentzel van Huyssteen and Ben du Toit (quoted in Maimela en König 1998: 459): “Relational truth wants to say that truth – also that of the Bible – does not solely exist objectivistically apart from humans for humans, it is also not subjectivistically created by humans, but becomes disclosed rather within a relation of the believer’s involvement on something else (translated).”

numerous world events. The two big world wars of the twentieth century, the constant regional conflicts and global disasters left people disillusioned with the promises which were made by the modernism's prophets. Secularisation played a key role in the ambivalence which ensued, and it was fulfilled in estrangement, exploitation and disorientation. In a summary of the characteristics of modernism Lyon (1994: 35) concludes that modernism has in a sense dug its own grave: "By proclaiming human autonomy, by setting in motion the process that would permit instrumental reason to be the rule of life, a change had begun that would end dismally, if not disastrously."

Consequently a paradigm shift took place from modernism to postmodernism. This shift represents much more than the shifts from an objective approach to knowledge to a subjective and personal narrative and context of reality<sup>27</sup>. The idealism of modernism has, inter alia on the basis of Descarte's theory, created big expectations of the mastering of nature and the enjoyment of the earth's fruit without much suffering and hard work. A consumer mentality, accompanied by material wealth, individual freedom and a life which produces something for everyone via the achievements of science and technology, has created the dream of an utopia, alongside the absolute trust that such an utopia can be realised. Modernism has however promised that which it was not able to deliver – with a consequent global disillusionment in the naïve faith in prosperity. The new paradigm of postmodernism was inevitable.

Postmodernism is, amongst others, characterised by pluralism, diversity and a total agnosticism in the absolute power of rationalism<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, its epistemological<sup>29</sup> focus is the relativity of truth<sup>30</sup> (over and against absolute rationality and reason); and anthropologically speaking it's the

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<sup>27</sup> A more complete description of this paradigm shift and accompanying implications for theology unfortunately falls outside the framework of this dissertation. Therefore attention will only be given to a few traits thereof in as far as it is applicable to the theme under discussion.

<sup>28</sup> For a much more detailed discussion of these and related concepts, see Greer (2003).

<sup>29</sup> An epistemology refers to the theory of the way in which information is gathered and organised, and it is determined by the paradigm (interpretation scheme) within which it takes place.

<sup>30</sup> Within a hermeneutical theological frame of reference this alternative perspective on truth has wider implications on the view of texts (and also human being's lives as "texts"). The epistemological insight of relational truth (which has already been mentioned before), known in certain circles as critical realism, therefore conditions the hermeneutic of the exegete. Whilst modernistic Biblical scholars approached exegesis of Biblical texts (as objects) out of the primary position of positivism, postmodernist hermeneutics gives preference to reader-response hermeneutics. The locus of revelation is no longer the historical events behind the text, but the text as language which includes/co-opts the reader. In the words of Sandra M. Schneiders (in Maimela en König 1998: 460): "...the positivistic objectification of the text which resulted inexorably in the dilemma of the subject-object paradigm of understanding by analysis, has begun to give way to a hermeneutical paradigm of understanding by participative dialogue."

decentred self (over and against the autonomous self) which receives primary attention. In the core of postmodernism lies an aversion in precise and rigidly fenced-in formulations. Instead of that our life experience (including faith) should let us “feel good”. For the postmodernist person “my story” is important – how I react is just as important as the principle of faith itself. My faith must be able to handle doubt and uncertainty - not to have all the answers is also fine. “It must just work” (pragmatism). Therefore New Age, experience, identity in music and experiential learning is so fashionable.

In non-philosophical circles the term “postmodernism” has only become known in the past two or three decades. But the roots of this paradigm is like a philosophical wave which has been building up for ages and only recently splashed out onto the beach of everyday human life. Strauss (1998: 14-15) argues that basic concepts and ideas, which contributed to the build-up of this wave, have been with us for a long time. He explains that certain elements of thought, already three or four centuries old, now have been integrated and assimilated into the wall of a postmodernist philosophy<sup>31</sup>.

## **2.1 Postmodernism, deconstruction and hermeneutics – a pastoral perspective**

The main idea of postmodernism is then that truth, as an objective reality, does not exist. According to this epistemology reality consists out of a diverse range of narratives which should be treated as open reflections of reality. Within this strategy the “grand narrative” of one big story (truth) is fragmented into a variety of narratives which is set forth from the “text”. This strategy is known as *deconstruction*<sup>32</sup> – it contributed to the downfall of unity through the challenge of the logo-centric tradition of the modernistic Western paradigm of thought. Martin Heidegger, who already in 1954 wrote about subjects such as “the reading of the text”, was one of the first postmodernists who talked about the phenomenon of deconstruction.

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<sup>31</sup> For a detailed exposition of the mainstream of postmodernist thoughts’ and thinkers’ origin and development, see Janse van Rensburg (2000), *The paradigm Shift* (p.13 and further).

<sup>32</sup> Anderson and Goolishian (1992) state that *deconstruction* is to take apart the interpretive assumptions of a system of meaning that you are examining, so that you reveal the assumption on which the model is based. As these are revealed, you open space for alternative understanding. Therefore deconstruction provides a corrective moment, a safeguard against dogmatism, a displacement, to keep it in process, to continuously demystify the realities we create.

When postmodernism and deconstruction is discussed, it must be kept in mind that everything starts with the philosophy of language. Just as the meaning of words in language is never fixed, so the text of life is always in a process of change. It needs interpretation because there are no absolute, fixed truths and values in life - according to the postmodernists. Life is a text which must repeatedly be read. When Heidegger, and after him Derrida, Lyotard and many more, write about the “reading of the text”, they are indeed speaking about the interpretation of life as a never-ending and continuous hermeneutical process.

This deconstructive strategy within the postmodernist paradigm has a number of implications for the pastoral field within practical theology; and more specifically – for the purposes of this dissertation – for the re-interpretation of masculinity and male sexuality within a fragmented and globalising reality. These implications will be made clear in the course of the dissertation, when the links between postmodernism, hermeneutics and the deconstruction of male discourses and stereotypes receive more attention. There is consequently also a number of tangencies between postmodernism, deconstruction and a pastoral perspective on masculinity and spirituality. These overlapping concepts will be explored in later chapters, and it will then become clear how they can be integrated in a meaningful way.<sup>33</sup>

The paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism has definitely brought about some very important shifts in the focus of (practical and other) theological circles. In the field of pastoral care metaphors became important factors in placing the metaphysical (dogmatic) constructions of God within the hermeneutical context of the encounter-dynamics. This shift from a modernist to a hermeneutic understanding of God is self-evident and should be welcomed. The postmodernist critique has therefore, according to Janse van Rensburg (2000), helped us to be dethroned from our position of self-righteousness, and it has warned us to talk in less arrogant ways about God and His kingdom.

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<sup>33</sup> It is self-evident that the scientific starting point of this dissertation is mainly representative of the shift from a positivistic stance to a more hermeneutic stance and attitude. It runs parallel to the shift in scientific methodology which can be typified as post-positivistic and postmodernist. The knowledge within this research-connection can therefore be seen as proportional in terms of relations, contexts and the variety of possibilities with regards to interpretations and perspectives (see also Louw 1998a).

The acceptance of this postmodernist critique on modernism is however not at all (inevitably) the acceptance of the postmodernist epistemology. The epistemological claim that there is no absolute truth, and no place for “grand narratives”, will be impossible to do homage to if we want to remain Bible based Christians and (pastoral) theologians. This debate unfortunately exceeds the limits of this dissertation, but the scenario-outline serves as confirmation of the above mentioned terminological distinction. The pursuit of a postmodernist epistemology is therefore something radically different from the inclusion of certain core dimensions of (critical) postmodernist thoughts.

Postmodernism particularly makes a special contribution by placing the focus on the individual and the context. Certain strategies which are used within postmodernist relations, e.g. the narrative and deconstruction, can make an important contribution to the field of pastoral theology, and more specifically to the historical, social and cultural analysis of masculinity and male sexuality (also within this dissertation). Such strategies can be integrated meaningfully within the hermeneutical paradigm, as long as they do not function exclusively within the postmodernist epistemology. This is possible because a strategy such as narrative is not exclusive to the postmodernist paradigm.

The *conclusion* can therefore be made that pastoral theology can learn and borrow from postmodernist strategies without necessarily accepting the conflicting paradigm thereof in order to implement the strategies. It can rather be stated that it is important to position such strategies within a reconcilable (Christian) paradigm.

### **3. PASTORAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION**

Louw (2000) asserts that pastoral hermeneutics in the third millennium is constantly challenged to understand pastoral actions against the background of contemporary life issues, e.g. international communication. It is on the basis of this assumption that the human soul can no longer just be seen as a private entity, but that is growingly becoming a “global entity”. According to Poling (2004: 182) one of the three core questions for the revision of pastoral

theology, care, and counselling in a time of global market capitalism is: How can we improve the quality of pastoral care across lines of gender, race, and class?

Pastoral hermeneutics therefore has the task to deconstruct the different schemata of interpretation which controls our contact – as humans from differing race, class and gender backgrounds - with the contemporary world. Furthermore, attention should be given to those issues which strip people's (in this case specifically men's) souls/ life quality of its human dignity<sup>34</sup>.

The indignity which is often implicitly propagated by globalisation, creates a very sharp challenge for the pastoral theology. Pastoral relationships which functions within the social reality which was established by the “global economy”, are conditioned by the ideological and spiritual context which is created thereby. Barbara Rumscheidt, in her book, *No room for grace* (1998), states this in a striking manner as follows:

“The good news of corporate capitalism proclaims salvation by global competition. The bad news prevails in a contemporary global culture marked by violent death and spiritual death equivalents: fear, poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, addiction, depression and despair. This dominant culture is hostile to the caring dynamics of human empathy. Its theology and ideology is aggressive: ‘look out for number one,’ ‘winner takes it all,’ ‘survival of the fittest’... Faith development oriented toward personal and communal relationships of accountability and solidarity is (subsequently) displaced, discredited, and/or subverted”. (Rumscheidt 1998: 11)

These new challenges which are put to pastoral theology ask that the scope and mandate of this practical-theological field should be investigated. This should be done in order to ascertain if this field has sufficient resources, so that it will be able to react to the context of dehumanisation. The question must therefore be asked as to how pastoral care can make a constructive contribution to this new tele-culture. Can the church still exert a significant influence and be a

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<sup>34</sup> Within the framework of this dissertation current schemata of interpretation and theoretical ideologies on which traditional perceptions of masculinity are based, are therefore deconstructed, and suggestions are made on its possible reconstruction. The definition and demarcation of some of these traditional theoretical ideologies (within sociological frameworks) will receive attention. It will however be discussed from a theological perspective only at a later stage in the research.

real motivator, or are we taken over by neutrality, apathy and negative withdrawal because of the growing marginalisation thereof in the new millennium? These questions indeed exceeds the limits of this dissertation, but stays relevant to be stated within the context of broader globalising trends, which challenges every aspect of contemporary practical-theological ecclesiology.

### **3.1 Globalisation and its impact on human identity**

The more the world is becoming a global village, the more the notion of culture and very specifically, the diversity of cultures, is becoming a burning issue<sup>35</sup>. To a certain extent, globalisation has become a cultural process that leads to homogenisation and a high level of interconnectedness which changes values. “Globalization divides as much as it unites; it divides as it unites – the causes of division being identical with those which promote the uniformity of the globe” (Zygmunt Bauman, in Sacks 2002: 24)<sup>36</sup>.

The important point to grasp is that within the process of globalization, goods and profit become more important than people and being functions, hence Waters (1995) describes globalisation as: “A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding”. He sees globalisation as the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonisation and cultural nemesis (Waters 1995:3).

The most dominating factors in this cultural process of homogenisation are: the power of capitalism; a market driven economy; the internationalisation of communication systems; the digitalisation of the world; and the power game created by the networking of big companies. The market driven economy is determined and defined by materialistic values and achievement ethics. Due to new technologies, mechanisation and urbanisation, life in itself becomes a functional entity. Functionalism and materialism have become benchmarks for the quality of life. Life, as well as knowledge, is being measured in terms of efficiency, production and achievement.

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35 In this regard the concept ‘glocalisation’ has been coined by R. Robertson (1992) as an indication of the importance of local issues and the impact of culture on local communities.

36 See J. Sacks (2002) and also P. Singer (2002) for more information on globalisation’s moral and ethical impact on societies.

Furthermore, the compression of want and satisfaction in terms of efficiency emanates into two important phenomena, i.e. instant need satisfaction and consumerism. This tendency can best be described by the concept: McDonaldisation. The principle of instant and fast-food restaurants is coming to dominate the rest of our world (Waters 1995: 143-144). McDonaldisation is busy moulding difference into a culture of sameness which transcends local and national boundaries. Science and technology are co-partners in this process of sameness.

It consequently becomes quite evident that globalisation is becoming more and more a factor that shapes human identity, culture and contextuality. Within the global village we enter into a “cultural economy” wherein local issues make place for transnationalism. In such a culturalized, global economy, world class is displaced by a world status system based on consumption, lifestyle and value-commitment (Waters 1995: 95). Values become standardized. The impact of globalization on human identity, as well as on theory formation in (theological) anthropology, is therefore tremendous.

Globalisation is accompanied by democratisation with its emphasis on individual freedom which rules supreme as the value by which all other values come to be calculated (Bauman 1997). Therefore the timely warning of Bauman (1997: 3): “The discontents of postmodernity arise from a kind of freedom of pleasure-seeking which tolerates too little individual security.” Furthermore, in terms of the global forces of Americanization and MacDonaldisation, cultural security and human dignity are threatened in many of the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world.

These above-mentioned developments are relevant in this first part of this study because, according to Louw (2003), the race for globalisation puts forth the following challenge to an anthropological (and hence a pastoral-theological) hermeneutics: whether human life, its significance and value, can be assessed only in terms of unqualified competitiveness, projected as the so called key to success? Anthropology in a global village is confronted with the question of how a global economy can contribute to a more humane society (community) and safeguard human dignity. This should be a basic ethical question for anyone who grapples with the



problem of being human in a globalising culture<sup>37</sup>. How do we make sense of this? How is this related to issues of gender and masculinity? These questions, amongst others, will be addressed in some of the next chapters, but first a short introduction on the practical theological and pastoral background of this study is given.

### **3.2 Globalisation<sup>38</sup> and gender challenges practical theology and pastoral hermeneutics**

Given the fact that this dissertation is a practical theological endeavour - with its focus being a pastoral assessment of images of men and masculinities in different cultural contexts – it is necessary to first outline what practical theology entails. In broad terms *practical theology (with pastoral care as subfield)*<sup>39</sup> *can be defined as a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions, and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming.*

Louw (2007: 46) relates spiritual healing in pastoral care to the field of practical theology and makes the following principle assertions to illuminate this relation:

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<sup>37</sup> Some theorists like Waters (1995) contends that we are entering a stage of post-globalization. The challenge is to consider whether there is any social possibility and human dignity beyond globalization, other than a recessive social disintegration and an anthropological confusion regarding identity and dignity. Within post-globalization human beings are exposed more and more to the imagination of virtual reality. Computers already simulate a virtual space out of information. With the click of a mouse an existence in cyberspace is simulated, that is, to simulate a body and a space that can be varied by design and thus by choice. “This cyberspace” bears no relationship to physical space and is limited only by the power of the computer(s) one uses (Waters 1995: 164). According to Louw (2003) anthropology is now challenged by “cyberpunks” — people living in the virtual reality of cyberspace. Cyberpunks live out their entire lives in and on the internet. Albeit one can be liberated from spatial constraints entirely, it is still the case that neither cultural economies nor virtual reality can fill the gap regarding our human quest for meaning, identity and dignity. Cyberpunks are the vagabonds of “trans-postmodernity” and “trans-globalization.” They represent a variant anthropological stance based on the pleasure principle, on the magic of entertainment and the imperialism of profit-makers.

<sup>38</sup> In this context the focus on globalisation is primarily directed in terms of its cultural and social influences, and not in terms of the economic forces that shape the phenomenon.

<sup>39</sup> Woodward and Pattison (2000) suggest that there is no one view about which of these terms (“pastoral” versus “practical” theology) should predominate over the other. Practical and pastoral theology can thus both be seen as genuinely practical/pastoral and authentically theological. The researcher would however simultaneously like to maintain the distinction which Graham (2000) makes, i.e. between ‘practical’ denoting the generic activities of Christian ministry and ‘pastoral’ the more interpersonal levels of care. She favours ‘practical theology’ given her emphasis on the discipline as the study of Christian *practice*, and locates pastoral theology as one of a number of practical theologies (but distinguished by its focus on the theory and practice of the human life cycle).

“The presupposition and basic assertion is that **Practical Theology** is that field within theology that deals with the **praxis of God**, i.e. the implications of the God-human encounter for life and the human quest for meaning. Practical Theology includes both ethics and aesthetics. It is interested in the intention, motivation and *telos* of human actions within the field of ministry, communities of faith and social contexts. In this regard it tries to link appropriate understandings of God with the pastoral and hermeneutical endeavour of understanding the salvific actions of God and his presence in life events (*intellectum*). Furthermore, it is about the communication and proclamation of the gospel (*verbum*); the transformation and liberation of social contexts (*actum*); the fostering of a vivid hope within the realm of suffering (*spem*); the symbolic and metaphorical expression of the Christian faith through imagination, creativity and ritual (*imaginem*); and the portrayal of Christian spirituality through visual images, audio sounds and narratives that contain meaning and represent the “seeing of the unseen” within virtual reality (*visum*).”

***These above-mentioned basic presuppositions implicitly form an integral part of the core matrix within which this study operates.***

Woodward and Pattison (2000: 13-17) explicates various essential characteristics of the scope or field of practical theology. Two of these main traits are also critically important to highlight at the start of this dissertation, namely its (1) interdisciplinary and (2) dialectical nature:

(1) Practical theology is *interdisciplinary*. Therefore it utilizes the methods and insights of academic and other disciplines - such as economics, sociology, psychology, and other disciplinary findings and perspectives - that are not overtly theological as part of its theological method. These types of interdisciplinary methods and insights will also be utilized in this dissertation.

(2) Practical theology is also *dialectical and disciplined*. Proceeding by way of a kind of critical conversation, many contemporary practical theologies hold in creative tension a number of polarities such as: theory and practice; the religious tradition emanating from the past and contemporary religious experience; particular situational realities and general theoretical principles; what is [reality] and what might be [ideal]; description [what is] and prescription [what ought to be]; theology and other disciplines; the religious community and society outside

the religious community. These creative tensions and its critical conversations will also form an integral part of the core outline of this study.

It must furthermore be noted that the above-mentioned perspectives require a fundamental reorientation of the core functions of pastoral care. In conjunction with Bonnie Miller-McLemore's view on pastoral care (1996; 2000), the object of study in this pastoral theological undertaking is the "living human web". Within this framework pastoral care still entails practical religious, spiritual, and congregational care for the suffering, involving the rich resources of religious traditions and communities, contemporary understandings of the human person in the social sciences, and ultimately the movement of God's love and hope in the lives of individuals and communities.

However, pastoral care will also be viewed from a liberation perspective where the focus falls on "breaking silences, urging prophetic action, and liberating the oppressed" (Miller-McLemore 2000: 242). In addition to the conventional modes with which pastoral care has been routinely equated, i.e. healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling (formulated by Seward Hiltner and others) four pastoral practices will receive particular importance: *resisting, empowering, nurturing, and liberating*. For indeed, "Pastoral theology and care oriented to the cry for gender justice disrupts and disturbs as much as it comforts and consoles." (Miller-McLemore 2000: 242).

In the light of the above-mentioned pastoral hermeneutics struggles with the question if the value of human life can solely be evaluated in terms of unqualified competition within the framework of an achievement ethos - which is presented as the so-called key to success. The answer is "no", and strategies must be found through which the global economy can make a contribution to a more humane society and the protection of human dignity. Pastoral hermeneutics, which works with the deconstruction of schemata of interpretation, is therefore responsible for the exposure of inapt God concepts which for instance undergird an unjust and patriarchal economic system of abuse. The field of economics is unaware of the way in which domination is supported by inapt God concepts. Therefore a pastoral theology of care must be extremely sensitive to and take cognisance of the significant role of God concepts in the economy.

The following conceptual schemata are often present with the postmodernist person: the ideological obsession with happiness (in the American “pursuit” thereof); inapplicable anxiety and the fear of loneliness; the tendency towards progress and prosperity and the pathological avoidance of suffering; the unrealistic disqualification of pain as a medium for growth; the demand for development and progress without the acknowledgement of boundaries. These schemes can often be related to an achievement ethos and the idea of wealth and status, as propagated by the mass media. The outcome is a life based on materialism and opportunism. Within a Christian spirituality these schemes and ideas are then projected onto a God who is presented as the solution to all life problems. Thus:

“God becomes a public idol, while his kingdom functions as an assurance company. Through prayers God is hijacked for selfish materialistic needs. Religion is then viewed as an investment to bypass tragedy; God becomes the brilliant Stockbroker, Director or Manager which safeguards the aspirations of an affluent society and imperialistic Christendom.” (Louw 2002: 348)

A pastoral hermeneutics which wants to be relevant within the question of globalisation, is therefore in its core bound to the relevance/irrelevance of the current economic system, evaluated in terms of local issues and needs. But then *pastoral care needs to find a deeper understanding and assessment of the philosophy and schemata of interpretation, which serves as motivators of the processes which daily affects the cognitions and expectancies of people. In this dissertation it is focused, out of a pastoral perspective, on the problem of gender and masculinity - with specific reference in later chapters to the relation between masculinity, embodiment and power, as well as the reciprocity between masculinity and Christian spirituality.*

#### **4. A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INTRODUCTION ON GENDER**

Given the impact of globalisation on human identity (which was explicated here above), what does it mean to be a woman, and what does it mean to be a man today?<sup>40</sup> Is there a basic “male nature” and a basic “female nature” that has remained unchangeable through human history and

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<sup>40</sup> In the introduction to his book *Being a man*, David Cohen (1990) describes this dilemma as follows: “When I was a little boy I was often told to be a man. When my marriage was breaking up my mother told me ‘to be a man’. By this she seemed to mean that I shouldn’t go back to my wife. Being hard and unforgiving was the proper posture for a proper man. Her curious harshness made me remember times when, as a boy, I was told ‘to be a man’. Sometimes, I was crying. I cried quite often since my parents bickered, shouted and fought most of the little time they spent together. Sometimes, being a man (as far as my mother was concerned) meant standing up to my father...”(1990: 1)

throughout different cultural settings? Or, alternatively, are our ideas about masculinity and femininity indeed context-specific and fluid, constructed by and circulated within specific cultural formations and practices, influenced by globalisation? If this is the case, what are the processes and mechanisms through which our understanding and experiences of womanhood and manhood are generated, sustained and changed in the contemporary postmodernist culture?

These above-mentioned questions are asked within a multiple range of socio-theoretical and socio-political contexts and disciplines, and it assumes a wide range of possible reactions. It is not the intent of this dissertation to present specific and detailed answers to these questions. A background exploration of the (multi-disciplinary) gender problematic is however necessary before a pastoral-theological perspective on certain aspects thereof can be presented at a later stage<sup>41</sup>.

As part of the introduction on the topic it is firstly important to note broadly that the subtle patterns and dynamic of gender pervade all areas of religion, both explicitly and implicitly, whether fully recognized or unacknowledged. According to King (2005: 3296): “Widely debated and often misunderstood, gender concerns have immense significance in contemporary culture as they are part of the international political and social agenda of most countries in the world. The Gender Development Index has recorded the global monitoring of existing gender gaps since 1996, and it provides clear evidence of how much still needs to be done before a truly equitable gender balance is reached.”

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<sup>41</sup> The relation between the disciplines of theology and psychology should be considered when attempting to define gender. In this dissertation the choice to consider gender in light of a Christian belief system (i.e. a pastoral-theological perspective) rather than the less specific and more nebulous domain of “spirituality” (as a general concept), is deliberate. In discussing the integration of psychological concepts and Christian theology, McMinn and Hall (2000: 251) state: Psychology, deeply rooted in a scientific epistemology, places great value in systemic and measurable observations. Christian theology is bounded by central doctrines, forged over centuries of dialog and based on the authority of a sacred text. Those integrating psychology and theology most effectively have learned to value both epistemologies. Christian theology (providing special revelation) and psychology (general revelation) may be seen as cornerstones, each with its own set of principles and doctrines that provide a contextual framework from which to view a variety of concepts. Although the definition of gender in Christian theology will certainly differ even among the various (evangelical or fundamentalist) Christian sub-cultures (Ingersoll, 2003), this dissertation will at a later stage (in chapter 5 and 6) give some indications on how to view this concept from a Reformational perspective.

Critical gender perspectives have made a significant difference to most academic fields, including the study of religion (and theology). Yet many scholarly publications on religion still seem to give little or no recognition to the profound epistemological, methodological, and substantive changes that contemporary gender studies, especially women's scholarship and feminist theories but also the growing field of men's studies in religion, have produced over the last thirty years (King 2005). Thus, the engendering of religions and their study provides a great challenge to contemporary scholarship, and therefore the researcher deems it necessary to take cognisance of its impact in this study.

Secondly, to state the obvious (which is often ignored): gender is simply a central feature of social life – one of the main organizing principles around which our lives as human beings revolve. We come to know ourselves and our world primarily through the prism of gender and it therefore shapes our identities and the institutions in which we work, live, play and exist. Our gendered state of being in life mostly happens unconsciously, and especially men were rarely in history understood through the gender-lens. Gender<sup>42</sup>, together with race and class, is therefore a central mechanism by which power and resources are distributed in our society and one of the main concepts out of which we design the meanings of our lives. According to Bowie (2005: 3420): “While age, ethnicity, class, and many other factors also have culturally prescribed norms, gender is the most universal and salient social organizing principle.”

Unfortunately, it seems that men often thought (and still think) of themselves as genderless, as if gender did not really matter in the daily experiences of their lives. The biological sex of individuals were (and still are) readily noticed, but the ways in which gender – that complex variety of social meanings that is attached to biological sex – is enacted in the daily lives of men, are not often meaningfully understood. The researcher is convinced that this gendering process, the transformation of biological males into socially interacting men, is a core experience for men. The fact that many men still are unaware of it only helps to perpetuate the inequalities based on gender in societies worldwide. Fortunately, in recent years, the pioneering work of feminist

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<sup>42</sup> Charles Sherlock (1996: 175) explains the complexity of the concept gender in three subcategories, which is helpful in trying to understand it. Firstly gender can refer to *gender identity* (attempts to describe the differences between men and women). Secondly, it can indicate *gender relations* (the patterns of power, norms, customs and roles which govern women and men's lives). Thirdly, it can connote *gender representations* (the ways in which gender concepts help to organize ideas about culture, nature, knowledge and social perspectives).

scholars, both in traditional disciplines and in women's studies, as well as feminist women in the political arena, has made us aware of the centrality of gender in our lives. This will also be critically explored in some of the paragraphs that follow.

Given the fact that gender and gender relations are such central concepts in societal life, it should first be explicated and brought into relation with the concept of masculinity, in order to evaluate it from a pastoral-anthropological (and implicitly theological) perspective in the ensuing chapters. The meta-question that will be asked at a later stage is thus: How can a pastoral-anthropological perspective be employed in order to shift the emphasis on male identity in terms of gender and sexuality, towards a spiritual understanding of male identity in terms of human dignity and human destiny (meaning)?

## 5. GENDER IDENTIFIED AS ESSENCE<sup>43</sup> OR CONSTRUCT – OR BOTH?

It has been stated that there are many different competing explanations for the differences between men and women and for the ways that gender relations are structured. Therefore, there have been various models in history that have guided social scientific research on gender, and specifically on men and masculinity/masculinities.

This first group of models can generally be categorised to be '**essentialist**'<sup>44</sup> in character. Some of the most powerful of these rely on biological notions that have focused on the ways in which innate biological differences between males and females program different social behaviours. Yet, the science of gender is itself socially produced and, in turn, produces different practices of

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<sup>43</sup> According to DeLamater and Hyde (1998:10-12) the concept of essentialism originated in the work of Plato (428-348 B.C.). Essentialism was the philosophical foundation for positivism in philosophy up to the twentieth century. It therefore dominated scientific and philosophical thought in the Western world, and can be typed as classical essentialism. Today, (so-called) modern essentialism implies a belief that certain phenomena are natural, inevitable, universal, and biologically determined. The concept modern essentialism is often used loosely to refer to research and theory presuming a biological basis, although a strain of cultural essentialism also exists.

<sup>44</sup> Bohan (1997: 32 – 33) notes importantly that designating an approach as essentialist is not the same as stating that it argues for the biological determination of gender. Therefore, the distinction between essentialist and (socio-) constructionist views of gender does not lie in the origin of gender qualities but in their location. Essentialist views interpret gender as a quality or trait that is resident within the individual, which explicates people's cognitive processes, moral judgement and personalities, etc. Thus, it is an essentialist stance to argue that "relationship" is a quality possessed by the individual. Essentialist models therefore construe gender in terms of fundamental characteristics that are assumed as internal, persistent, and generally separate from the on-going experience of interaction with the daily socio-political contexts of people's lives.

masculinity and femininity, different ways of ‘doing man’ and ‘doing women’ (Epstein 1998: 52). Therefore, other accounts within the social sciences, and, in particular, those which deal with gender as forms of (masculine and feminine) identity regard gender as something much less fixed than biological accounts would suggest. Identity is rather seen as a human task which is never complete, but always in process.

Subsequently a second group of models emerged which can mainly be categorised under the term ‘**socio-constructionist**’<sup>45</sup>. Some of these are anthropological models that have examined masculinity cross-culturally, stressing the variations in the behaviours and attributes associated with being a man. Other psychological as well as (until recently) sociological models have stressed how socialization of boys and girls includes accommodation of a “sex role” specific to one’s biological sex.

Although each of these perspectives helps us to understand the meaning of masculinity and femininity, each is also limited in its ability to explain fully how gender operates in any culture (and some can be typed as essentialist whilst others as socio-constructionist in nature).<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the researcher will henceforth give a short introduction to each of these models’

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<sup>45</sup> One of the topics of greatest interest to social constructionists has been gender and its social construction. A common misunderstanding is that the social construction of gender means that gender-typed attributes are simply the result of socialization (Bohan, 1993). However, the social constructionist position is considerably more complex than that. Social constructionists see gender not as a trait of the individual as essentialists do, but rather as a process external to the individual. Gender is defined by interactions between people, by language, and by the discourses within a culture. Therefore, just as essentialism is often misunderstood as biological determinism, the social construction of gender is often confused with the socialization of gender. The position urging that gender is socially constructed is not simply an assertion of the environmental origin of gender traits. Rather, the constructionist argument is that gender is not a trait of individuals at all, but simply a construct that identifies particular transactions that are understood to be appropriate to one sex. In this way gender is not habitant in the person but exists in those interactions that are socially interpreted as gendered. From this view, relationality is a quality of interactions not of individuals, and it is not essentially connected with sex. What it means to term an interaction feminine or masculine is socially agreed upon and is reproduced by the very process of participating in that interaction (Bohan 1997: 33). This assertion that gender, and hence masculinity is socially and historically, not biologically, constructed is also supported by, amongst many other researchers, e.g. Morgan (1992), Sedgwick (1985), MacInnes (1998) and Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994).

<sup>46</sup> Although one may frame integrationist or conjoint theories of biological and cultural influence, it seems unlikely that there can be a true conjoining or synthesizing of essentialist and social constructionist approaches. The reason for this will become clear through the argumentation in the next paragraphs. The researcher is however of the opinion that a balanced integration of the two poles of gender definitions is the most desirable if we want to speak of true partnerships between men and women. *In this dissertation there is worked with a notion of gender as a set of social and cultural meanings assigned to biological (sexuality) differences. “Gender” therefore becomes an analytical tool enabling us to probe deeply into our everyday practices as women and as men within the context of our religion, culture and history.*



relevance in terms of gender and masculinity. In doing so, the distinction between essentialist and socio-constructionist perspectives on gender and sexuality will become increasingly evident.

## 5.1 Biological models

Relying on differences in reproductive biology, some scholars have argued that the physiological organization of males and females makes inevitable the differences that are observable in psychological temperament and social behaviours. Some perspectives hold that differences in endocrine functioning are the cause of gender difference, that oestrogen predisposes females toward passivity, tenderness, and exaggerated emotionality, whereas testosterone predisposes males toward aggression, competition, and violence. Some other theorists argue that male and female behaviour is ruled by different halves of the brain; males are ruled by the left hemisphere, which controls rationality and abstract thought, whereas females are governed by the right hemisphere, which controls emotional affect and creativity.

Whilst biological differences between males and females would appear to set some parameters for differences in social behaviour, it most probably would not determine the temperaments of men and women in any one culture. Therefore, the biological argument has been challenged by many scholars on several grounds: the most explicit flaw being the implied causation between two observed sets of differences (biological differences and different behaviours). This implied causation is misleading, since there is no logical reason to assume that one caused the other, or that the line of causation moves only from the biological to the social. “We may be born males or females, but we become men and women in a cultural context.” (Kimmel and Messner 2004: xii).

Thus, although no human behaviour is totally uninfluenced by biology, masculinity reflects more of social and cultural expectations of male behaviour (rather) than biology. Men’s (just like women’s) hormonal state, chromosomal patterns and homeostasis can influence their behaviour. For example, research has indicated links between levels of testosterone in males and dominant and aggressive behaviours. But aggressive behaviour can indeed also cause higher levels of testosterone, rather than the other way round. Whitehead and Barret (2001: 16) therefore states:

“So male aggression is not conditional upon testosterone; young boys with very little testosterone can be aggressive in certain social situations and there is evidence that testosterone levels are not significantly higher in those males who are violent and abusive towards women.”

## **5.2 Anthropological models**

One of the most outstanding contributions of the anthropology of women has been its sustained analysis of gender symbols and sexual stereotypes. According to Henrietta Moore (1994: 14) the main problem facing researchers in this area is how to explain both the huge observable variation in cultural comprehensions of what the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’ mean, and the fact that certain notions about gender appear in a wide range of different societies.

Anthropologists have thus entered the debate on gender from very different positions. For example (according to Kimmel and Messner, 2004), some anthropologists have suggested that the universality of gender differences comes from specific cultural adaptations to the environment, whereas others describe the cultural variations of gender roles, seeking to demonstrate the fluidity of gender and the primacy of cultural organization. Many scholars have pointed out problems with the anthropological model, since it lacks in many regards and also reveal a marked conservatism that implies: the differences between women and men are the differences that nature or cultural evolution intended, and are therefore not to be tampered with. “Why didn’t intelligence become sex linked, as this model (and the biological model) would imply?” (Kimmel and Messner 2004: xii)

## **5.3 Psychological models**

For a big part of the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, theories which came forth out of the world of psychology, dominated schemata of interpretation concerning gender (and specifically masculinity). Sigmund Freud’s theories had the greatest influence. According to Connell (1995: 12) Freud’s theory about the Oedipus-complex developed to the “normalizing psychoanalysis of the 1940’s and after [which] it lost the capacity

for a critique of masculinity". The dominance of the psychology shifted the focus away from the social context and environment.

Some gender theorists propose that there are clear-cut and visibly apparent psychological differences between men and women<sup>47</sup>. One philosopher, Helena Cronin (in Tripp 2000: 1) declares these differences according to Darwin's evolution theory. The process of natural selection over the span of evolutionary time, according to Cronin, implies that men are more competitive, ambitious, status-aware, committed, goal-oriented and persevering by nature. "This is a two million year-old fact [and] we should accept it." By stating this, she articulates an essentialist model of gender differences, and maintains the theory that certain ways of thinking and acting are essentially masculine, and certain ways essentially feminine. Within this model men and women have inherent and characteristic traits that fundamentally remain intact over the span of history and throughout different cultural borders.

Cronin's argument for an essentialist position is opposed by Germaine Greer (in Tripp 2000: 2), who proposes that the differences between men and women should be viewed differently: "I...agree that masculinity is very different from femininity...but I also believe that men work very hard at creating masculinities...There's a lot of aspects of the way they behave which are highly cultural and extremely protean, [and] could change pretty quickly...Things cannot not fit with biology...that's obvious...the point is that culture does its own thing with biology, [and] it could have done any one of a number of things."

Psychological theories have also contributed to the discussion of gender roles (and the implications of its transgression)<sup>48</sup>, as psychologists have specified the developmental sequences for both males and females. Kimmel and Messner (2004: xii – xiii) indicate that earlier theorists for instance observed psychological distancing from the mother as the precondition for

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<sup>47</sup> See, e.g. Roothman, Kirsten and Wissing (2003) for a South African study on the differences between men and women with regard to aspects of psychological well-being. The results of their study are in line with gender stereotypes and traditional socialisation practices and, according to them, possibly reflect the impact of longstanding social inequity between men and women.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g. Sirin, McCreary and Mahalik (2004) for an examination of the influence of gender role transgressions on perceptions of men and women's social status, homosexual orientation and value dissimilarity.

independence and autonomy. Since it was assumed to be normative for males to exhibit independence (and the capacity for abstract reason), it was argued that males are more successful at negotiating these psychological passages, and implied that women in some way stayed behind men on the ladder of developmental success. These kinds of arguments may be found in Freud, Erikson, and Kohlberg.

But these models, too, have been challenged, for instance by sociologist Nancy Chodorow, who argued that women's ability to connect contains a more fundamentally human trait than the male's need to distance. Chodorow (1978) explicitly insists that these "essential" differences between women and men are socially constructed and thus subject to change.

### **5.3.1 Male and female (sex) roles**

According to Connell (2002: 5) psychological research in general suggests that the great majority of people combine masculine and feminine characteristics, in varying blends, rather than being all one or all the other. The field of psychology's first important attempts to create a social science of masculinity centred on the idea of a male sex role. It was based on the revolutionary depth psychology founded by Freud. Its origins go back to late nineteenth-century debates about sex difference, when resistance to women's emancipation was reinforced by a scientific doctrine of innate sex difference.

This psychological model or paradigm was later defined as the male sex role identity (MSRI) paradigm<sup>49</sup>. It is primarily a set of ideas about sex roles (especially the male role), which has

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<sup>49</sup>In essence, this paradigm represents the way that the Western society has constructed a psychology of masculinity. Joseph Pleck, in his pioneering book, *The myth of masculinity* (1981), published a comprehensive re-examination of this male role literature and model. He criticized the 'Male Sex Role Identity' paradigm above all for its assumption of concordance between norm and personality – the idea that conformity to sex role norms is what promotes psychological adjustment. Sex role identity is a hypothetical psychological structure by which, it is thought, an individual psychologically "validates" or "affirms" his or her sex group. By developing sex role identity, an individual goes beyond the simple cognitive awareness of his or her biological sex to psychologically identifying with it. Sex role identity is manifested in sex-appropriate traits, attitudes, and interests. (Pleck 1981: 12) The MSRI theory/paradigm is at a later stage defined by Pleck (1987) as follows: "The theory of male sex-role identity (MSRI) has been the dominant paradigm in American Psychology for understanding male experience. In brief, this theory holds that for individuals to become psychologically mature as members of their sex, they must acquire male or female 'sex-role identity,' manifested by having the sex-appropriate traits, attitudes and interest that psychologically 'validate' or 'affirm' their biological sex. However many factors conspire to thwart the attainment of healthy sex-

dominated the academic social sciences since the 1930's and more generally has shaped our culture's view of the male role. Role theory is based upon a theatrical metaphor in which all social behaviour is viewed as a kind of performance. Located at the intersection of psychology and sociology, role theory draws attention to the fact that most people, for most of the time, behave in ways which are socially prescribed. People, it is assumed, are by no means free agents, going about their business or behaving in their own preferred way. Instead, role theorists claim, they are more like actors on a stage, playing out pre-scripted parts. To be a man then, they suggest, is inevitably to play a certain role. Thus, masculinity represents just a set of lines and stage direction which men have to learn to perform.

Since the second half of the twentieth century some theorists have attempted to construe the male sex role in a more condensed style. One example is Brannon (1976), who interpreted the hegemonic male role as consisting of four basic clusters:

- 'no sissy stuff' – avoids of all feminine behaviours and traits. A 'real man' must never, never resemble women. Physically, real men have deep voices, avoid the use of cosmetics, and give minimal attention to their clothes and hygiene. Emotionally, real men present themselves as invulnerable, and they repress expressions of affection toward other men.
- 'the big wheel' – centres on the acquisition of success, status, and breadwinning competence. Typically, 'the big wheel' is determined by a man's occupation.
- 'the sturdy oak' – conveys manliness, self-reliance, strength, confidence and independence.
- 'give 'em hell' – men emit an aura of aggression and violence and use it to obtain sex from women. They display aggression, violence and risk-taking behaviour.

The MSRI paradigm and its ensuing models (as mentioned above) have been criticized and found wanting by leading sociologists like R.W. Connell (1995) who states: "Role theory in general is logically vague. The same term is used to describe an occupation, a political status, a momentary transaction, a hobby, a stage in life and a gender. Because of the shifting bases on which 'roles'

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role identity, especially for males (e.g., the actual or relative absence of male role models, and women's changing roles)." (Pleck 1987: 21)

are defined, role theory leads to major incoherence in the analysis of social life. *Role theory exaggerates the degree to which people's social behaviour is prescribed. But at the same time, by assuming that the prescriptions are reciprocal, it underplays social inequality and power. For all these reasons 'role' has proved unworkable as a general framework for analysis.*"<sup>50</sup> (Connell 1995: 26) (own italics)

Therefore, in conclusion the researcher contends: *there is most probably not a single, straightforward psychological process through which gender identities are formed. Instead, there is a complex interaction of thoughts, evaluations, negotiations, emotions and reactions.*

#### 5.4 Sociological models

Several sociologists have also attempted to synthesize these three above-mentioned (biological, anthropological and psychological) models into a further systematic explanation of "sex roles". These sex roles are the collection of attitudes, attributes, and behaviours that is seen as appropriate for males and appropriate for females. Thus, masculinity is associated with technical mastery, aggression, competitiveness, and cognitive abstraction, whereas femininity is associated with emotional nurturance, connectedness, and passivity.

The strongest challenge to all these perspectives came from feminist scholars, who have specified the ways in which the assumptions about maturity, development, and health all made masculinity the norm against which both genders were measured. In all the social sciences, these feminist scholars have criticized these early studies to reveal the unexamined ideological assumptions contained within them. The pioneering French feminist Simone de Beauvoir did this by stating (in 1949) in a classic phrase: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"<sup>51</sup>. By the early 1970's, women's studies programs began to articulate a new paradigm for the study of gender,

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<sup>50</sup> Against this background it may however be argued that the traditional male sex role has contributed towards sex role strain and the 'crisis of masculinity' in that it advocates one rigid and essentially unattainable male image. Later in the dissertation (chapter 3) it will be argued that the mass media have undoubtedly added to this by making extensive use of sex role stereotypes, and presenting a largely unrealistic, dysfunctional and obsolete image of masculinity in an attempt to legitimise and propagate patriarchal ideologies.

<sup>51</sup> See De Beauvoir (1949).

and by the mid-1970's, the first group of texts about men appeared that had been inspired by these pioneering efforts by feminist scholars<sup>52</sup>. (Kimmel and Messner 2004: xiii – xiv)

Another one of these feminist scholars, Mary Stewart van Leeuwen (et al. 1993) states that although gender relations are part of each culture and each period of history, they vary in shape and form. Therefore each cultural context has its own version of gender relations that also changes over periods of time. People and their behaviours are still called feminine or masculine, but the definition thereof has changed in some ways and continues to change. “From this perspective, then, gender is seen not as an essential, inherent attribute but as something that we largely construct and to which we give meaning in a social context. In a sense, gender becomes a verb: that is, we gender.” (Stewart van Leeuwen et al. 1993: 240).

## 5.5 Precursory summary of the four models' depiction of gender

In the light of these above-mentioned contentions it can be concluded that gender is constructed more by people, than by biology, and this construction is shaped by historical, cultural, and psychological processes (Basow, 1992). Primarily then, the nature of each culture's gender relations is most clearly perceivable: firstly in the construction of power (often called patriarchy<sup>53</sup>); secondly in the division of labour between males and females; and thirdly in the social organization of sexuality and attraction (often called cathexis)<sup>54</sup>.

According to Judith Butler in her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990), gender is evidently not something stable we are born with, and not something we possess, but rather something we do or perform. She proposes that it is produced both within oneself and for other people as “a stylised repetition of acts” (Butler 1990: 140), inscribed on the body through continual performance. “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender...identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (1990: 25).

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<sup>52</sup> A more in-depth discussion on some of these pioneering efforts from feminist scholars will be mentioned at a later stage in this chapter.

<sup>53</sup> This concept of patriarchy will be explained and clarified in more detail in chapter 4.

<sup>54</sup> See also R.W. Connell's *Gender and Power* (1987); and A. Brittan's *Masculinity and Power* (1989).

Butler (1990: 10) contends that we do not have a gender identity which informs our behaviour; on the contrary, that behaviour is all that our gender is. Gender, then, is what you *do* at particular times, rather than a universal *who you are*. Thus, gender is a process of becoming, a condition actively under construction. Not simply as imposed from outside, by social norms or pressure from authorities, but rather as people who construct themselves as masculine or feminine.<sup>55</sup>

Gender may be a construct, but *gender also constructs us in a certain way*. It is possible to argue that our concept of the human subject is always already gender-determined, and that the comprehensibility of human subjects is dependant on their identification with a specific gender: other people are always ‘he’ or ‘she’ for us, never ‘it’. In another book *Bodies that matter*, Butler (1993) describes it as follows:

“Subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows the process of...gendering but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves.” (1993: 7)

In this way gender functions for us as a cultural typology, and it sets borders for interpretation and imaging. Therefore cultural schemata for the interpretation of gender differences will be inevitably and undeniably present in the ways in which we attribute meaning to ourselves, other people and the world around us – also indeed within our religious (and specifically theological) meaning-systems/ interpretation schemes. It is thus in the first and last instance a hermeneutical encounter and will therefore later be assessed through a pastoral-hermeneutical perspective.

## 6. LANGUAGE AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER

In light of the above-mentioned assertions a clear distinction can be made between, on the one hand: the (mainly biologically determined) male and female sex, and on the other hand:

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<sup>55</sup> Butler’s (1990) concept of gender as an ongoing performance that can encompass any gender characteristic regardless of sex also pertains to men’s masculine identity. Men have the agency to choose the gender identity they perform and their masculine identity varies across time and culture. “Masculinity is never fully possessed, but must perpetually be achieved, asserted and negotiated” (Roper and Tosh 1991: 18).



masculine and feminine gender. This distinction illustrates the significant role language plays<sup>56</sup> in the understanding of issues pertaining to terminologies such as gender and sex, and therefore deserves further analysis.

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 5) “both language and gender are fundamentally embedded in social practice, deriving their meaning from the human activities in which they figure.” Gender is, after all, a system of meaning – a way of construing notions of male and female – and language is the primary means through which we maintain or contest old meanings, and construct or resist new ones.

The analytical category gender<sup>57</sup> has only quite recently entered the general language world in English circles: “It was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that it became widely acceptable to make a distinction between ‘sex’ – denoting anatomical or biological ‘maleness’ or ‘femaleness’ – and the term ‘gender’ – denoting the distinct sets of characteristics culturally ascribed to maleness and femaleness and signified by the adjectives ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (Tripp 2000: 3).

The year 1968 is viewed by many social theorists as the year within which a very definite shift has taken place and the “modern” meaning of gender was constructed in the English language. The American psycho-analyst, Robert Stoller’s book, *Sex and Gender*, then made a clear distinction<sup>58</sup> between the two terms. Basically, it can be stated that sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Gender builds on biological sex, it exaggerates biological difference and,

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<sup>56</sup> Language has significant power. In the words of McFague (1987: 3): “We are the pre-eminent creatures of language, and though language does not exhaust human reality, it qualifies it in a profound way.” Something in this statement resonates in Martin Heidegger’s (in Polt 1999: 176 and further) view of language as “the House of Being”, in other words that language is not only there for the use of the human being, but that humans actually exist for the sake of language. He proposes that language itself creates meaning.

<sup>57</sup> Over the last thirty years the term ‘gender’ has become common in English-language discussions. The term was borrowed from grammar. Ultimately it comes from an ancient Indo-European word-root meaning ‘to produce’ (cf. ‘generate’), which gave rise to words in many languages meaning ‘kind’ or ‘class’ (e.g. ‘genus’). In grammar ‘gender’ came to refer to the specific distinction between classes of nouns ‘corresponding more or less’ – as the nineteenth-century Oxford English Dictionary specifically noted – ‘to distinctions of sex (and absence of sex) in the objects denoted’. (Connell 2002: 7 – 8)

<sup>58</sup> See Linda Nicholson’s “Interpreting Gender” (1994) to clarify some of the problematic aspects of this type of distinctions.

indeed, it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant. There is no biological reason, for example, why women should have coloured toenails and men not.

But, while we still mostly think of sex as biological and gender as social, this distinction is not fully clear-cut<sup>59</sup>. People tend to think of gender as the result of nurture – as social and hence fluid – while sex is simply given by biology. However, “there is no obvious point at which sex leaves off and gender begins, partly because there is no single objective biological criterion for male or female sex. Sex is based in a combination of anatomical, endocrinal and chromosomal features, and the selection among these criteria for sex assignment is based very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female.” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 5).

## 6.1 Binary logic as linguistic interpretive framework of gender

The implicit assumption that men and women are binary opposites, and that speech constitutes a symbolic reflection of that opposition, is inherently problematical both from the point of view and language and gender. In the modern English (and Afrikaans in South Africa) language usage it has become common practice to speak about men and women as opposite sexes of one another. It is a linguistic habit which, through repetition, has almost become second nature, but which (according to some feminist theorists) necessitates further critical scrutiny. According to Johnson and Meinhof (1997: 14) this positing of men and women as opposites, and therefore essentially different, needs to be seen within a much broader tradition in linguistic thinking generally, the roots of which are to be found in structuralist approaches to language. Why do we speak of opposite, and not rather of different or other gender types?

Diane Elam (in Tripp 2000: 169) identifies, what she calls, a binary logic at work in our understanding of gender. She proposes that: “we satisfy our prescribed gender role more through knowledge of what we are not than what we are”. Out of this perspective gender is not an isolated identity, but it is constructed within relationships, and we therefore come to an

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<sup>59</sup> This is affirmed by Edwards (2006: 82) who asserts: “...gender and sexuality, as practices, discourses and indeed constructs are intricately linked and its often far more accurate to talk in terms of gendered sexualities and sexualized genders rather than gender and sexuality, as if they were two distinct categories.”

understanding of masculinity and femininity through a process of differentiation. We are male precisely by not being female, and vice versa; therefore masculinity should at the same time depend on and hand down the idea of femininity as the defining and constitutive opposite pole thereof<sup>60</sup>.

Binary logic, according to the French feminist Helene Cixous (in Tripp 2000: 6), is a vital part of Western patriarchal thought, seeing that it generates and sustains gender power relations. Binary patterns structure reality within a range of “either/or” oppositions such as active/passive, culture/nature, rational/irrational, public/private. Within each of these oppositions one term will be inclined to take privilege over the other, with the subordinated term typically linked to femininity/womanhood.

Binary thoughts are integrally part of many of our traditional interpretation schemes and expressions. It is difficult to escape from them, and it can be viewed as both constrictive and restrictive. It tries to polarise plurality, complexity and nuance to a (over)simplified question of “either/or” – it therefore causes the “collapse” of a multiplicity of variations into one opposition. In the light of these considerations it is not surprising that many feminists’ primary goal is the destabilisation and deconstruction of rigid binary gender constructions, which serves as the stabilisers of patriarchal power.

Subsequently it seems inevitable that the Western patriarchal cultures try to normalise gender roles, and to fit gender into a rigid, binary, oppositional structure. This understanding of gender is deeply engraved into the traditional schemata of interpretation and expressions (as in the phrases “a real man” or “a member of the opposite sex”), and should therefore be challenged by sociologists and others that are interested in radical gender politics.

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60 This abovementioned paradigm and stereotypical expression of masculinity and femininity as opposite poles have frequently had a negative impact on people’s developmental processes and identity formation. William O’Malley (1992) states this as follows: “The stereotyping has been psychologically corrosive: boys thinking that men don’t cry and that any genuine affection for another male is a hint of homosexuality; girls believing women are by nature homemakers and any urge to stand up and challenge is a threat to their womanhood.” (O’Malley 1992: 402).

## 6.2 Gender identity

The above comments about sex and gender lead us to another concept, *gender identity*. Some people in society are perceived as male and they identify themselves as masculine, whilst others who are perceived as male, identify themselves as feminine. *Gender identity* (‘I am male’ or ‘I am female’) is some function of the interaction between self-identification and others’ identification. It therefore refers to an individual view or belief that he or she belongs to a particular gender, supported by self-identification and the identification of others (Franklin 1984: 3). Consequently masculinity (or femininity) as a static configuration is not important; rather, Connell (1995: 72) asserts that the construction of gendered identity is a project. A project defined as a process of configuring practice through time – the process is thus unfolding and unfinished (cf. also Giddens 1991).

Henceforth, the actual definition of the biological classifications *male* and *female*, and people’s perception of themselves and others as such (female and male), is ultimately social. Indeed, this is a fact which should be integrated in one’s view of *sex* and *gender*, but a further analysis of this detailed distinction unfortunately exceeds the limits of this research endeavour. For the purpose of this study, the terms male/female (sex) will be used when referring to the genetically determined and biologically maintained sex of persons. By contrast, the terms masculine/feminine (gender) or manhood/womanhood will be used when referring to the culturally produced assumptions, expectations, roles and stereotypes (see the following paragraph) that relates to “fitting” and “normal”<sup>61</sup> behaviour for men and woman (thus referring to one’s subjective feelings of gender identity).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> According to Nevid et al. (2006: 366) “normal” gender identity can be defined as the psychological sense of being male or female. For most people gender identity is consistent with a person’s anatomic sex. In gender identity disorder (GID), however, there is a conflict between one’s anatomic sex and one’s gender identity. GID can also be referred to as trans-sexualism and may already begin in childhood, when some children with the disorder may find their anatomic sex to be a source of persistent and intense distress. Some researchers refer to people with GID as inter-sexed or trans-gendered. According to Looy and Bouma (2005) the existence and often struggling experience of such persons *challenge Christians to reflect seriously on our theologies of gender*, and their implications for our understanding of what it means to be male and female. They also call us to consider how we might, in Christian community, seek to minister with persons who are inter-sexed or trans-gendered.

<sup>62</sup> This distinction is based on definitions used by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to its glossary: “Gender” refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female in a particular point in time (WHO 2001); whilst “Sex” refers to the biological characteristics which define humans as female or male. [These last mentioned sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as

### 6.3 Gender roles and stereotypes

Except for the (above-mentioned) distinction between sex and gender it is furthermore very important to distinguish between *gender roles* and *gender stereotypes*<sup>63</sup>. According to Bee (2000: 162) gender roles describe what men and women actually do within a particular cultural and historical context, whilst gender stereotypes refer to a set of shared, often rigid beliefs about what men and women should do, how they should act, what traits they all have, in accordance with their gender. The degree to which a person identifies with societal definitions of masculinity or femininity is thus referred to as *gender role identity or sex typing* (as defined here above).

Basow (1992) contends that it is possible, indeed common, for women and men to vary in their adoption of sex-typed (or gender role identity) characteristics. According to Greer (in Tripp 2000: 2), the ways in which men and women think, act and experience interactions will have much more to do with the specific culture within which they live, than with nature/the natural. This will however differ quite strongly from culture to culture and within one period in the history to the next. This view of Greer (concerning gender roles) is affirmed by Bee (2000), but according to Bee gender stereotypes are “also remarkably consistent across cultures...exceptions were quite rare. The common male stereotype is centred around a set of qualities often labelled instrumental, including competence and agency, while the female stereotype centres around qualities of affiliation and expressiveness, often referred to as communal.” (Bee 2000: 162-163).

Both views should therefore be accommodated. On the one hand there are clearly distinguishable contextual cultural-historical differences in men and women’s behaviour, interaction patterns etc;

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there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females.] (WHO 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Stereotypes can be defined as strongly held overgeneralizations about people in some designated social category. Such beliefs tend to be universally shared within a given society and are learned as part of the process of growing up in that society. Gender stereotypes are those structured sets of beliefs about the personal attributes of women and men. These beliefs are normative in the sense that they imply that gender-linked characteristics not only exist but also are desirable. Gender stereotypes exist both on the cultural level (for example, as reflected in the media) and on a personal level (for example, our implicit personality theory regarding the attributes linked with being female or male). We acquire gender stereotypes as we acquire information about the world and our roles in it.

but on the other hand there is also a lucid universal pattern of stereotypical behaviours etc. (which is expected) of people, especially within the Western society.

Gender stereotypes can furthermore not only vary across different contexts, but also within different time frameworks. According to Basow (1992: 6) gender stereotypes are not fixed but respond, albeit slowly, to cultural changes over a period of time. Since the 1970s, distinct subtypes of both female and male stereotypes have appeared (especially in the Western world). For women, there are at least three distinct stereotypes: *the housewife* (the traditional woman), the *professional woman* (independent, ambitious, self-confident), and the *Playboy bunny* (sex object). Although the subtypes are perceived as differing on many characteristics, behaviours, and occupations, they still share commonalities. For example, all three subtypes are expected to be concerned with having and caring for children.

The traditional male stereotype has been found to include three main factors: *status* (the need to achieve success and others' respect), *toughness* (strength and self-reliance), and *anti-femininity* (avoidance of stereotypically feminine activities). In addition, the traditional man is seen by men as sexually proficient. Women, however, distinguish a sexual man subtype – the stud or Don Juan. For many theorists - see for example Pleck (1981) - a liberated man stereotype also exists that incorporates such stereotypically feminine traits as gentleness and sensitivity. (Basow 1992: 6). *The question can thus now be asked: what are the traditional male stereotypes currently (in 2007), and how has it changed in, for instance, the last two decades?*

***In summary:*** within the framework of recent sociological and psychological literature it is throughout the tendency to highlight that ***neither masculinity nor femininity are fixed, coherent or static constructions***. It is evident: none of us are simply one thing; we are not one whole or exclusively “male” or “female”. In spite of strong oppositions from both genders in this regard, women are not all the same, and the same applies to men. Schemata of interpretation for masculinity and femininity as homogeneous and fixed binary opposites are just simply not plausible any more. The ‘male-female’ dichotomy cannot explain the different ways people are gendered in time and place. Instead of viewing masculinity and femininity as two ends of a spectrum, **the researcher suggests *the idea of masculinity/ femininity as ‘cultural space’*** that

men and women can choose to inhabit - *these spaces are cultural constructs and not properties of persons.*

An important question might therefore be: *how should we interpret and understand this presupposition of gender as non-static construction theologically? In other words what does a theological-anthropological perspective on gender look like?* What new presuppositions must then be addressed? These questions will be attended to at a later stage in this dissertation (in chapter 5).

## **7. THE GENDERED CONTEXT WITHIN A GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE**

One of this dissertation's presuppositions is that when one speaks about gender-issues you are forced to deal with the issue of power within the context of an escalating human rights culture. One of the most dominating factors within this field is the use and abuse of power (to which attention will be given in more detail at a later stage). The basic problem, for instance, in the South African society which needs to be addressed, is the question whether it is possible to find a formula whereby people who have been forcibly separated by racist laws can live together in a common society. With such a question in mind it is presupposed that the analytical categories of race and gender (as well as other categories such as class, age and sexuality) should not be separated when exploring the social context within which men and women (of different ethnicities) live together.

Issues like the HIV pandemic, sexual violence and many other forms of discriminatory practices against women should also be attended to when addressing the above-mentioned problem. Subsequently, introductory remarks will be made on these related topics, but first the following update on international domestic violence.

One of the most recent global research projects on domestic violence against women - also called violence by a male intimate partner - was released by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2005. The WHO *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against*

*Women*<sup>64</sup> is a landmark research project, both in its scope and in how it was performed. For the results presented in this report, specially trained teams collected data from over 24 000 women from 15 sites in 10 countries representing diverse cultural settings: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The use of a standardized and robust methodology has substantially reduced many of the difficulties that affected earlier work on violence against women, and produced results that permit comparison and analyses across settings. (WHO 2005: 5)

The main focus of the WHO Study was violence against women by male intimate partners. This included physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by current partners or ex-partners, and covered both the current situation of the women interviewed and their lifetime experience. There were wide variations between different settings in the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women. For example, the proportion of women who had ever suffered physical violence by a male partner ranged from 13% in Japan to 61% in provincial Peru. Japan also had the lowest level of sexual violence at 6%, with the highest figure of 59% being reported in Ethiopia. While sexual violence was considerably less frequent than physical violence in most settings, it was more frequent in provincial Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and urban Thailand. In countries where large cities and provincial settings were both studied, the overall levels of partner violence were consistently higher in the provincial settings, which had more rural populations, than in the urban sites. (WHO 2005: 6)

Furthermore, most acts of physical violence by an intimate partner reflect a pattern of continuing abuse, and were not just isolated events. The vast majority of women who had ever been physically abused by partners experienced acts of violence more than once, and sometimes frequently. With the exception of the most severe types of physical violence – choking, burning, and the threatened or actual use of a weapon – in each site, over half of women who had experienced a violent act in the past 12 months had experienced that act more than once. (WHO 2005: 7). It is also very evident that around the world, mental health problems, emotional distress and suicidal behaviour are common among women who have suffered partner violence. (WHO 2005: 16)

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<sup>64</sup> See WHO, 2005.



## 7.1 Perspectives on (sexual) violence against women and HIV in South Africa

In South Africa, as neo-liberalism and an increasingly unequal and globalised world change traditional modes of production and forms of employment, men and women's roles are forced to change. Similarly, the HIV pandemic is forcing dramatic changes on men and women, boys and girls. As more and more people become ill and struggle to gain access to life-saving medication, men and boys are increasingly being called upon to share the tremendous burden of caring for and supporting the ill and dying, previously borne primarily by women and girls.

While gender roles are indeed shifting, gender inequality remains entrenched and continues to devastate women's lives. It is now well established that the HIV epidemic disproportionately affects women's lives both in terms of rates of infection and the burden of care and support they carry for those with HIV-related illnesses. Young women are much more likely to be infected than men<sup>65</sup> (Pettifor et al. 2004).

According to Denise Ackermann<sup>66</sup> (2004: 214) "...the AIDS pandemic in South Africa is a complex mixture of issues. Gender inequality, attitudes towards human sexuality, the scarring and fragmentation of large sections of society, our history of migrant labour and uprooting of communities exacerbated today by increased poverty and unemployment and obfuscation in regard to the cause of AIDS by leading politicians, are all part of the South African AIDS story. Statistics on the incidence of HIV infection are, like all statistics, problematic. This is particularly the case in the developing world, where stigma militates against reporting AIDS related infections and deaths<sup>67</sup>...Suffice it to say that even on the most conservative estimates, the scene looks bleak."

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<sup>65</sup> See also Van Dijk (2002) for some indications as to why HIV-related illnesses are more prevalent among youth in South Africa. Furthermore, see Smith (2002), who examines the way in which poverty and inequality increase girls' vulnerability to HIV (and also simultaneously affect the ability of older women to care for HIV sufferers).

<sup>66</sup> See Ackermann, 2004.

<sup>67</sup> It is generally accepted, however, that as recently as in 2003 some 14 000 people were infected daily by the HI-virus, of whom approximately 1500 are South Africans. By the end of 2003, 42 million people were living with the virus in their bodies. The pandemic has already claimed over 17 million African lives. Taking an average of the figures provided by UNAIDS and those in a recent South African research project (Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study 2002), it would appear that HIV prevalence among people in South Africa between the ages of 15 to 49 years is about 20 percent of our total population. Women have a higher HIV prevalence than men of about 4 percent. The Medical Research Council of South Africa calculates that 25 percent of last year's adult deaths were due to HIV-related diseases in South Africa. Life expectancy is now at an average of 37 years and will drop even more before the pandemic peaks. At present some 600 people are dying daily from HIV-related causes. (Ackermann 2004: 214)

Women's greater vulnerability to HIV is in part explained by the very high levels of sexual and domestic violence reported across South Africa – some of the highest levels reported anywhere in the world<sup>68</sup>. Violence in South Africa is an every day occurrence<sup>69</sup>, much of it between men, but, even more, from men to women. Violence against women and children is widely recognized as a serious concern across the country: 52, 733 rapes<sup>70</sup> and attempted rapes<sup>71</sup> were reported to the South African police between April 2003 and March 2004, a slight increase from the previous. The South African government has taken important legislative steps to try to combat violence against women, including introducing a new Sexual Offences Bill to remove anomalies from the existing law, which was discussed in Parliament during 2004. Police continue to receive training in handling rape cases. Specialized courts are being established, yet conviction rates remain low.

In a country like South Africa, where a very large percentage of adults are HIV-positive, rape can mean a death sentence. In April 2002, the government pledged Africa to provide rape survivors with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)—antiretroviral drugs that can reduce the chances of contracting the virus from an HIV-positive attacker. Government inaction and misinformation by high-level officials as well as administrative delays in dispensing the antiretroviral drugs continues to impede access to this lifesaving program. Children, an estimated 40 percent of rape and attempted rape survivors, are especially harmed by government failure to address their needs<sup>72</sup>.

Furthermore, women's economic vulnerability makes it more likely that they will be forced to sell sex for economic survival, less likely that they will be able to negotiate protection against sexually transmitted infections with a male sexual partner, and less likely that they will be able to leave a relationship that they perceive to be risky – all of which combine with biological

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<sup>68</sup> See, e.g. Boonzaier and De La Rey (2004), for narrative accounts of this type of sexual and domestic violence.

<sup>69</sup> See, e.g. Wood and Jewkes (1997); and Mathews (et al. 2004).

<sup>70</sup> According to Judy Tobler (2000: 79) a conservative figure from the organisation Rape Crisis in South Africa, based on reported rapes, plus an equally conservative percentage estimate of those unreported, is that a woman is raped every 23 seconds in South Africa.

<sup>71</sup> See Du Toit (2003: 36-66) for an excellent exposition on rape as irresponsible male behaviour, which includes torture. She asserts that "*men must refuse to be men*, in as far as the popular conception of masculinity views it as the enforcing of one's will against opposition...men have the responsibility of turning rape and violence against women and children in general into a public and political issue, because men with their lives, experiences and problems dominate the public domain. (2003: 64)

<sup>72</sup> See World Report, 2005.

vulnerability to increase rates of HIV among women worldwide. Similarly gender norms for masculinity - that expect men to be sexually adventurous and to dominate women - increase men's, particularly young men's vulnerability to HIV infection. It does this by pressuring them to engage in risky and sometimes violent sexuality with multiple partners. Thus, *gender norms also affect men's vulnerability to infection but in very different ways from those affecting women.*

Therefore, HIV doesn't just destroy immune systems; it also undermines the social, economic and political systems that underpin entire nations and regions. The HIV pandemic's destabilizing effects have been severely felt in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. A core aim, in the researcher's opinion, must be to develop suitable responses to these challenges adopting a human rights approach with a gender lens. Furthermore an understanding about gender concerns in HIV development needs to be developed seeing that gender inequality is a key variable in the incidence of HIV. As gender disparities increase, the epidemic is affecting more and more women who bear the negative consequences of the gender imbalances. And as the epidemic is maturing, it is drawing in women who have had only one sex partner.

## **7.2 Globalisation and the issue of gender mainstreaming<sup>73</sup>**

How is globalisation gendered? What are the changes in women's participation in different parts of society, e.g. in formal parliamentary politics on a global gender scale? Is there a connection between economic development and political democracy for women? What is gender mainstreaming and why is it regarded as such a key institutional response for promoting gender equality and empowering women? How prevalent are these initiatives and developments in the South African human rights culture?

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<sup>73</sup> According to Walby (2004: 2) gender mainstreaming is a contested concept and practice. "It is the re-invention, restructuring, and re-branding of a key part of feminism in the contemporary era. It is both a new form of gendered political and policy practice and it is a new gendered strategy for theory development. As a practice, gender mainstreaming is intended as a way of improving the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes. As a form of theory, gender mainstreaming is a process of revision of key concepts in order to grasp more adequately a world that is gendered, rather than the establishment of a separatist gender theory." Her paper explores the potential and limitations of gender mainstreaming as a practical and as an analytic strategy by addressing key underlying theoretical issues as well as comparatively assessing the implications of gender mainstreaming in different settings. See Walby (2004).

It has globally become clearly evident that there can be no democracy if women are not full political participants. Not only must women's empowerment be a focus for grassroots organisations, it must also be a focus for the state and the institutions of global governance. In order for an economy and a society to be productive, women as well as men need to be engaged fully, which can only effectively happen if the state, as well civil society, is democratic.

Sylvia Walby (2000: 20-28) examined the rise of women's participation in parliaments around the world, and its association both with economic and human development and with regional and global political alliances. She explored the evidence which has emerged in support of a so-called 'productive engagement' approach<sup>74</sup>. According to Walby (2000: 22) since 1945, there has been a major increase in the extent to which women are elected as representatives in national parliaments around the world.

The pattern of women's representation in parliaments is very variable between different countries. There is a regional pattern, although there are significant variations within each region. The Nordic countries have the highest representation of women, with female parliament membership at 38.9 per cent, whilst sub-Saharan Africa is at 10.9 per cent<sup>75</sup>. The transition to a market economy and more open democracy was accompanied by a dramatic drop in the number of women in the national assemblies. Very recently, this has been growing again, according to her.

Walby contends (2000:23) that there are two main factors behind the rise in women's election to parliaments, namely the increase of women's economic power, and women's political struggles. Furthermore there is a correlation between the proportion of women in employment and in parliament in many countries. For instance, the Nordic countries have the highest rates of female

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74 This approach is distinguished by Walby from five other approaches, i.e. welfare; equity; anti-poverty; efficiency; and empowerment. This (sixth) "productive engagement" approach combines efficiency and empowerment and sees democratisation and efficiency going hand-in-hand, for women as well as men. It is based on the understanding that a modern economy needs people to be educated and to be able to associate freely and to exchange information. (Walby 2000: 20-22).

75 These figures are representative of the late 1990's. For a summary of the most recent worldwide statistics on the (percentage) share of women-held seats in national parliaments, see Gupta (et al. 2005: 193) for the report of the UN Millennium Project 2005 (see table A4.4). South Africa's statistics regarding the above-mentioned for 1990 and 2003 respectively are: 2.8% and 30.7%.

membership of parliaments in the world. In comparison, countries with low levels of representation of women in parliament also have low rates of female paid employment.

Achieving gender equality and empowering women requires technical expertise and knowledge of how to mainstream gender concerns into development policies and programs. At the 1995 fourth World Conference on Women the international community endorsed gender mainstreaming as a key institutional response for promoting gender equality and empowering women. In essence gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means to the goal of gender equality. As a technical tool it can be effective only if supported by a strong political and legal mandate. At the country level legal instruments such as the Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>76</sup> and others provide such a mandate. The understanding of gender mainstreaming raises complex questions as to the relationship between global, regional and national levels of governance. (Walby 2004: 23)

An adequate understanding of gender mainstreaming is often compromised by a lack of conceptual clarity about the meaning of gender, which is unfortunately often still equated with women and henceforth gender mainstreaming is seen solely as increasing the focus on women. In South Africa the post-apartheid (after 1994) government made gender equality one of the priorities of the reconstruction process in the country. South Africa's constitution now guarantees equality between men and women and provides for affirmative action to address gender inequalities in public life. The constitution takes precedence over customary law when the equality clause and customary law conflict<sup>77</sup>. In 1995 South Africa was one of the first

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<sup>76</sup> CEDAW is regarded as a touchstone for realizing the potential held out by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), set out by the UN. The CEDAW process has generated a wealth of understanding and experience that illuminates the nature of gender-based discrimination and clarifies the steps needed to achieve gender equality. The third MDG states: to promote gender equality and empower women, with its target: to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015. While the MDG's set out concrete, time-bound and measurable goals, targets and indicators for poverty reduction, this framework provides only the starting point for the work that must be undertaken. As the Millennium Declaration has emphasized, it is critically important that the gender equality obligations and commitments that have been made to the world's women are effectively implemented. CEDAW can be used as a lens to understand and address the gender equality dimensions of the MDG's. (UN Inter-agency Network on women and gender equality, 2005)

<sup>77</sup> Several new laws have been introduced and existing laws revised to make them more gender-sensitive. The Public Service Act of 1994 and the Labour Relations Act of 1995 removed discriminatory practices in public services and labour markets. Abortion was legalised in 1996. The government also passed a law in 1993 criminalising rape within marriage. Gender concerns are fully mainstreamed into the governments apparatus. South Africa does not have a separate ministry of women's affairs, but the commission on gender equality, provided for in

countries in the world to pioneer analysis of the national budget from a gender perspective. The Women's budget initiative was a collaborative venture of women parliamentarians and women's organisations to make the case for relocating expenditures and revenues to more adequately respond to the needs of women. (Gupta et al. 2005:150)

It is therefore clear that, in terms of monitoring and accountability, South Africa has women's movements that can hold governments to their promises. Gender budget initiatives serve as important monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

### 7.3 Feminism/s and theories on gender

The late nineteen sixties and early seventies were (above else) the period within which a new so-called second wave<sup>78</sup> of feminism found momentum, and writers theorised and politicised around the newly available category of gender. These feminists (for example Germaine Greer) not only emphasised the cultural construction of gender, but also the cultural construction of gender inequality; in other words, the ways in which gender constitutes power relationships. The most feminists identified the societies within which they lived (live) as patriarchal, i.e. structured in ways that give men's interests priority above women's interests.

It is currently quite lucid that the secular feminism made a huge difference in the ways in which gender is viewed within the postmodernist Western culture. When feminism is discussed it is important to realise that the movement was never represented as a single, uniform theory of gender. Many different theories, practices, perspectives and agendas exist within the movement.

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the constitution, monitors and evaluates government and the private sector on gender, informs the public and makes recommendations on laws and policies. The office on the status of women is responsible for developing national gender policy, promoting affirmative action in government, supporting government bodies to integrate gender in all policies and programs, and organising gender training. (Gupta et al. 2005:150)

78 Linda Woodhead (2003) distinguishes between three phases in the continuing development of feminism.

According to Woodhead (2003: 67) *first wave feminism*, which gathered momentum in the late nineteenth century, tended to be gender-blind in the sense that it wished to claim equality between the sexes and to "subsume their differences under a common 'humanity'". *Second wave feminism*, which flourished between the 1960's and 1980's, developed a highly essentialist understanding of men and women, and campaigned for the liberation of women from male oppression or "patriarchy". *Third wave feminism*, which began to dominate the field in the 1990's reacted (and still reacts) against essentialism and seeks instead to explore gender differences which are now understood as complex, multifaceted, fluid, constructed, and only loosely related to the body.

It will for now suffice to assert that one of the main contributions of the feminist movement/s is that it elicited the following: *that gender is a continuous effect of the meanings and definitions that are culturally produced and circulated*<sup>79</sup>.

Secular feminism is mainly busy with the construction, nuances and implications of what it means to be a woman within a specific context, in a given culture within a certain time framework. But, feminism can and should also be interpreted and engaged with by men as well, as Phylis Bird (1999: 130) states: “Ultimately it (feminist reading – authors) should make sense to men as well. Feminism, and feminist interpretation, is not idiosyncratic, concerned only with female history and female nature, but aims to provide a more adequate account of our gendered human nature and history”.

Human (gender) identity must always be formed (and changed over time) in dialogue between men and women. Therefore feminist re-interpretations of what womanhood means has a considerable effect on interpretations and experiences of what masculinity/manhood means. Unfortunately, masculinity has mainly and mostly been presented as the human norm, and conventional masculine qualities (such as rationality, authority, braveness, mastering abilities, independence, physical energy etc.), were simultaneously viewed as universal “human” ideals. Within patriarchal-organised societies and contexts masculine values often became the ideological structure of the society as a whole. (Tripp 2000: 11)

Some of the recent re-interpretations of masculinity were done in service of feminism, and others functioned complementary to it. An example of the last mentioned is the work of Homi Bhabha (in Tripp 2000), *Are You a Man or a Mouse?*, in which he emphasises the multiple nature of masculinity within postmodernist frameworks:

“To speak of masculinity in general, ‘sui generis’, must be avoided at all costs. It is as a discourse of self-generation, reproduced over the generations in patrilineal perpetuity, that masculinity seeks to make a name for itself. ‘He’, that ubiquitous male member, is the masculine signature

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<sup>79</sup> It follows that for instance, the investigation of the masculine gender, and explorations on the influence and dynamics of power within gender relationships have obviously benefited considerably through this scrutinizing (feminist) movement/s.

written large – the pronoun of the invisible man; the subject of the surveillant, sexual order; the object of humanity personified. It must be our aim not to deny or disavow masculinity, but to disturb its manifest destiny – to draw attention to it as a prosthetic reality – a ‘prefixing’ of the rules of gender and sexuality...” (Tripp 2000: 102)

Therefore it becomes clear that feminism played a pioneering role in the articulation, politicisation and development of the questions concerning gender (and specifically masculinity). It is of critical importance to realise that these defining contributions have many real, material consequences in our everyday (contextual) lives as men and women. How are these meanings and definitions culturally produced in the differing contexts and (sub) cultures, for instance in South Africa? What is the impact of the religious environment on these productions?<sup>80</sup> A further elaborate discussion of the diversification within the secular feminist movement exceeds the limits of this dissertation. These introductory remarks are limited to their relevance pertaining to the question of gender (and later to the problem of masculinity). But, the feminist theology, and especially African Feminist theology, has a very important role to play in this regard, hence the following introductory remarks.

#### **7.4 African women’s Theologies<sup>81</sup> contribution**

Theological engagement with gender issues seeks to expose harm and injustices that are in society and are extended to Scripture and the teachings and practices of the Church through culture. African women have benefited from the theological work done by women globally. They are part of the trend whereby women now study theology. If African women today are able to name some of the oppressive aspects of African cultures, such a stance has not come easily.

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<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note that, according to Woodhead (2003: 73), in Christianity – the largest of the world’s religions, women outnumber men. Yet the reasons for their greater religiosity, and the nature of this religiosity, have attracted little attention or energy within the sociology of religion. The data proving women’s greater religiosity is however now overwhelming and three main suggestions have been made, according to Woodhead (2003: 73). Women are more religious than men because: (i) of their structural locations in society (religion, like housework, having become one of the gendered institutions created by the division of labour); (ii) women are differently socialized; (iii) their greater religiosity is a compensatory response to their material and social deprivation.

<sup>81</sup> African women’s theologies belong to the wider family of feminist theology, which is further categorised as liberation theology (within the field of African theology). African women theologians want to acknowledge that even within Africa, there is diversity of women’s experiences due to differences in race, culture, politics, economy and religion. (Phiri 2004: 16)



Telling these stories of dehumanising cultural practices is still rare and involves struggle. There are still many women who would not speak of their own experiences of either as victims, perpetrators or even sympathisers.

According to Kanyoro (2001: 162), African women theologians who have encountered feminist analysis “do not quickly jump to condemn women for being custodians of dehumanising cultural practices. It is appreciated that even women’s actions may be deeply rooted in patriarchal socialization, and, therefore, the analysis of women’s oppression has to be undertaken in the context of gender analysis.” She explains (2001: 178) that for feminists, patriarchy does not just mean the rule of the father, or the rule of males for that matter, but it carries with it connotations of an unjust hierarchical and dualistic ordering of life which discriminates against women. Patriarchy should therefore not be seen as the opposite of matriarchy.

Using gender analysis for their theological explorations, African women theologians seek to search and understand how their societies are organised, and *how power is used by different groups of people* (men and women, young and old, and people of varying economic means). Who benefits from a particular interpretation of culture and how is the system kept in place? How are roles, attitudes, relationships and values regarding women and men constructed in different societies across Africa? These are some of the questions they pose from theological vantage points. Henceforth, it becomes clear that the concepts and practices of equality and discrimination as determined by social, economical, religious and cultural factors lie at the heart of the theology of women in Africa today.

Kanyoro furthermore sees cultural hermeneutics as a key factor in the liberation of women in Africa. She contends (already in 1994) that “the complexities inherent in cultural debate require space and a safe environment of mutual trust and mutual vulnerability in order for dialogue to take place...A new aspect of feminist analysis has been brought to theology mainly by studies of women from Africa. This deserves its rightful place in the theological paradigms. It could be called ‘cultural hermeneutics’” (2001:163). Kanyoro explains that all questions regarding the welfare and status of women in Africa are explored within the framework of culture. Women’s ability to inherit land or own property is inhibited by the fact that it is seen as culturally “wrong”.

Women are excluded from leadership positions because it is culturally the domain of men. All spheres of life (as stated) are influenced by the all-pervasive culture.

However, it is not simply sufficient to analyse culture without reference to the people who maintain the culture and on whom the culture impacts. This is where the need for a *gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics* is identified because it can perform the dual function of addressing issues of culture, whilst being critical of that culture from a gender perspective. Cultural hermeneutics thus seeks to find ways to raise questions of accountability of the society (and the church) to women, and the accountability of women in taking responsibility for their lives.

Kanyoro's (2001: 165) theory is that "the culture of the (Bible) reader in Africa has more influence on the way the Biblical text is understood and used in communities than the historical culture of the text." Therefore she contends that one has to analyse both personal and communal experiences in religion and culture. Because it is obvious that commitment to the changing of oppressive systems has to be done within the community (otherwise its validity will be questioned), Kanyoro prefers to refer to theology currently being done by women in Africa as "engendered communal theology". (2001: 169).

## **7.5 Men and the struggle for gender equality (in South Africa)**

The researcher contends that the above-mentioned concept of gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics can and should be fruitfully applied to studies of masculinity / masculinities from a pastoral-theological perspective. It can indicate that the battle against patriarchy, and its consequences in the form of masculine sexism, has not merely humiliated women. In accordance with the German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann<sup>82</sup>, the researcher contends it (patriarchy and its

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<sup>82</sup> In a chapter entitled "Feminist Theology For Men" in his book *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, Moltmann, invites men to develop a male or masculine liberation theology (Moltmann 2000a: 269-271). This theology, according to him, can free both men and women from the estrangements brought about by patriarchal traditions. The researcher is positive about Moltmann's aim of drawing hitherto apathetic men to discourses on the liberation of both males and females, but agrees primarily with Koopman's (2004) suggestion that men do not need to develop a masculine theology, but that we should become teachable and should do theology in a

consequences) has in some ways robbed many men of their fixed identity and prescribed understanding of humanity. The exclusion of women from defining and determining what it means to be human makes all men and women losers. The concern is not only that the humanity of women is ignored because of this denial. *“Men are also dehumanized since they miss the opportunity to understand and experience full humanity.”* (Koopman 2004:192, own italics)

Moltmann (2000a: 278) asserts: “If the divided and pre-programmed man compensates for his inner anxieties<sup>83</sup> through aggression towards women and by disparaging them, he destroys the humane society...Like racism, masculine sexism is basically self-hatred which constitutes a public danger. The feminist liberation of women from their patriarchal and sexist oppression gives men too the chance to free themselves from their delusion of supremacy, and to develop more human qualities.”

In many regards, the struggle for gender equality continues to be viewed by many people primarily as a women’s struggle. The contributions of men in this struggle, though small but significant, have not been adequately visible and evident. Men have more often been viewed part of the problem, but it is important that they are seen as part of the solution. Stories of men’s struggles and pain must also be told. Men, like women, have been socialized within societies with deeply held beliefs and values and have had to carry the weight of societal expectations of being masculine. In these contexts (as have been referred to before), most men have been unable to reveal their “soft” side and their emotions of fear of being criticized. Men are generally not treated with the same sensitivity as women. The needs, concerns, feelings and fears of both women and men must have equal value and importance.

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humble way. “That means that we have to learn to listen to and follow the voices of women. Men can only participate in the liberation of women, and in their own liberation, if we identify with those who suffer under us and if we allow them to continually steer the discourse. Only in this way can we make a fruitful theological contribution.” (Koopman 2004:192)

<sup>83</sup> Concerning masculinity, Morrell (2001a: 8) observes: “Masculinity is not inherited nor is it acquired in a once-off. It is constructed in the context of class, race and other factors which are interpreted through the prism of age. Boys develop a masculine gender identity which is deficient, relative to the adult masculinity of men...the stages by which boys become men – manhood – are a source of anxiety and a rite of passage...Their tastes and their bodies are influenced, some would say shaped, by discourses of gender which they encounter from birth.”

Partnerships should be built, and in order to do that men and women must work together in ways that are positive, progressive, respectful and healthy. These types of partnerships between men and women can provide a good basis for the shared interests and constructive relations on which gender justice can be based. Leading African woman theologian, Isabel Phiri (2004: 21) states: “African women’s theologies include men in the vision and struggle for African liberation from all forms of oppression. A partnership and mutuality with men for the exclusion of all forms of violence against women in sought.”

In accordance with this desire, Klein (2004: 42) (in conversation with Denise Ackermann) asserts: “Women’s liberation is an ongoing struggle and is deeply connected to the liberation of men as well. No men can be liberated as long as women are not liberated...men must join women in the struggle against discrimination, abuse and violation. It is about their humanity as much as it is about ours. Solidarity is all we ask for.”

Across the world, in addition to the efforts needed to ensure women’s rights, there is growing recognition that men’s full and active support is necessary to achieve gender equality, end violence against women, and mitigate the impact of HIV. Indeed, in many communities worldwide, men work creatively to end men’s violence against women and children, prevent HIV and to foster gender equity. South Africa has seen some men taking the issue of gender equality as seriously as they took the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed masses. Men’s involvement in these efforts has taken many forms. According to Peacock & Botha (2006: 284-285), among the earliest and most visible public manifestations are the various men’s marches launched since 1997 that have drawn thousands of men out into the streets in a public repudiation of men’s violence against women and children.

Since the first men’s march organised by ADAPT (Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training), the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) and the South African Men’s Forum (SAMF) in 1997, both government and civil society have demonstrated considerable commitment to increasing men’s involvement in efforts to promote gender equality. The issue of fatherhood and paternal responsibility has more recently become the focus of considerable attention (as will

be discussed in more detail at a later stage). In essence then there is growing support among men to dismantle patriarchal practices that demean women.

Other initiatives in this regard include the following: GENDER, EDUCATION AND TRAINING NETWORK (GETNET) (cf. Daphne 1998: 24); THE MEN AS PARTNERS (MAP) NETWORK and THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEN'S FORUM (SAMF) (cf. Peacock and Botha 2006: 284-285).

But despite the above-mentioned initiatives, many other men stay blind to the previously mentioned realities and challenges in terms of gender inequalities. 'The fish are the last to discover the ocean', is an expression which can be used to bring home to men the realisation that in the context of the gender power system, they are the norm and have always been so. Efforts to promote gender equality have long focused on women, the subordinate sex in this system. But equality is about women and men having the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities. The creation of a gender equal society will not be achieved unless men and women work together to transform the conditions that govern the lives of both sexes.

Men must acknowledge that existing relations of power serve to perpetuate an undemocratic system which affects all members of society. What is expected of men in contemporary society is revealed in expressions like 'the primacy of the male norm', 'the hegemonic masculinity', or 'the male stereotype'. Thus, men find it difficult to break into areas traditionally defined as 'female' occupations. Violence committed by men against women is the ultimate consequence of the values inherent in a society characterised by male dominance and female subordination.

Although gender-based power structures will assume different forms depending on levels of awareness in a given culture, all of them embody traditional values of some kind and perpetuate the existing order. Research into men and masculinity will help increase our knowledge of the subject and is an important factor in efforts to bring about change. More men must be actively engaged in gender equality work and be prepared to openly oppose violence committed by men against women if we are to achieve a gender equal society.

This will only be possible if men are committed to change their attitudes and mindsets on the gendered issues in society. *This is possible* because culture is dynamic and gender roles, including masculinity are not (only) traditionally inherited, but are products of social formation. *If/When men become aware of their capacity to change their attitudes and mindsets on the above-mentioned issues, it can establish an essential matrix for the transformation of male identity.*

## 8. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN GENDER AND MASCULINITY/IES

In his book *Masculinities*, Robert Connell (1995) contends that gender interacts with other social structures such as race and class. Therefore, although men in general benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, they do not benefit equally. Indeed, many pay an extensive price. For example, white men's masculinities are constructed not only in relation to white women but also in relation to black men. Men of marginalized ethnic groups (mostly non-white) may be targeted for racist abuse and are likely to have the poorest working conditions, health status and life expectancy. Boys and men who depart from dominant definitions of masculinity because they are, for example, effeminate or gay, are often subject to verbal abuse and discrimination, and are sometimes the targets of violence.

Concurrently, men who conform to dominant definitions of masculinity may also pay a price. As research on men's health<sup>84</sup> shows (Watson 2000), men have a higher rate of industrial accidents than women, have a higher rate of death by violence, more alcohol abuse, and (not surprisingly) more sporting injuries. "Recent health statistics for the UK paint a depressing picture. They show that women live five years longer than men". (Watson 2000: 17)

Masculinity can most concisely be defined as the social reality for men in modern society. The task of describing that reality, which is in flux, is however a very difficult one, regardless of socio-political perspective. In discussing masculinity, Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1990: 3) suggests that it will be valuable to distinguish between three components, in order to understand it.

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<sup>84</sup> More detail on these and other research results on men's health will follow at a later stage.

First, there is the question of what men are: the *masculine gender role*. This is a set of behaviours, attitudes, and conditions that are generally found in the men of an identifiable group within a reasonably specific historical, ethnic, or religious situation. For example, if the men in this group tend to behave aggressively, aggressiveness is a part of their masculine gender role.

Second, there is the question of what people think men are: *the stereotype of masculinity*. A stereotype is a customary notion of what most people consider to be the masculine gender role. If it is widely believed that men are rational and independent, then that belief is part of the gender stereotype, regardless of whether it is part of the gender role. The gender role and the stereotype are quite distinct (and it has also been distinguished earlier in this chapter).

Thirdly, there is the question of what people think men should be: *the gender ideal*. The gender ideal is a widespread notion as to what the gender role for men should be. If it is generally conceived that men of a certain age and means should be married, then that is part of their gender ideal. “Obviously, what people think men should be may be quite different either from what men are or from what people think men are. Stereotypes and ideals, too, are historically situated; they reflect the ideas of specific groups about what men (of specific groups) are and should be.” (Clatterbaugh 1990: 3)

Most discussions of masculinity within the parameters of this (last-mentioned) gender ideal tend to treat it as if it is measurable. As if manhood is an eternal, timeless essence that resides deep in the heart of every man. Manhood/masculinity<sup>85</sup> is then perceived as a quality that one either has or doesn't have. It is seen as innate, residing in the particular biological composition of the human male, the result of certain hormones or the possession of a penis. Then manhood is thought of as “a transcendent tangible property that each man must manifest in the world, the reward presented with great ceremony to a young novice by his elder for having successfully completed an arduous initiation ritual” (Kimmel 1987a: 223 – 224).

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<sup>85</sup> These two terms: manhood and masculinity are used interchangeably (as was motivated and explained earlier in this chapter).

Some men have more of it, others less. Those men who appear to lack masculinity are, by definition, sick or genetically inadequate. Gay men, for example, are often regarded as men who lack a proper hormonal balance, and who consequently are not ‘real’ men. This assumption – that we can know and describe men in terms of some discoverable dimension – is problematic because it suggests that masculinity is timeless and universal (and implicitly essentialistic<sup>86</sup>).

It is one of the core aims of this and the following chapter to examine this assumption critically. The researcher’s position is that *one cannot talk of masculinity, only masculinities*. This is not to claim that masculinity is so variable that we cannot identify it as a topic, or to revert into a rigid or unrealistic relativism which would make it an almost impossible object of study. The plural term ‘masculinities’ is now widely used in academic circles and indicative of the wide variations in masculinity, in how it is understood, enacted, experienced and lived. Since gender does not exist outside history and culture, this means that both masculinity and femininity are continuously subject to a process of reinterpretation. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed and created in culture, and consequently means different things at different times to different people. Therefore, the researcher contends that any account of masculinity must begin with its place in the general discussion of gender (as was given partly from the start of this chapter).

According to Kimmel (1987a: 224) this idea that manhood is socially constructed and historically shifting “should not be understood as a loss, that something is being taken away from men. In fact, it gives us something extraordinarily valuable – agency, the capacity to act. It gives us a sense of historical possibilities to replace the despondent resignation that invariably attends timeless, a-historical essentialisms. Our behaviours are not simply ‘just human nature’, because ‘boys will be boys.’ From the materials we find around us in our culture – other people, ideas, objects – we actively create our worlds, our identities. Men, both individually and collectively, can change.”

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<sup>86</sup> Beynon (2002: 163) describes this masculine essence as “the idea that in spite of the wide variety in the expression of masculinity there is, nevertheless, a fundamental aspect which is common to all, but which stops short of identifying what this might be.” In the words of Bly (1991: 230) it is identified as “the structure at the bottom of the male psyche (which) is still as firm as it was twenty thousand years ago”. Therefore, a related concept that explicates this notion further is the so-called “deep structure of masculinity”: the idea that there is an elemental masculinity common to all men, whatever their social or geographical positioning. It is difficult, however, to identify what these might consist of without resorting to crude biologism (as referred to earlier in this chapter). (Beynon 2002:159)



Ideas of masculinity not only change over time, they may change during the course of one's lifetime. This is what Ian Harris (1995) – who sampled 560 men in the United States to determine the influence of gender role messages on men - indicated. He provides the most comprehensive study to date of the socialization into roles perspective, based on extensive interview data in the United States gathered over a number of years. Harris' study serves as a very comprehensive 'map' of contemporary American masculinity (in the latter half of the twentieth century) in the words of men themselves. The socializing 'messages' emanate from parents, teachers, peers, the media, organizations like churches, and constitute a series of 'scripts', or guidelines, by which men live their lives. They can be grouped as follows, telling men they must strive to become:

- Standard bearers, who do their best and achieve as much as they can;
- Workers, who become good breadwinners and develop a strong work ethic;
- Lovers, whether as faithful husbands and partners, or as playboys;
- Bosses, by overcoming all possible hurdles and taking control;
- Rugged individuals, who are prepared to engage in dangerous and adventurous acts, having faith in their abilities;

These guidelines can give off contradictory messages (for example, the need for real men to be both conformist achievers and faithful partners as opposed to hedonistic playboys and rebels). The study shows convincingly at the detail of the nature of the voices (messages), but it does not explicitly note how these are received, interpreted and enacted as life scripts differently by men in different circumstances.

Harris also identified nine messages that illustrate modern expectations for men: "be like your father; be a faithful husband, Good Samaritan, law, nature lover, nurturer, rebel, scholar, and technician" (1995:13). Although attitudes about masculinity varied by geographic location, class, race, sexual orientation, and family background, Harris found that generational differences were the strongest variable in differing visions of masculinity. *Thus, in studying masculinities one has to take cognisance of variable of age.*

## 8.1 Changing conceptions of men and masculinities – globally and locally

Men are daily bombarded with images and handy rules to help them negotiate their way through a world in which all the rules for being a man seem to have changed or vanished without warning. Some tell men to manifest traditional masculinity against all contemporary challenges. Others tell them that they are in power, the oppressors. But if men are in power as a group, why do individual men often feel so powerless these days? *Can men and masculinities change?*

If men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up, then it must rather be something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour, which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways. Therefore, one of the key elements of masculine identities is the work that goes into establishing and maintaining them. “In psychoanalytic theory...boys and men have to struggle constantly to remain ‘hard’<sup>87</sup>, for it is difficult to hold on to the symbolic power of the phallus and masculinity must therefore be established through constant practices of ‘manhood’.” (Epstein 1998: 52). Men, in a typical age of performance, seem to constantly want to re-affirm their ‘unchangeable’ manhood in some way or another. This ‘rediscovering the masculine’ is a theme which has been resurrected in our time by, in particular, the American writer and poet Robert Bly<sup>88</sup> (1991).

In the following section attention will be given to the changes that men and masculinities in different settings – first globally and then locally within South Africa - are faced with. Some of the ways in which they deal with such transformations, will be also explored. Thus, the researcher will explicate the argument that the ways men form their identities as men, or ‘do man’ is not fixed. Nor is there some one thing which we can label ‘masculinity’ and leave it at that, believing that we have explained what we need to know about men. There are many different versions of masculinity which are affected by, among other things: different men’s movements; the social positions of particular men or groups of men; the life histories of

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<sup>87</sup> According to Beynon (2002: 61) “the hardening of the male body and mind and the formation of a masculine character through manly pursuits, particularly in the great outdoors in the company of men (and the exclusion of women) was epitomized in the figure of President Teddy Roosevelt and his outriders, his band of hard-riding followers.” The researcher will later (in chapter 4, under the heading “*Sport, muscles and Christianity*”) again refer to President Roosevelt’s influence on the development of a “muscular Christianity”.

<sup>88</sup> A more in-depth analysis of Bly and the men’s movement will be made later in this chapter.

individual men; common sense or oppositional notions of what men should be like, as well as (where applicable) men's interpretation of the meaning of their Christian faith for their manhood.

## 8.2 Some terminological clarifications

Before a short overview is given on the recent historical development of masculinity studies, one must distinguish between three concepts which often tend to be confused in the literature as well as in political and everyday discourse, namely: masculinity, masculinism and patriarchy. Basically, **masculinity** refers to those aspects of men's behavior that fluctuate over time. In some cases these fluctuations may last for decades – in others it may be a matter of weeks or months.

In contrast, **masculinism** is the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination, in other words the culture of 'being a man', traditionally based on physical power, aggression and competition. As such, it represents the ideology of **patriarchy**. Masculinism takes for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres.

## 9. A SCOPE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MASCULINITY STUDIES

A detailed overview of how masculinity was (historically speaking) perceived and how those notions changed over time, exceeds the limits of this dissertation. However, to get an idea of the trajectory which the literature proposes concerning masculinity, it is necessary to make some key remarks in this regard. The first is that the influence of psychology still continues to impact the domain of masculinity, but the feminist movement (in its diverse state) initiated new ways of perceiving men and masculinity. Gender-analysis (amongst others by feminism and other movements, as was indicated earlier) highlighted the system of dominance (of men over women). It has also been expanded to expose the nature and dynamics of the power which men often have over women.

These developments investigated masculinity and elicited some new perspectives on maleness and manhood. It moved away from the notion about men which generalises out of the specific, to the investigation of the social context of dominance. According to the South African historian Robert Morrell (1997: 169) this was the critical shift “which gave the discipline of history a particular interest in the study of men which had hitherto been primarily the domain of psychology and, later on, of structural functionalist sociology.”

## **9.1 Global reactions to feminism/s**

### **9.1.1 *The first generation of reactions***

During the early 1970's<sup>89</sup>, partly as a consequence of the intellectual ferment of the 1960's (including the rise of feminism as a mighty intellectual movement), men who supported the goals of feminism, started getting involved in the challenges of feminism. The first generation of heterosexual men who then reacted to the women's movement started feeling uncomfortable about a dominant heterosexual masculinity which served as subjugation of women and homosexual men. They were concerned about the injustice and suffering which was caused by men. They felt that masculinity should be deconstructed because it was part of the problem and would seemingly not be able to be part of any solution. The suffering and problems which were caused by dominant masculinities had to be undone if there was any chance on gender equality. Men were now obligated to primarily give attention to the suffering of women, especially where there was dealt with violence against women.

From the start of men's reactions to feminism there was also the tendency to men's liberation. Gender roles were thought of in liberal terms and masculinity liberation movements argued that just as women were restricted by their role expectations, men were also confined by their roles. Just as women should be free to work in the public sphere, so men should also be free to be more involved in the private sphere of for instance domestic work and child care. Seidler (1997) however points to the vacuum of these men's liberation movements:

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<sup>89</sup> See Connell (1995) for a survey of work on masculinity before the 1970's, particularly within the context of psychoanalysis in the first half of the twentieth century.

“Helpful in being able to focus on the experience of men, notions of men’s liberation were unable to illuminate the structured character of *gender relations of power*. They tended to slip into a false parallelism between men and women and tended to avoid the power and violence that was often structured into gender relations.” (Seidler, 1997: 3) (own cursory writing).

In 1978 the journal *Achilles’ Heel* was established in Britain to try and seek a type of compromise between these two above mentioned positions. This developed a third position which highlighted the structured power relations, whilst simultaneously speaking about the redefinition of masculinity/masculinities. It thus provided the space wherein men could write about anti-sexism and problems of masculinity. The journal refused to define masculinity exclusively as a power relationship. Instead it tried to highlight the dissonance which many men frequently experienced with regards to dominant masculinities. New acknowledgement was given to men’s emotional worlds, and it was not any longer perceived as “feminine” and thus as threat to dominant heterosexual masculine identities.

*Achilles’ Heel* thus included a variety of writings from different viewpoints. It expressed many men’s experiences of contradiction between the powerless feelings which they possibly experienced in their personal lives, and the power which they possessed in society. It also emphasised how men within different masculinity spheres struggled to attain and sustain their self-images (maybe out of the fear for rejection). A single homogeneous vision of masculinity which all men had to hold dear, was therefore turned down, and the power relationships between different men’s groups / masculinities (not just between men and women) had to be analysed.

However, the journal only survived for four years. According to Morrell (1997: 170) – following Jonathan Rutherford’s view - the attempt (at that stage) to start a men’s movement in Britain was unsuccessful because it was led by older, white, middle class, urban men, who were concerned about the implication of their own masculinity, rather than with questions of gender.

Whilst the men’s-studies started losing momentum, some theorists still carried on to explore the gender question and to develop complementary ways to approach women’s oppression. In the

early 1980's the Australian historian and social theorist, R.W. Connell, started theorising about the position of masculinity within patriarchal relationships - he was influenced by 'n class-based understanding of history. This positioning of men within the social and historical context introduced the end of the gender-role theory's credibility. Although the critique on this theory became increasingly stronger, it necessitated the work of historical theorists to bring its triumph to a fall. In the mid-1970s, the first group of works on men and masculinity appeared that was directly influenced by these feminist critiques of the traditional explanations for gender differences.

Books such as Warren Farrell's *The Liberated Man* (1975) discussed the costs to men's health – both physical and psychological – and to the quality of relationships with women, other men, and their children of the traditional male sex role. Other anthologies explored the meanings of masculinity in the United States by affirming a feminist-driven perspective through which to view men and masculinity (e.g., Deborah David and Robert Brannon's *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority*, 1976). According to Kimmel and Messner (2004: xiii – xiv) the single most important book to criticize the normative organization of the male sex role was Pleck's *The Myth of Masculinity* (1981) (as was referred to earlier). Pleck argued convincingly that the male sex role model was incapable of describing men's experiences. In its place, he theorized a male “sex role strain” model that specified the contemporary sex role as problematic, historically specific, and also an unthinkable ideal.

Building on Pleck's work, a critique of the sex role model started emerging. The sex role model was a-historical and suggested a rigid and false cultural universalism, ignoring the ways in which definitions of masculinity and femininity were based on, and reproduced, relationships of power. Power dynamics are an essential element in both the definition and enactments of gender, and this could not be ignored any longer. Nevertheless, studies on masculinity rapidly expanded in the seventies and eighties. Morrell (1997: 170) asserts that many gender theorists continued to investigate the phenomenon of masculine power because they viewed it as the only way to promote gender equality and justice. Masculinity - and that which it represented, the frailness and psychological construction, as well as the history and changing form thereof - (amongst others) all received attention.

Socially speaking, the growing consciousness of men's issues brought about the 'new (era) man' – the man who broke with the traditional gender roles and assumed a set of domestic tasks and responsibilities. Not all men were/are satisfied with these developments, and by the late 1980's and early 1990's, another reaction came to the fore out of the male quarters. This was the reaction which described the shift in gender relationships as a 'crisis of masculinity' (as mentioned earlier). Internationally men were united by the goal of eliminating feminist triumphs, and to re-establish and confirm the rights of men.

These attempts were/are not integrated or uniform, but viewed collectively it entails and embodies something which is currently known as the 'gender counter-revolution'. One of these is the mythopoetic men's movement which was initiated by Bly – which emphasized the escalation in single-parent families, and attributed the crisis of masculinity mainly to the absentness of fathers in the lives of young sons. This movement will be discussed later in this chapter in more detail.

### **9.1.2 *The second generation of reactions***

Kimmel and Messner (2004: xiii-xv) contends that the first generation of research on masculinity (mentioned above) was extremely valuable, particularly since it challenged the unexamined ideology that made masculinity the gender norm against which both men and women were measured. The old models of sex roles had reproduced the domination of men over women by insisting on the dominance of masculine traits over feminine traits. These new studies argued against both the definitions of either sex and the social institutions in which those differences were embedded. Shapers of the new model looked at "gender relations" and understood how the definition of either masculinity or femininity was relational, that is, how the definition of one gender depended, in part, on the understanding of the definition of the other.

Research on women again superseded the research on men and masculinity in the 1980's. The focus thereof in this round was however not on the ways in which sex roles reproduce the power relations in society, but rather on the ways in which femininity is experienced differently by

women in various social groups. Gradually, the notion of a single femininity – which was based on the white middle-class Victorian notion of female passivity, beauty, and emotional responsiveness – was replaced by an examination of the ways in which women differ in their gender role expectations by race, class, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, region, and nationality.

The research on men and masculinity now entered a new stage, in which the variations among men were seen as central to the understanding of men's lives. The unexamined assumption in earlier studies had been that one version of masculinity – white, middle-aged, middle-class, heterosexual- was the sex role into which all men were struggling to fit in our society. Thus, working-class men, men of colour, gay men, and younger and older men were all observed as departing in significant ways from the traditional definitions of masculinity. Therefore, it was easy to see these men as enacting “problematic” or “deviant” versions of masculinity. Such theoretical assertions, however, reproduce precisely the power relationships that keep these men in subordinate positions in our society. The advanced study of masculinity revealed that although men and masculinity possess the cultural and political capital to subordinate women and femininity, men themselves can be subordinated by other men and that there is not one, but multiple masculinities<sup>90</sup>.” (Kimmel and Messner 2004: xiv)

**By way of summary:** the study of recent literature on the topic of masculinity brought the following distinct main themes to the fore.

1. The social constructionist perspective argues that the meaning of masculinity is neither trans-historical nor essentially and culturally universal, but rather varies from culture to culture and within any one culture over time.
2. The experience of masculinity is not uniform and universally generalizable to all men in each society. Masculinity differs dramatically in each society and specific geographical setting.

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<sup>90</sup> This focus on ‘multi-masculinities’, rather than the singular masculinity, is confirmed by pro-feminist works such as Harry Brod’s *The Making of Masculinities* (1987), Michael Kimmel’s *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (1987a), Bob Connell’s *Gender and Power* (1987). The concept of ‘male power’ is then dislodged by the notion of ‘hegemonic’ or ‘hierarchical’ masculinities, perhaps best characterised as those forms of masculinity able to marginalise and dominate not only women, but also other men, on the grounds of (for instance) class, race and /or sexuality. According to the view of masculinities - where gender identities and power relations are seen as highly contextualised practices - it becomes rather more difficult to make clear and generalizable statements about how men are, or what they do.



3. In order to map the construction of these various masculinities<sup>91</sup> in men's lives and to examine core developmental moments during a man's life in which the meanings of masculinity are articulated, a life course perspective should be adopted. Through this perspective it can become clear that the meaning of masculinity is not constant over the course of any man's life, but will change as he grows and matures.
4. The issue of power – what is patriarchal power? How do men own this power, if they own it? What is the nature thereof and how does it change?

*These four themes will henceforth form an integral part of the latter of the dissertation's content.*

The first three themes - as was partly discussed thus far - served as stimuli for the development of men's groups and movements, and for the participation of individual (mostly middle-class) men in psycho-analysis, in an attempt to understand themselves and their masculinity more fully. The fourth theme concerning power relations between the genders caused some men to (collectively) get involved in gender politics. The themes are closely connected to each other, and the responses of men took on different forms over the years (as was indicated here above). The theme of power will be addressed in chapter four in more detail. But first, attention should be given to a related concept "hegemony", in order to clarify what is meant by it when it is used later in the dissertation.

## **9.2 The question of hegemony**

The question of hegemony represents another big debate within the field of critical men's-studies. Feminists have long argued that men have collective power over women. As indicated here

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<sup>91</sup> Jeff Hearn (1996: 213-214) has presented a critique of the concept of masculinity / masculinities. He states that the recent move to the plural concept of masculinities represents an advance, but does not fully resolve some difficulties with the concepts. What is exactly meant by masculinity is often unclear. Meanings stretch from essential self to deep centre, gender identity, sex stereotype, attitudes, institutional practices and so on. Masculinity is often a gloss on complex social processes, used imprecisely. The concept is sometimes attributed a causal power when masculinity is rather the result of other social processes. According to Hearn (1996: 214) some proposals for developing work in this area are: Firstly, when masculinity / masculinities are referred to, they should be used more precisely and particularly. Secondly, it is often much more appropriate to base analysis on the concept of 'men' and what men do or think or feel. It is generally preferable to move from 'masculinities' back to 'men'. Accordingly, it is generally more accurate to refer to 'men's practices' or 'men's social relations' or 'men's assumptions' or 'beliefs about men' and so on. Thirdly, it is clear that 'masculinities' are much talked of and about, and for this reason alone, it is very useful to explore the multiplicity of 'discourses of masculinity' and 'multiple masculinities'.

above, advanced critical men's studies have however shown that not all men own the same power or receive equal advantage thereof. It may be exerted in different ways, depending on the place and the specific arrangement of relationships which is in place in the man's life (Morrell 2001: 9).

However multiple and contested the concept may be, there is one form of masculinity that appears repeatedly in the literature, albeit with different names and slightly different definitions. The names include "hegemonic" masculinity (Connell 1995), "traditional" masculinity (Helgeson 1995), "dominant" masculinity (Courtenay 2000b), and "negative or extreme" masculinity (Helgeson 1995).

Connell's (1995) groundbreaking work classifies different masculinities into hegemonic, complicit (conservative) and marginalised (subordinate) groups. At the centre of this classification is the concept of hegemony. Hegemony, "refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life", in terms of gender, "one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" and it is this hegemonic construct of masculinity which forms the gender 'norm' of any given society (Connell, 1995: 77). The majority of men are unlikely to display hegemonic masculinity, but hegemonic masculinity is what they will be encouraged to embody and admire.

Henceforth, men engage in a constant performance of masculinity and never truly achieve or own hegemonic status. Masculinity "must be proved, and no sooner is it proved than it is again questioned and must be proved again – constant, relentless, unachievable" (Kimmel 1994: 122). This competition to 'prove' masculinity makes it an unstable and often violent process. The majority of men embody complicit masculinity. In other words, they will not embody true hegemonic forms of masculinity but that they consent to hegemonic forms and draw the dividends of power over women as a result.

Hegemonic (white, middle-class, heterosexual) masculinity in a given historical period is defined in relation to femininity and subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1987). It becomes the marker

against which other masculinities are measured, and by which standard they may be found wanting. What is normative (prescribed) becomes translated into what is normal. In this way, heterosexual men maintain their status by the oppression of gay men; middle-aged men can maintain their dominance over older and younger men; upper-class men can exploit working-class men; and white men can enjoy privileges at the expense of men of colour.

Although hegemonic forms of masculinity are historically and culturally specific, a common theme is that heterosexuality and homophobia form the basis of hegemonic masculinity. The rejection of femininity within hegemonic masculinity is a central mechanism for men to ensure that their individual position in the hierarchy of masculinity be maintained. Men who display, or are perceived to display, 'effeminate' traits - or any kind of powerlessness or refusal to compete, readily identified with images of homosexuality - will be relegated to the bottom of the masculinity hierarchy, their masculinity subordinated and marginalised.

## 10. MASCULINITIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE AND/OR CRISIS?

Masculinity is held to be in crisis<sup>92</sup> (as has been mentioned earlier) because the central tenets upon which previous masculinity was based (patriarchy, bread-winning, tasks demanding strength etc.) is eroding (Faludi, 1999). This is measured by, among other things, high rates of male suicide, the declining academic performance of boys, men being depicted as the victims instead of the perpetrators of violence, men being trapped between the traditional role expectations of being male, as well as the construction of new ideas on fathering within a framework of masculinity and child care. Alterations in the labour force<sup>93</sup>, in the political domain

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<sup>92</sup> Since men and masculinities are often conflated (as was noted above), it is relevant to note that in this (supposed) crisis men, as well as their masculinities are affected. Men (i.e. male behaviours, privileges and attitudes) have recently been thrown into the deep end as they have faced rising threats of unemployment, increased job-related stress, an upsurge in gay movements, a rise in feminist movement attacks etc. This has also plunged traditional conceptions of masculinity (i.e. images, stereotypes or norms), into confusion.

<sup>93</sup> One of the most significant causes of the crisis in masculinity seems to be the change in the labor market. Given the fact that work forms a central part of masculinity, since it provides men with power, expertise and authority, nothing has proved more harmful to men's sense of masculinity than unemployment. It cultivates feelings of inadequacy, humiliation and loss of human dignity. Furthermore, according to Lemon (1991: 210) there are numerous 'symptoms' associated with the crisis of masculinity, especially in the declining emotional and physical health of men, e.g. the rising rate of heart attacks and stress related diseases, and the increasing incidence of emotional disorders among men, amongst others. In South Africa, she contends the following of these 'symptoms' are most prevalent: (i) the incidence of family murder; (ii) the rising rate of divorce; (iii) the rising incidence of social pathology; (iv) declining emotional and physical health; and (v) the increasing visibility of homosexuality.

and in the domestic sphere have left men in the position of having to negotiate new concepts of masculinity and manhood. South Africans are not exempted from this occurrence, as various masculinities have been forced to rethink their original positions within the post-apartheid policy of the 1990's (specifically after 1994)<sup>94</sup>.

The 'crisis of masculinity' thesis has even assumed, for many, almost the status of a defining characteristic of Western societies at the turn of the millennium<sup>95</sup>. Edwards (2006:15) contends that the core issues in relation to this perceived crisis of masculinity have gained added credence due to their increased prevalence in a variety of forms of media coverage (as will be explicated later in the next chapter). According to Whitehead and Barret (2001: 6) "The common theme within the debate is that the displays of manhood considered appropriate prior to the 1950s, are socially stigmatized and debased fifty years on. Many men still yearn to perform and validate their masculinity through 'conquering the universe', but the aggressive, dominant, emotionally repressed behaviour that such yearnings engender are increasingly seen as (self)-destructive, if not derisible." However, many writers on this subject argue that the idea of a crisis is somewhat alarmist and conceals the persistence of male power (Lemon, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1996). Despite these cautions there is recognition, particularly in South Africa, that men (and especially young males) are "in trouble" (Chant, 2000).

Whether men's turmoil is real or imagined (i.e. a mere discursive construction) is debatable, but it is a fact that it's not new. Masculinity is only continually redefined and renegotiated as each era of men experience it in different ways. Men have long been engaged in changing

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<sup>94</sup> *South Africa is not exempt from the transitions of masculinities.* However, the political and social developments, as described above, did not find much resonance in South Africa in the 1970's and 1980's. The reasons for this are multiple, and it, amongst others, concerns the intensive political (racial) struggles which shoved gender questions to the background. According to Morrell (1997) men's studies initially infiltrated the social life in South Africa by the late 1980's, and only in the early 1990's it influenced the academic circles. Men's groups developed, mostly constituted out of middle-class, white, professional men who wanted to make sense of their personal problems, and chose the men's group approach to try and achieve this. Simultaneously a conscious initiative was launched by a small group of men (amongst others some UNISA-academics), and so the "South African Association of Men" came about – which envisioned the protection of men's rights (according to them) and the restoration of male dignity.

<sup>95</sup> Some researchers in South Africa, like e.g. Jason R. Bantjes (2004), attribute the "masculinity in crisis" discourse, in part, to hegemonic models of masculinity which restrict men to certain modes of behaviour and specific roles in society. His study (M.A. Thesis in Psychology) investigates the content of a group of South African adolescent males' cognitive schemata for masculinity and gender roles (through a qualitative mode of enquiry). Bantjes' findings affirm that a hegemonic model of masculinity exists in the sub-culture of South African society represented by the participants, and suggests that hegemonic masculinity in South Africa is both restrictive and damaging to men and society.

masculinities and re-masculinizations<sup>96</sup>, following periods of crisis in masculinity, *but the challenge remains for men to find various outlets and ways of dealing with renewed uncertainty.*

The greater emphasis on gender equality in all walks of life has challenged the hegemonic patriarchal arrangement of society<sup>97</sup> and empowered women substantially. This has not only led to men having to renegotiate their relationship with women, but also to the manifestation of the “crisis” in the escalation of crime, domestic violence, suicide and family breakdowns. Men - especially those who find themselves marginalized and subordinated in socio-economic terms - are reported to commit most violent crimes, and at the same time they are the victims thereof. Thus, men often respond to the challenges to their manhood by what Beynon (2002: 81) refers to as “defending ‘male honor’”.

This means that men who feel powerless and that their masculinity is under threat, resort to violence since it has long been associated with male ways of dealing with conflict. They do this in an attempt to protect their honor as men, since macho (i.e. “real”) men are dominant and controlling, and do not tolerate disrespect or challenges to their honor. These men’s lack of resources “render their sense of masculinity problematical” (Beynon, 2002: 82) They also die sooner and become more and more isolated from intimate relationships. ‘Absent dads’ no longer feel needed in the household. These are all signs of a (specifically hegemonic) masculinity in crisis. Another alleged ‘symptom’ of crisis in South Africa is the ‘flight from masculinity’ epitomized by the rising incidence of homosexuality. Therefore Lemon (1991: 214 – 215) argues that the increased visibility of homosexuality in South Africa, has begun to implicitly question the assumption of heterosexual masculinity.

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96 Lemon (1991: 23) for instance indicates that already in pre-industrial societies of the seventeenth century, social, political and economic change prompted the renegotiation of gender relations, sexuality and marriage, and a re-examination of the notion of masculinity. But she asserts that the Enlightenment provides a particularly appropriate point at which to begin tracing the historical development of the contemporary ‘crisis of masculinity’ and masculine identity, since it was during this period that the cornerstones of the traditional male sex role were laid.

<sup>97</sup> Lemon (1991: 216) asserts that the overall character of South African society can be described as patriarchal, in which discriminatory practices against women and other minorities are both accepted and common. In her analysis of attitudes towards women in South Africa, Lemon (1991: 218) concludes that the media create and perpetuate a conservative and negative climate conducive to rigid sex role socialization, and are concerned with the maintenance of the status quo, rather than the implementation of change.

Apart from demands to embrace more feminine characteristics, men are also expected to engage more seriously in fatherhood. But how do they go about this? How do fathers in particular include care-giving in their construction of masculinity or does it become a part of a hegemonic masculine form? These questions are important to address and will henceforth receive attention.

### **10.1 The dynamic interplay between fatherhood and manhood as an example**

It has been indicated convincingly that masculinity is neither biologically determined nor automatic - it is more of a social construct which can take many different forms and can change over time. Consequently, fatherhood is a role that can and should be understood and exercised in different ways. Particularly in the context of the developing world, other categories of father (than the biological) – i.e. economic and social – are important. Therefore, although the connection between fathers and masculinity seems patently obvious, it is, in fact, a complex subject<sup>98</sup>. Fatherhood is associated with manhood. When one is ‘a man’ one is expected to be able to take on the fatherhood role. But the point at which one becomes a man is reached along different routes and the process is often contested.

In the Western world, it is widely understood that a man becomes a father when he impregnates a woman. This explanation makes a biological happening the exclusive criterion of becoming a father. In short, modern technologies – such as *in vitro* fertilisation, to name only one - are forcing new definitions of what a father is. “The status of ‘father’ is therefore not simply the result of a biological process, and caution should be taken against linking biology and procreation too closely or unquestioningly with the idea of ‘a father’.” (Morrell 2006: 13-14)

In examining the relationship of fatherhood to manhood, Morrell (2006: 15) focuses on two issues: the physical act of begetting a child, and the processes of accepting and performing a

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<sup>98</sup> One researcher that recognizes the complexity of the subject of fatherhood is R.D. Parke (2000), who assumes a developmental focus to provide a psychological perspective on the complexities of father involvement. Components of father involvement include such relationship components as direct interaction, availability, and the managerial function, all of which are conceptually distinct. Other issues that should be carefully considered are the context of father involvement, processes used to index involvement, and dimensions of involvement. Parke contends that future research needs to study father involvement within a greater variety of ethnic-minority groups so that both cross-group and within-group variability can be appreciated.

fatherhood role (thus becoming a role-model)<sup>99</sup>. Fatherhood can be understood in different and contested ways and from many angles. Some important questions to attend to are: How does fatherhood feature in the way men understand masculinity? How does/did race and class shape fatherhood (specifically in South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century)? How do/did understandings of fatherhood change over time?<sup>100</sup>

These questions are attended to in detail in the book edited by Linda Richter and Robert Morrell (2006), *BABA: men and fatherhood in South Africa*. In essence, the authors argue that biological fathers should be encouraged to be close to their children and responsibly take on the fatherhood role. There exists a stereotype that men are not interested in children and that fathers are naturally ill-suited to parenting. In contrast, the book demonstrates the centrality of fatherhood in the lives of men and in the experiences of children. It argues that fathers can make a major contribution to the health of South African society by caring for children and producing a new generation of South Africans for whom fathers will be significant by their presence rather than their absence.

But, despite the widely held view that being a father and providing for one's children is important, many South Africans neglect their parental responsibilities. Many children grow up without a father's presence in their homes or in their lives. This can also be identified as a contributory cause of childhood vulnerability – including vulnerability to HIV infection.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Fathers as role models are also vitally important for the adolescent male. Two Australian authors Biddulph (1994) and West (1996) stress the importance of fathers and other male role models in helping boys to understand what it is to be a man. The belief that the quality and characteristics of the father-son relationship are important in shaping boys' understanding of masculinity is not only true in Australian society. The role of fathers in teaching boys about masculinity in other cultures is highlighted in research on masculinity from Jamaica. In Jamaica, 42% of households are headed by women. As a result boys in these communities often look for male role models outside the family, in the community. In so doing they are socialised in the ways of the street by modelling the behaviour of the "don men" (these are men who control local politics in the poor rural areas of Jamaica). In the absence of their fathers these boys look to the older boys in the community to teach them about sexuality and ethical values (Cleaver, 2002).

<sup>100</sup> See for example, Hewlett (2000), for a brief overview of anthropological approaches and studies of father involvement with insights into how father involvement is conceptualized in the USA (and has changed over time).

<sup>101</sup> This is one of the reasons why movements such as the South African Men's forum (SAMF) and the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) have begun to put their energies into fatherhood work. In recognition of the need to support men as fathers, the Child Youth and Family Development programme at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa was prompted to launch the Fatherhood Project in December 2003. The project was prompted by three converging issues: Firstly, the very high rates of child sexual abuse in South Africa, most of which is perpetrated by men. More than 25 000 children are sexually abused each year in South Africa. Secondly, the absence of very large numbers of men from households in which children are growing up and low levels of father support for children's care. Thirdly, the increased care needs of children as a result of deaths and family disruption from the HIV epidemic require men to take responsibility for children's wellbeing. The HIV pandemic has undoubtedly weakened family structures and highlighted the question of fatherhood. (Richter and Morrell 2006:6-7)

One of the central challenges facing researchers working on the topic of fatherhood is to distinguish between fathers and fatherhood. A father is easily equated with the man who makes the biological contribution to the creation of the child. But the term father is also used globally to refer to many people who take on the role of father with respect to children, families and the wider community. This is typed fatherhood. Fatherhood is therefore a social role, and the importance of this role fluctuates over time, and simultaneously the content of the role shifts.

According to Richter and Morrell (2006: 2) some South African men are beginning to reassess the value of fatherhood. This is part of an international process, in which two kinds of response by men can be discerned. One response is to demand rights for fathers - therefore fathers' rights organisations share, with other men's rights organisations such as the Promise Keepers, a reputation for anti-feminism. Some other responses are to approach the question of parenting from a more holistic position and emphasize the interests of children.

Current international movements to promote fatherhood include innovative changes in state policy in various areas of the world. In the Scandinavian countries, for example, paternity leave has been dramatically extended, encouraging men to be primary caregivers for their children (see Brandth and Kvande 2001, 2002). The experiences of South Africa's fathers have been powerfully influenced by history. For the biggest part of the twentieth century, different experiences of work basically shaped what was possible for black, coloured, white and Indian fathers. There are many reasons why fatherhood has not yet become a policy issue in South Africa – and not yet followed the lead taken by social welfare states in the north - not least that there are many other claims made upon the over-stretched social agenda of the state. Modest attempts have been made to extend parental leave but this has not explicitly aimed to increase father involvement in childcare. Rather, the move emanates from equity arguments generated by the country's emerging human rights culture. (Richter and Morrell 2006: 3-4)

Fundamentally, in South Africa there are (at least) two very important factors to consider when thinking about men and fatherhood in the context of masculinity. The first is the persistence of high levels of unemployment which affects young black men disproportionately. Secondly, the historical legacy of racial emasculation by which African men were infantilised (Morrell, 1998).

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To restore the value of fatherhood in constructions of masculinity it is necessary give attention to both of these factors. This endeavour unfortunately exceeds the limits of this dissertation (see Richter and Morrell, 2006 for more detail).

### **10.1.1 Fathers in society (specifically the media) and the politics of fatherhood**

At the very heart of feminism is the idea that patriarchy – the rule of the father – is the cause of women’s oppression (as was indicated earlier). Even allowing for the difference between a patriarch (a male leader in the biblical sense that implies age, seniority and paternal rights) and a *pater* (a ‘father’), it is important to consider the gendered status of fathers. Is fatherhood necessarily implicated in gender inequality? Do men use their position as fathers to oppress women? Or does the assumption of fatherhood produce men who are more responsible, more tolerant, and more supportive of gender equality? These are key questions in considering how fatherhood is related to constructions of masculinity. (Morrell 2006: 17)

The most prominent concern in research on fathers in the recent period has been the phenomenon of the absent father<sup>102</sup>. In his book, *Absent Fathers, Lost Sons*, Guy Corneau reflects upon the consequence of the father’s absence. He notes that the crisis of absent fathers is reaching epidemic proportions. The number of children living in fatherless homes (mostly homes headed by women), are dramatically on the rise. Even when a man lives in the home, Corneau (1991: 12-13) suggests that there is no guarantee of effective fathering. This lack of attention from the father results in the son’s inability to identify with his father as a means of establishing his own masculine identity:

“The term absent fathers...refers to both the psychological and physical absence of fathers and implies both spiritual and emotional absence. It also suggests the notion of fathers who, although physically present, behave in ways that are unacceptable: authoritarian fathers, for example, are oppressive and jealous of their sons’ talents and smother their sons’ attempts at creativity or self-affirmation. Alcoholic fathers’ emotional instability keeps their sons in a permanent state of insecurity.”

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<sup>102</sup> See for instance Gordon Dalbey’s *Sons of the father: healing the father-wound in men today* (1992), for an evangelical Christian interpretation of this issue.

Corneau notes furthermore that a boy who has experienced such paternal neglect in many cases struggles with sexual identity, represses aggression, lacks healthy ambition, suffers from learning disorders, has a diminished sense of moral value and personal responsibility, and often turns to some form of substance abuse in an attempt to quench his inner psychic turmoil. To summarise the depths of these problems, he writes:

“The father’s absence results in the child’s lack of internal structure...His ideas are confused; he has trouble setting himself goals, making choices, deciding what is good for him, and identifying his own needs. For him, everything gets mixed up: love and reason, sexual appetites and the simple need for affection...Basically he never feels sure about anything.” (Corneau 1991: 37)

Many different works on masculinity have, from varying standpoints, examined the way in which boys have been affected by physically absent fathers. Bly (1991), through his mythopoetic work, has for instance created support for the idea that absent fathers are responsible for a crisis of masculinity. Morrell (2006: 18) however contends that there are two problems with the absent father argument. The first is that it is difficult to show that the physical absence of the biological father is as serious for the child as it is often argued. Indeed, the presence of the father can have negative consequences for the child.

The second problem is that men have used the arguments that children need their (biological) fathers to pursue anti-feminist campaigns designed to return women to their dependence on men or to reduce their autonomy. Consequently “the position of a father cannot be measured simplistically in terms of his physical absence or presence...A father might well be physically present, but emotionally absent, or physically absent but emotionally supportive.” The ensuing debate on this issue of the real impact of absent fathers on their children (specifically sons) is considered to be extremely important, but unfortunately exceeds the limits of this dissertation’s focus.

Another important aspect to analyse is the way in which fathers appear in the media and how this influences the politics of fatherhood. Men as fathers are often ignored or portrayed in narrow ways in the media, which inhibit alternative forms of fatherhood from emerging. However, one exception is the image of the African man as father – intimately engaged with childcare and responsibility – which was an important feature in media representations in the 1950’s in the

black newspaper *Drum*. Lindsay Clowes (2006: 108-120) indicates that in the 1950's, African fathers in urban areas had a better chance of establishing themselves in the household and enjoying a healthy relationship with their children. Representations in this era often portrayed men as fathers happily ensconced in domestic situations.

While *Drum* dropped this portrayal in the 1960's and replaced it with images of men at work, relating to one another rather than to women and children, the idea that African men were and are not interested in children, was and is challenged. These last-mentioned kinds of images (of men at work etc.) were much more typical of the ways in which white men had, for decades, been represented in magazines aimed at white audiences. "The period thus sees the images of black men produced by *Drum* converge with those produced for white audiences, showing parenting as women's work. The involved and nurturing father was, in other words, written out of *Drum's* discourse on manhood over the 1950's" (Clowes 2006:108)

Although the representation of fathers in advertisements of *Drum* may be only a very relative reflection of actual fatherly involvement, it nonetheless remains highly significant that this popular and widely-read magazine decided to represent men in domestic environments and involved with their children. This resonates with the fact that the number of men that have decided to actively partake in the care-giving and upbringing of children have certainly increased during the past few years. More and more men are utilizing the opportunities to stay home and take care of children while the women return to work earlier than would otherwise be the case.

### **10.1.2 The reconstruction of fathering capacities**

In the light of the importance of work in men's lives, one can raise the question how being away from the public arena, and entering a domain traditionally reserved for women, affects their masculinity? Since men's increased involvement in care-giving, there has been a change in the nature of fatherhood as it is continuously "shaped and reshaped according to cultural context, work and family relations" (Brandth and Kvande 1998: 2). It is generally evident that men in higher paid positions, whose wives earn equivalent incomes, have the structural resources to stay home and care for children. For these men, fathering is constructed within and integrated into a

hegemonic form of masculinity, and it is also constructed by the interactions of mothers and fathers as they negotiate issues pertaining child care.

By sharing leave from work, men and women regard themselves as participating in equal parenting, but the styles of parenting are not necessarily equal. Brandth and Kvande (1998) contends that, although fathers, like mothers, also deem closeness, care and contact as important to ideal parenting, they do not hold the same perceptions as to how these should be manifested. While women's ideas of intimacy involve face to face contact, men have more of a side-by-side nature in the provision of care. Fathers regard friendship with the child as important and engage in activities where things are done together, e.g. going for walks. Much of the activities done together occur in the public arena instead of inside the home, as would be the case with mothers.

Fathers also claim that mothers worry too much and are over-involved, suggesting that they as fathers worry less. They believe that children should be taught independence and not be pampered too much (Brandth and Kvande 1998: 7). Even though mothers agree with the idea of independence, they are also concerned as to whether such practices provide children with sufficient emotional involvement on the side of the parent.

Women often give masculine or rather paternal care higher status than their own maternal practices. This has the effect of reproducing masculinity as the norm. This, along with the fact that men generally refuse to equalize the amount of housework that the woman did when she was the primary care-giver explicates the distance between fathering and mothering. As such, it reinforces women's secondary position and men's dominant position.

Another way in which added support is given to men's dominance is by means of the combination of hegemonic masculinity – in terms of work life – and caring. This implies that paternal leave does not necessarily involve a break with hegemonic masculinity. Fathers who take paternity leave still manage to stay in touch with the public sphere by managing their time according to their own needs and taking the baby along on visits to the workplace etc. Thus, in this sense, fathers on paternal leave do many of the things they would have done anyway. Staying at home does not threaten their masculine identity since they simply combine child care

and masculine activities. Consequently, childcare has (to a large extent) been successfully integrated into an ever-changing hegemonic masculinity. It has become admirable for men to be good at caring for their children, and this has infiltrated the rigid boundaries of hegemonic masculinity.

***In conclusion:*** fatherhood is an integral element in the construction of masculinities, but it is interpreted in different ways. For men who accept that fathering goes beyond their contribution to conception, there are many ways of interpreting fatherhood. Fatherhood may be understood as negotiating a responsibility to provide and protect, or it may be interpreted as an entity in which one's children become part of one's identity – 'I am my children'. Masculinities which value both responsibility and care can and should be fostered. Such masculinities should steer clear of the claim that fatherhood gives men power over women and children and justifies authority and tyranny. Basically, "...fatherhood can make a contribution to the lives of men. It can give meaning to their lives and open up unexplored channels of emotional engagement. When men accept the fatherhood role, in whatever form, they also contribute to the broader goals of gender equity. Fatherhood should be a role that integrates men into families, rather than separating them from children, women and other men." (Morrell 2006: 23)

## **11. CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY**

*Changes in South Africa influenced gender relationships in areas of critical importance to gender identity and power – the family, the formal sector, political and civic institutions etc.* Apartheid has been viewed for a long time as the reason for the persecution of African people, but the impact of apartheid on gender relationships (and specifically on men) is – as far as the researcher could ascertain - less well researched and documented. Militarization and compulsory national service has for instance at one stage brought about a growing intolerance of differences and diversity.

At the same time, the promotion of rugby and cricket as national sports and tokens of patriotism in many instances created and presupposed a national white (hegemonic) masculinity, and suppressed other forms of masculinity in many ways. In the arena of sport masculinity and male

prohess is exhibited and performed in public<sup>103</sup> – there the physical power thereof draws attention, and the art of conquering is revered. Competitive sport in the media has become a main provider of (hegemonic) masculine images in South Africa<sup>104</sup>.

Many people still hold the view that South Africa is one of the bastions of chauvinism. *South African men are in many instances stereotyped, and certain aspects of masculinity are isolated and highlighted as representative of all men. This results in the failure to unleash the richness and diversity of different forms of masculinity.* Nevertheless, in many parts of South Africa it is an undeniable fact that very few men are truly caring and mindful of their intimate relationships. They are not concerned about how they treat women and children, they do not reflect on their roles in family life, consciously attempt to create more equal ways of sharing domestic tasks and decisions, or explicitly reject violent methods of resolving conflicts.

According to Sideris (2004: 29), “In many cases a social context persists where traditional notions of the family hold sway. According to these ideas, gender and age hierarchies dictate the rights, duties and obligations of men, women and children in the family. Biology and “God’s will” are invoked to justify these structures of hierarchy and in this way they are presented as the *natural* order of family relations. And popular ideas about gender permit the use of violence to maintain authority”. Therefore, the examination of practices of men who transgress norms, and their debates about “what it means to be a man”, in specific historical contexts, is very necessary. (see Sideris 2004<sup>105</sup>)

However, a growing body of literature in South Africa details transformations in the meanings attributed to manhood and changes in the practices of men. A collection of papers edited by

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<sup>103</sup> According to Burnett (2001: 71), “Male only, or ‘true’ sports, like soccer and rugby, have become a domain where masculinity is celebrated and promoted by media and governments at national and international levels as a unifying force.”

<sup>104</sup> “A man’s love for football is a love of and for manhood, composed of a condensation of introjected (turned inward) homoerotic desire. Boys discover that football places them in a masculine universe where they can enjoy the company of men and the spectacle of their bodies – as long as it is framed within competition, the struggle for dominance.” (Mark Simpson quoted by Sharkey 2000: 174). Further remarks will be made (at a later stage) on the significance of the unique relationship between sport and masculinity.

<sup>105</sup> Tina Sideris (2004) documents changes in gender relations in the Nkomazi region, a rural area situated in South-Eastern Mpumalanga province. Drawing on fieldwork and clinical work (as psychologist) conducted over an eight year period, Sideris examines how a small group of men have reflected upon their practices and redefined themselves as ‘different’.

Robert Morrell (2001)<sup>106</sup> brings together research that explores the varying expressions of masculinity that have been fashioned by South Africa's complex and violent racial and sexual politics – *in order to unleash the richness and diversity of different forms of masculinity*. Without discounting the historical challenges that social, economic and political forces have posed for different sectors of men and the ongoing transformation of ideas that define masculinity in South Africa, recent scholarship identifies the transition to political democracy as a moment of significant challenge to men (Morrell 2001; Posel 2005<sup>107</sup>; Walker 2003<sup>108</sup>; Reid & Walker 2005<sup>109</sup>).

### 11.1 Perspectives on (black)<sup>110</sup> African masculinity in South Africa

From a gender perspective, the political changes that followed the abolition of apartheid in the early 1990's, resulted not only in the empowerment of women but also in a situation where previous masculinities no longer had a place in the new democratic political setup, and its implications. So drastic was the political shift that it infiltrated class structures to affect not only the "top dogs"<sup>111</sup> of the apartheid politicians, but also the "under dogs"<sup>112</sup> of its subjugation.

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106 Morrell's book, *Changing men in Southern Africa* (2001), is aimed at optimizing this potential depth of 'multiple masculinities' in Southern Africa.

<sup>107</sup> Deborah Posel (2005) puts the phenomenon of baby rape and the more general phenomenon of sexual violence into historical perspective, highlighting the manner in which sexuality, particularly male sexuality has become politicised in contemporary South Africa. She tracks the emergence of public scrutiny of sexual violence in media reports and argues that it was the rape of infants that "focused the spotlight of shame squarely on men" and evoked a sense of moral panic. Rape cases, particularly those involving babies and young children, are highly publicised and become the yardstick by which the 'moral fibre' of the nation is measured. In this discourse of moral shame, Posel shows how it is men – fathers, brothers, sons – who are blamed.

<sup>108</sup> Walker (2003) examines young men, perpetrators of abuse, who have joined an organisation that provides support and counselling to men who want to change. Her analysis of their testimony reveals their struggle to remake themselves in contrast to past versions of manhood which they interpret as oppressive (Walker 2003: 23). Careful to avoid rigid and premature categorisation of the efforts these men make to come to terms with the process of change, Walker nevertheless suggests the rise of new notions of masculinity.

<sup>109</sup> Reid and Walker's (eds.) book *Men behaving differently* (2005) takes up the challenge of examining the relationship between sexuality and social transition, in different institutional and geographical locations, and look at new masculinities which have been forged in post-apartheid South Africa. The essays in this book reflect on masculinity in a state of flux, reconfiguration and change. "This includes immediate and tangible changes in South Africa's political landscape, transitions in academic enquiry into gender and sexuality, and also emerging possibilities for alternative sexual and gender identities." (Reid and Walker 2005: 2)

<sup>110</sup> The researcher uses the racial category 'black' referring to an apartheid classification. It must however be noted that the racial classifications of coloured, black, white (and Indian) are used to assist in the understanding of the South African social context, and not to essentialise or discriminate against (groups of) people.

<sup>111</sup> These "top dogs" refers mainly to so-called white Afrikaner (heterosexual) middle-class and upper-class men.

<sup>112</sup> These "under dogs" refers mainly to so-called black (African) and coloured men (and women) in lower income groups.

In describing the political transition in terms of masculinity, Thokozani Xaba (2001) terms the reigning masculinity of young African males during the apartheid era 'struggle masculinity', and that of men in contemporary society 'post-struggle masculinity'. In the previous era, African township youth who were trained in the use of military weapons in order to protect their communities from the state and clandestine forces, suddenly found their skills no longer needed in the post-apartheid regime.

'Struggle masculinity'- denoted by opposition to the government system, political militancy and a strong anti-authority posture – which became dominant among young Africans during the struggle against apartheid, has found no place in South Africa's current democracy. It is a democracy which propagates respect for law, order and state institutions, as well as for co-operation with the police force.

Previous 'comrades' and 'exiles' who voluntarily interrupted their education in order to dedicate their lives to the liberation struggle are currently socially, economically and even politically isolated in a system where their skills, and even more importantly, their reason for training is no longer relevant. This means that men who were moulded into a masculinity characterized by status, honor and social respect (that could be 'earned' within the community through the exercising of violent acts), are now expected to take on a non-violent, non-sexist, peaceable masculinity. But this was strange territory to them since the masculinity that they knew and lived was one born out of the harsh environment of apartheid ideology (Xaba 2001: 112).

Young 'comrades' and 'exiles' became more and more isolated in this democratic South Africa where they don't have much formal education, making it nearly impossible to find work – without which there is no legitimate means of attaining the luxuries of life that they feel they deserve. In addition to this, women who were previously deemed subordinate were now being equated to men by the gender politics of the new ANC government which emphasizes gender equality. Thrown into troubled waters in terms of their understanding of their masculinity, these men – who found no affirmation of their masculinity from this new dispensation in society – have become desperate to cling onto that which was familiar to them. As a result, they sought affirmation from each other and started operating like a close-knit supportive family. This family



generated its own codes, separate to those of society; codes that demanded the maintenance and respect of one's honor; codes that reaffirmed their masculinity.

Such 'survivalist' groups of 'comrades' and 'exiles' often incorporated members of criminal gangs, and some themselves form part of these gangs<sup>113</sup> in an attempt to survive this unfamiliar, alienating system within which they found themselves. They turned on the communities that they were trained to protect and used their skills and weaponry against community members in order to extract resources from them. In a backlash to the authority of the new state, these men resorted to criminal acts that ranged from assault to rape and murder – activities that were sometimes justified in a previous era but not in this one (Xaba 2001: 114). Finally, because they have been left behind socially, politically and economically, these men created (for their own benefit) spheres in which their word is law.

But this was not the only masculinity that suddenly found it self facing a foreign political and social context in the 1990's. Afrikaner masculinity was also caught unaware in the newly defined environment of a democratic state and politics. Henceforth, attention will be given to its recent developments.

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<sup>113</sup> In another related study on gang-type masculinity Benita Moolman (2004) explores the construction of heterosexual masculinity in relation to gang rape on the Cape Flats. She examined how the political and economic marginalisation of coloured men under apartheid influenced the construction of a violent, sexualised masculinity linked to gang membership in this area. Moolman (2004: 121) emphasised that collective rape helps gang members construct and affirm their heterosexual masculinity and group identity. According to her (2004: 119) values such as domination, power, control, conquest, achievement and competition contribute to this masculinity - which are then encoded and shaped by gang rape in particular ways. The political-economic marginalisation of masculinity on the Cape Flats happened in relation to the dominant white masculinity. Moolman concludes that in the South African space all other masculinities – black, sub-economic and working class, homosexual and so forth – became subordinated to the dominant masculinity and thus needs to be examined in this context. See also Luyt and Foster (2001) who investigated the relationship between gang processes and differing forms of masculine expression. As a comparative exercise they attempted to explore differences in masculine performance, between areas either embedded in gang culture or those removed from its everyday occurrence, assessing the impact of omnipresent gang processes on masculine understanding.

## 11.2 Post-1994 views on (white) “Afrikaner”<sup>114</sup> masculinity in South Africa

As implicated before, the National party’s victory in the election of 1948 (in South Africa) initiated an era of approximately thirty five year’s rule under the apartheid regime. In the process Afrikaner nationalism became a racist, authoritarian and militarist power within which certain codes for appropriate male conduct was formed. These codes of conduct were intertwined in the hegemonic, so-called Afrikaner masculinity. Kobus Du Pisani (2001: 157) states: “Hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was intrinsically bound up with the social and political power of Afrikaner society and hence with Afrikaner nationalism”. He analysed this overruling form of Afrikaner masculinity<sup>115</sup> within the historical context of the South African political set-up.

Du Pisani (2001) discusses the powers and agents which have formed and transformed it, the role thereof in the apartheid society, and the reaction thereof on societal changes. The focus is on change in symbols and metaphors in Afrikaner masculinity. A detailed discussion is not possible, but some preliminary remarks in this regard are very crucial.

The rise of a hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity marginalised other alternative forms of masculinity by silencing or stigmatising them, with the help of the socio-political power which it found in the Afrikaner community and the Afrikaner nationalism. According to Du Pisani (2001: 158) the hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was puritan in nature: “It took an unyielding

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<sup>114</sup> According to Cloete (1992: 42) Afrikaner self-concepts have moved from a “constructed Afrikaner homogeneity” to “pieces of broken images”. As Serfontein (1990) (cited in Cloete 1992: 42-43) points out: “Afrikanerdom or the Afrikaner volk or the Afrikaners simply do not exist as a separate, identifiable group any longer. There are, however, different groups or fragments of Afrikaners, or Afrikaans-speaking whites. Some regard themselves as the Afrikaner *Volk*, others simply as *Boere* (farmers), others as South Africans and others again as Afrikaans-speaking Africans.” The researcher is aware of these current debates regarding the concept “Afrikaner (masculinity)”. It is an ideologically laden concept which causes large-scale differences of opinion. A detailed discussion of this issue unfortunately transcends the scope of this dissertation. It will suffice to note that the researcher specifically wants to focus (in main parts of this dissertation) on Afrikaans-speaking, white Afrikaner-masculinity, with comparable references to experiences and trends within other ethnic men’s-groups in South Africa and internationally.

<sup>115</sup> An insightful study of Afrikaner masculinity that was also done recently and locally, is one titled *Alternatiewe sieninge van manwees*, by G.J. Cloete (2001). Cloete indicates that social discourses may have a decisive influence on an individual’s way of life. By means of a narrative conversational approach, he introduces a number of discourses that had or still have an influence on five white Afrikaans-speaking men in the Dutch Reformed Congregation Vereeniging-East. The discourses are: (a) a man is as breadwinner the primary provider for the family; (b) a man is goal-oriented and focused on success; (c) a man is dominant and aggressive; (d) a man does not value emotions and relationships and (e) a man does not change easily. In contrast, the study furthermore indicates that men are able to develop alternative ways of being men in spite of social discourses influencing them.

Protestant view bases on ‘pure’ New Testament principles, and rigid austerity and strictness in conduct and morals.” Initially this puritan ideal of Afrikaner masculinity found expression in the image of the simple, honest, religious, stable and hardworking *boer* (farmer).

The highest form of loyalty to the Afrikaner establishment was portrayed in the prerequisites for the Afrikaner *broederbond*: white, financially independent, Afrikaans speaking, Protestant men (mostly out of the Calvinist tradition and members of the Dutch Reformed church) older than twenty-five years of age, were able to become members of the *bond* if their nominators could give account of their infallible character, as well as their commitment to their fatherland, language and culture.

This, combined with other elements of Afrikaner masculine identity, such as heterosexuality and political conservatism, was greatly the representative prerequisites for the ideal of Afrikaner masculinity. In the meantime, this rural based primary symbol of masculinity changed and was complemented by other symbols in the process of societal change, which was brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation.

The momentum of the Afrikaner industrialisation in the twentieth century elicited some new urbanised dynamics, and eventually Afrikaner worldviews started shifting in the long run. In spite of the strict governmental control over the mass media, the globalising trends still influenced and infiltrated the Afrikaner community through literature, films and other media, music and business contracts. The forces of globalization modified primary symbols of masculinity and supplemented it with other symbols that were more in keeping with the realities of urbanization and modernity. Perceptions of traditional masculinity were merged with elements of the urban lifestyle. In this way the Afrikaner ideas about masculinity were broadened.

As pressures for greater open-mindedness and liberal trends strengthened, Afrikaner masculinity was associated more with intellectual sophistication, an increasing affluence of the urban middle class and protests against the conservative establishment of the *Afrikanerdom* (Du Pisani 2001: 159-160). Although some factors of rural life remained, the Afrikaner urban culture became the

hegemonic identity. Symbols of Afrikaner masculinity changed from those of simple, religious *boers* to successful, lavish businessmen. Amidst all this change, however, the strong grip of patriarchy and authoritarianism remained.

Rigid puritan moral standards were relaxed. Patriarchy was challenged, but not dethroned. It is extremely difficult to describe the exact nature and determine the direction of the current Afrikaner masculinity. Tendencies in the Afrikaner culture followed the pattern of the general West, but globalising trends did not lead to the full-scale abolishment of formal race, class and religious distinctions, underlying to Afrikaner ethnical and masculinity identities.

With the generation gap in Afrikaner society that came about in the 1960's between the older and younger generations, hegemonic masculinity was more challenged than ever before. The acceptance of patriarchy as 'normal' and 'natural' and the view of the male-headed family as the cornerstone of a healthy society became contested as violence by men in Afrikaner families came to the fore. This resulted in traditional notions about marriage and the family gradually changing in favour of more equality between partners in love and marriage. (Du Pisani 2001: 164)

Another aspect of *Afrikanerdom* that changed and yet stayed the same since the advent of democratic governance was the idea of men as 'warriors'<sup>116</sup>. In earlier times, conservative Afrikaners prided themselves in what they regarded as a proud military<sup>117</sup> tradition<sup>118</sup>. According

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<sup>116</sup> See the undermentioned critique on the (mythopoetic men's movement's) concept of 'men as warriors' below.

<sup>117</sup> According to Karner (1998: 231) military veterans' lives seem foretold, constrained, and problematized by their own internalized views of what it means to be a man. Their quest for manhood initially leads them to the military and into combat, which in turn leaves them with a continuing need to find acceptance as men, which has led them to participate in what she calls "toxic masculinity". In the 1970's-1990's military conscription had a profound effect on huge amounts of young men, particularly those who had to serve in the Angolan war. A recent book written by J.H. Thompson (2006), gives a collection of reflections and memories of that time. She interviewed men who did National Service. Contributors include ordinary soldiers, Special Forces members, helicopter pilots, chefs and religious objectors. Thompson captures the spirit and atmosphere, the daily duties, the boredom, fear and other intense experiences of soldiers. Her book gives dramatic and insightful perspectives of the destructive type/s of masculinity enacted in the SA Defence Force (SADF) in that period.

<sup>118</sup> According to Conway (2005: 94) the dilemma with this "proud military tradition" is that it served as a primary institution for the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The existence of conscription and the primacy the SADF had in the pre-democratic South African state meant that the imagery associated with the South African soldier, and the values needed to become a soldier, resonated throughout white society. In military affairs the state apparatus is often visibly constructing forms of masculinity and regulating relations between them, not as an incidental effect of its operation, but as an actual precondition of them. As indicated above Morrell (2001) and Du Pisani (2001) identify South African hegemonic masculinity as tied with Afrikaner identity. Because Afrikaner masculinity was

to Du Pisani, the heroic warrior was a prominent metaphor of Afrikaner masculinity. This idea of heroism (according to Du Pisani) later became transferred and manifested in the sports arena, especially initially in rugby and later in cricket. Sporting heroes were idolized and now became associated with the macho image of *Afrikanerdom*<sup>119</sup>.

Some Afrikaner perceptions of and attitudes toward gay men and liberals have also changed in the past few years. Liberalism was more accepted as a form of politics due to the immense pressures of social and global change. Although it has become more tolerant of liberalism, the *Afrikanerdom* is less accepting of homosexuality, which is still regarded by many as a sin, though not as harshly judged as in the old fashioned puritan way. However, within the category of Afrikaner masculinity, some right wingers still prefer to hold onto conservative notions in spite of all the changes that have occurred.

According to Du Pisani the core of the hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity<sup>120</sup> stayed relatively in place through the whole apartheid period, notwithstanding the process of gradual change in gender relations. But the repudiation of political power in 1994 inaugurated a very big schism with the past for the *Afrikanerdom*. The amount of Afrikaner men in positions of public power is depleting and men are not so dominant in the public sphere as before. Afrikaner masculinity does not prescribe the ideal masculinity for the broader society any more, or for white men in general or even for Afrikaans speaking, white men. Elements of the formal puritan hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is still present (it is understandable), but with the death of apartheid and the depletion of Afrikaner nationalism the economic and/or political support which was necessary for the Afrikaner masculinity to rule like before, is non-existent.

Du Pisani (2001: 172) closes his argument with the following statement:

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authoritarian and intolerant of criticism, a pervading sense of guilt and respect for authority coerced and enticed men into obediently accepting the value of military service.

<sup>119</sup> The researcher is aware of the fact that this argument regarding “transferral” to sport is however open to criticism. Sport (especially rugby) was indeed an important aspect of masculinity even before the fall of apartheid.

<sup>120</sup> Another interesting study to note is by Sandra Swart (2001), who reported on hard-line Afrikaner masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa. Once powerful, these Afrikaner men (followers of the disgraced former leader, Eugene Terre Blanche) have, in little over a decade, been socially marginalized. The importance of Swart’s ethnographic approach is that it combines politics, history, racism, militarism, sport, celebrity and other factors in the formation of a range of masculinities in the political and cultural bucket, which is post-apartheid South Africa.

“But Afrikaner nationalism has not disappeared, and given its record of pragmatic adaptation to circumstances it is conceivable that a new hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity may in due course emerge.”

**By way of summary:** the Afrikaner cultural identity and hegemonic masculinity underwent various developmental phases in the twentieth century – from rural traditionalism at the start of the century to industrialised modernism in the middle of the century, to the postmodernist world of technology and globalisation. In the process the metaphors and perceptions of masculinity were transformed alongside the diversification of ways of expression, and of masculinity. Afrikaner masculinity, in the aftermath of apartheid, therefore reflects many diverse images of masculinity which coexists in Afrikaner society<sup>121</sup> as it strives to remain alive within a political context that is not conducive to original Afrikaner values.

As indicated above, the race-determined governmental interference in South Africa has (historically speaking) fundamentally changed gender relations. However, it stays very important to note that the responses of men to these changes cannot be generalised. *Class, race, age, sexual orientation and geographical aspects*<sup>122</sup> are important determining factors for the ways in which men react<sup>123</sup>.

## 12. MEN'S MOVEMENTS

### 12.1 Defining remarks on some men's movements

It has been stated at the start of this chapter, that as a result of the changes women were making and the questions they were asking, and also as a result of the inherent strain of the male role, many men began re-evaluating their roles and raising their own consciousness. To this end, the

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<sup>121</sup> According to Beynon (2002: 154) other masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa include ‘the exemplary’ (for example, sporting heroes), ‘the marginalized’ (members of ethnic groups) and ‘the dishonourable’ (homosexual).

<sup>122</sup> Although the researcher is acutely aware of these mentioned variables’ impact on men’s lives, he can unfortunately not analyse its direct influence in detail in this study, but will throughout take serious cognisance thereof -this will be evident in his approach to this research endeavour.

<sup>123</sup> In this regard it must (constantly throughout the dissertation) be kept in mind that the researcher’s views are directly influenced by his own identity as a young, white, Afrikaans speaking, heterosexual man. The researcher himself is indeed acutely aware of this fact in the whole process and development of this research project.

men's (liberation) movements arose (mainly in the USA) in the early 1970's and have been slowly growing, especially in urban areas.

These so-called men's movements can be concisely defined as attempts by groups of men world-wide to address the issue of masculinity. Three such social men's movements are: men's rights, mythopoetic and pro-feminist men's movements. Some of these groups adopted an **anti-feminist**, some a **pro-feminist**, and others a **pro-masculinist** stance.

The pro-feminist men's movement started from the acknowledgement that men have power and privilege in a male-dominated society (Kaufman 1994: 156). The contemporary pro-feminist men's movement emerged as a part of the feminist movement and organized around issues like domestic violence, rape, and pornography. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many men came together in response to the growing second-wave feminist movement. Many of these men saw pervasive sexism in American society and became active by publishing books and periodicals and forming consciousness-raising groups and formal organizations (Messner, 1997).

Men began to examine what it meant to be a man, primarily through consciousness-raising (CR) groups and books. Although many of the men in such groups did not consider themselves part of a movement, others began to organize. The first national Conference on Men and Masculinity was held in 1975 and this conference has been held nearly every year since then. (Basow 1992: 336)

During the 1980's two distinct men's movements developed, namely: the 'pro-feminist' group (who support a feminist analysis of patriarchy) and the 'pro-masculinist' group (who emphasize men as victims (Clatterbaugh, 1990)). Pro-feminists analyzed men's problems as stemming from a patriarchal social system that privileges men, especially white middle-class, heterosexual men. Some pro-feminist are more liberal (emphasizing gender roles) and some are more radical (emphasizing patriarchal oppression). But both groups view men as forced into oppressive behaviours that distort men's character and limit their functioning.

According to the men's movements, liberating men thus requires eliminating patriarchy and restrictive gender roles. Pro-feminist men are aligned with feminist women in working for social and political change, and many such men supported women's movements. Current pro-feminists also work to overcome homophobia within both themselves and the culture, since such attitudes maintain the gender hierarchy and alienate men from each other. (Basow 1992: 336)

In contrast, pro-masculinist groups - although far from unitary - tend to focus on supporting men's rights and masculinity. In the early 1970s, the main emphasis of pro-masculinists was on defense against feminist attacks. These groups tended to see men as victims of oppressive gender roles as well as feminist anger. Men's rights activists fight perceived men's oppression, including unfair legal decrees of alimony and child support, and domestic violence against men. These activists saw men's liberation as the other side of women's liberation, claiming that sexism oppresses women and harms men. They also walked a tight rope between acknowledging women's oppression and the pain traditional masculinity caused many men; as a consequence, some men fell into the men's rights camp (Messner, 1997). The emergence of men's rights<sup>124</sup> can be traced to the formation of the Men's Rights Association in 1973, founded by Richard Doyle (Clatterbaugh, 1990).

In response to increasing separation of gender roles with growing industrialization (the public/private split), many middle-class men became concerned about the effects of too much female influence on growing boys (Kimmel, 1994). One outcome was the development of boys' clubs - for example, the YMCA and the Boy Scouts - to combat "feminization." Another outcome was increased militarization and sports consciousness - President Theodore Roosevelt was a symbolic hero of this movement<sup>125</sup>.

Connell (1995) does not see 'men's movements' as the loci of potential change since the only factor which unites men in such contexts is their collective status as the object of feminist criticism. Instead, Connell proposes, men are probably more able to reflect upon their power as

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<sup>124</sup> According to Fox (2004: 105) men's rights and fathers' rights groups are probably the most dominant men's groups on the internet, including The National Coalition of Free Men, The Men's Defense Association, The National Organization for Men, and The National Center for Men. There are also many Internet-only sites promoting men's rights, such as [www.patriarchy.com](http://www.patriarchy.com) and [www.mensactivism.org](http://www.mensactivism.org).

<sup>125</sup> See also chapter 4's heading titled: "*Sport, muscles and Christianity*".



men within the framework of other political struggles in which they might engage, e.g. class, race etc. This is also why he argues that where men do become able and willing to question their own position of power vis-à-vis women, this is most likely to occur within a framework of what he refers to as ‘alliance politics’ (Connell 1995: 225-243).

## 12.2 The mythopoetic men’s movement

More recently (in the early 1990’s), another branch of the pro-masculinist group has been gaining momentum – men who recognize they have been injured in their personal development by the rigidity of male gender socialization and role expectations, and who are searching for spiritual healing and growth (Clatterbaugh, 1990). The path to such healing frequently is through therapy, CR groups, and rituals all focused on releasing the “wild man” inside the civilized man. Myths are heavily used to provide men with a positive image of masculinity, one that combines strength with tenderness. In short, this pro-masculinist movement is directed at dealing with the crisis in masculinity.

Best-selling books - such as Bly’s *Iron John* (1991) and Sam Keen’s *Fire in the belly* (1991) - have argued that men need to rediscover their masculinity in order to heal their wounds<sup>126</sup>. Many have deep emotional and/or psychic wounds that are not always acknowledged and can best be healed by drawing on a mythopoetic approach which stresses the need for men to rediscover or assert their manhood (or their “warrior energy”). Men are also called upon to reassert their innate and essential difference from women.

The mythopoetic men’s movement can be defined as a form of a self-help movement (Connell, 1993) or a quasi-religious movement (Schwalbe, 1996). Bly’s 1982 interview in *New Age* magazine is commonly seen as the starting point of the mythopoetic men’s movement, where he

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<sup>126</sup> Another book which belongs to the body of literature which argues that men require healing, is E.R. Barton’s edited volume: *Mythopoetic Perspectives of Men’s Healing Work: An Anthology for Therapists and Others* (2000). This book is a wide-ranging exploration of the mythopoetic men’s movement and its application, especially in the ManKind Project (MKP). It provides insights and information that advance the debate and offer new opportunities for understanding and integration. Barton’s anthology goes well beyond *Iron John* (Bly) and *Fire in the Belly* (Keen) to take a scholarly look at ‘the men’s movement’. It offers a philosophically sound and carefully delineated conceptualization of the mythopoetic approach to the study of men.

discussed the problem of 'soft males'. Bly's solution: men must be initiated into manhood. The Industrial Revolution, he claims, caused many men to absent themselves from their son's lives. Consequently, fathers were unable to initiate their sons into manhood. As a result, many uninitiated men turned to feminist women as role models. But according to Bly initiation into manhood happens through Jungian psychological techniques.

Mythopoetic men face their shadow side through the use of stories, poetry, and myths, become initiated into manhood, and as Bly (1991: 22) notes come to possess "Zeus energy, which encompasses intelligence, robust health, compassionate decisiveness, good will, generous leadership." Based on the works by him and others (such as Keen, 1991; Moore & Gillette, 1990<sup>127</sup>), this 'wildman' movement is based on the belief that only men can initiate males into manhood. "Through the use of rituals, men get in touch with their inner feelings and heal the emptiness and alienation caused by the absence of fathers, the oppressive nature of corporate culture, and feminist attacks on men." (Basow 1992: 337)

In North America specifically, retreats (aptly titled 'wildman gatherings') encouraged men to overcome the barriers separating them from developing intimate friendships with each other. "Similar to the views of the early 20th-century pro-masculinists, modern men are depicted as endangered by too much of the 'feminine.'" Either they become 'soft' as a result, or they rebel and become 'macho' ('savage men'). What's needed is a healthier balance. Similar to cultural feminists, then, wildmen emphasize gender differences and the importance of valuing one's own 'side.'" (Basow 1992: 337)

Thousands of men attended weekend 'wildman' retreats, and support groups popped up in local communities. By the mid 1990's an estimated 100,000 men had attended some kind of mythopoetic event (Schwalbe, 1996: 4). Soon after, mythopoetic men's activity started gaining negative media and academic attention, including anti-mythopoetic essays written in feminist and pro-feminist anthologies. Mythopoetic popularity waned in the late 1990's. Its literature started

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<sup>127</sup> This host of male writers have rejected what the new man is and stands for. They blamed feminism for what they saw as an aberration, and called for men to return to their roots, assert themselves, take charge and become real men again. Therefore, in the late 1990's the 'New Man' was in danger of dismissal. (Morrell 1998: 7)

to look the same after a while, and the movement had no vision of social justice or social change. According to Fox (2004: 106): “Those who claimed that the mythopoetic men’s movement was a fad may have been right. However, the popularity of New Warrior Training Adventure and local groups reveals that there are still some men to whom a mythopoetic perspective speaks.”

The mythopoetic movement catered mainly for the needs of relatively well-educated, white, middle-class men. These were men who were experiencing a crisis of confidence that was often attributed to the emotional or actual absence of a father in childhood. The movement reacted to the expressed needs of these men by developing rituals – initiations into manhood – by which men would rediscover their masculinity. According Michael Schwalbe (1996), Bly used Grimm’s fairy tales (drawing loosely on Jungian archetypes) which, though equally popular, are ‘primitivist’ rituals, invoking a time when men were at one with nature and themselves. This is one of the reasons why some theorists (like Schwalbe) are critical of this movement, and deserves more comment.

### **12.3 Meaningful critique on the mythopoetic men’s movement**

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1997) examine what they call a fragment of the emergent cultural image of the contemporary New Man<sup>128</sup>: the participant in the mythopoetic men’s movement, i.e. the man who attends the weekend “wildman gatherings” (mentioned above). According to them:

“Bly’s curious interpretations of mythology and his highly selective use of history, psychology, and anthropology have been soundly criticized as ‘bad social science’... But perhaps more important than a critique of Bly’s ideas is a sociological interpretation of why the mythopoetic

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<sup>128</sup> According to Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994: 1) images of reconstructed men – from the “wounded male” to the “new man”- appear on advertising bill-boards and television and in magazines and newspapers. Beynon (2002: 164) states that “New Man” is a term often used in at least two separate senses. In the first, originating in the 1970’s the new man is a pro-feminist (the ideology-led ‘nurturer’ tradition), attempting to put his ‘sharing and caring’ beliefs into practice in his daily life. In the second sense, originating in the 1980’s, he is a hedonist, seeking out the latest fashions and taking a great interest in grooming and appearance (the consumerism-led ‘narcissist’ tradition). Beynon argues that these two have now become inextricably linked in a vague, generalized ‘new man-ism’. Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner’s concept of this ‘new man’ (1997: 505) can be described as more in line with the ‘nurturer tradition’: “a white, college-educated professional who is a highly involved and nurturant father, ‘in touch with’ and expressive of his feelings, and egalitarian in his dealings with women.”

men's movement has been so attractive to so many predominantly white, college-educated, middle-class, middle-aged men in the United States over the past decade." (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1997: 505)

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1997) argue that Bly's movement attracts thousands of men not because it represents any sort of radical break from "traditional masculinity", but exactly because it is so compatible with shifts that are already taking place within current constructions of hegemonic masculinity. According to them, many of the men who attend Bly's gatherings are already aware of some of the problems and limits of narrow conceptions of masculinity. The biggest focus of the gatherings is the poverty of these men's relationships with their fathers and with other men in workplaces.

Thus, relatively privileged men may be attracted to the mythopoetic men's movement because, on the one hand, it acknowledges and validates their painful "wounds", while guiding them to connect with other men in ways that are both nurturing and mutually empowering. On the other hand, and unlike feminism, it does not confront men with the reality of how their own privileges are based on the continued subordination of women and other men. In focusing on how myth and ritual can reconnect men with each other and ultimately with their own "deep masculine" essence, Bly sidesteps the central point of the feminist critique – that men, as a group, benefit from a structure of power that oppresses women as a group. His concept of male power is marginalised by biological and mythopoetic narratives, which leave little scope for feminist contestation.

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1997: 506) contends: "In ignoring the social structure of power, Bly manages to convey a false symmetry between the feminist women's movement and his men's movement. He assumes a natural dichotomization of 'male values' and 'female values' and states that feminism has been good for women in allowing them to reassert 'the feminine voice' that has been suppressed. But Bly states (and he carefully avoids directly blaming feminism for this), 'the masculine voice' has now been muted – men have become 'passive...tamed...domesticated.' Men thus need a movement to reconnect with the 'Zeus

energy' that they have lost<sup>129</sup>. 'Zeus energy is male authority accepted for the good of the community' (Bly, 1991, p. 61)."

Thus, the Iron John-type study calls upon men to reclaim the identity which has been savaged by feminism – an identity which ultimately resides in essential masculinity<sup>130</sup>. This essence of the masculine, it is argued is rooted in natural or biological states. And the problem with such pre-determined states is, of course, that it is meaningless to contest them. So when men and masculinity come under attack, it is clear who or what is at fault – not the objects of criticism, but its perpetrators. Johnson and Meinhof (1997: 19) contends that it does not really matter whether this anti-feminist agenda is framed within structuralist, psychoanalytic or mythopoetic discourses. "The issue is simple: difference is used to justify inequality and, in the struggle to maintain power, men must assert, and reassert, their innate and essential distinction from women."

Therefore, in short: "the mythopoetic men's movement may be seen as facilitating the reconstruction of a new form of hegemonic masculinity – a masculinity that is less self-destructive, that has revalued and reconstructed men's emotional bonds with each other, and that has learned to feel good about its own Zeus power." (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner 1997: 507)

If this is the case, then the mythopoetic approach to healing does not really promote gender equity. Does it meaningfully contribute to healing the gender wounds of the (USA) nation?

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<sup>129</sup> The notion that men need to be empowered as men is indicative of some 1970's men's liberation activists who saw men and women as equally oppressed by sexism (as mentioned earlier). But this view strips the concept of oppression of its political meaning and thus obscures the social relations of domination and subordination. Men continue to benefit from this oppression of women, but, significantly, in the recent history, women's compliance with masculine hegemony has been counterbalanced by active feminist resistance. Men do tend to pay a price for their power: they are often emotionally limited and commonly suffer poor health and a lower life expectancy than that of women. But these problems are best viewed not as gender oppression, but rather as the 'cost of being on top'.

<sup>130</sup> According to Peterson (1998) there are other kinds of 'popular' writings which also enjoy widespread commercial success and are equally essentialist. The 'men's rights movement' seek to expose the so-called myth of male power, and to reclaim and protect masculine power and privilege, and can be seen to represent a reactionary response to feminism. "Like the mythopoetic and 'men's rights' advocates, 'pro-feminist' advocates tend to cast men as 'victims of society', effectively side-stepping awkward questions about the power relations of gender and sexuality." (Peterson 1998: 8). Fortunately, not all studies of masculinity have been based on the kind of essentialist and/or anti-feminist approaches discussed here. Indeed, there is a strong tradition of writing on men within which the rejection of such views is central (Brittan, 1989; Connell, 1987, 1995, 2002; Morgan, 1992). This (last-mentioned) tradition's approach is to deconstruct the notion of a single, distinctive form of masculinity across time and space, and to emphasize the nature of masculinity as socially constructed, highly contextualised, hence fluid and variable.

Michael Messner (1997) concluded that the mythopoetic movement did have something to contribute but that organisations working in the terrain of racial and sexual identity politics, were more likely to pioneer a path to gender justice. Messner blamed the mythopoeists for historically having had little connection with feminist organisations, and not unambiguously aligning themselves with feminist goals or showing any willingness to give up the ‘patriarchal dividend’. Another point of uncertainty is the fact that their position on gay rights is also vague.

### ***12.3.1 South African perspectives on the mythopoetic men’s movement***

The mythopoetic movement and its approach to men’s healing has yet to make a clear-cut impact on South Africa. The ManKind Project (MKP) has a small presence in South Africa. Founded in 1985 in the United States, it has only recently attracted interest. According to Morrell (2000: 104) “this approach to healing gender wounds might play an important role in the lives of a minority of men in South Africa. Its contribution in this respect should be weighed up against the difficulties it will have in rooting itself in a gender context quite different from the well-resourced north.”

Morrell argues that the centrality of the ‘warrior’ in mythopoetic healing work is not likely to inspire confidence amongst feminists or peace-loving people in South Africa – because here ‘warriors’ are associated with war and killing. In our country, the recent militarised past is satiated with warrior images, and gender activists looking for new ways of envisioning gender relations and masculinity will most probably tend to turn away from that past. “Gender workers are unlikely to find the call to search for ‘warrior energy’ helpful in a context where violent crimes are very common. It’s not that there is nothing of value in the warrior image – African initiation rites still invoke the importance of the warrior while teaching the associated values of integrity, wisdom and restraint – it is just that these images are inappropriate for South Africa still struggling its way out of the legacy of apartheid.” (Morrell 2000: 103)

The other problem with the ‘warrior’ image is simply the fact that it is *essentialist*, and *does not pay much attention to uniqueness and diversity*. Men in South Africa live and work in different

conditions and cannot be bulged into one category. Their lived experiences are marked by race, class, location, religion, family structure and many other factors, and *therefore their gender wounds cannot be treated homogeneously*.

Masculinist retreats to retrieve deep, wounded, masculinity are but one of the ways in which men currently struggle with their fears and their shame. Unfortunately, at the very moment that they work to break down the isolation that governs men's lives (as they enable men to express those fears and that shame) they ignore the social power that men continue to exert over women. The privileges from which they (as the middle-aged, middle-class white men who largely make up these retreats) continue to benefit – regardless of their experiences as wounded victims of oppressive male socialization – is also in many instances still easily disregarded .

Nevertheless, the mythopoetic approach to healing needs to be taken seriously because it is serious about working for a peaceful world, and can make an important contribution in creating a safer, peaceful and equitable world order.

### **13. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

*This chapter focused on the cultural hermeneutical dimension of the interplay between identity, gender and masculinities, explicated within the field of practical theology and pastoral care. It was asserted that the recent turns towards theories on globalisation and postmodernism in the social sciences and humanities, has led worldwide scholars to re-evaluate basic categories of social analysis. Therefore, self-identity has become an inescapable issue in the context of post-traditional (or postmodernist) societies where there are less clearly defined identities and roles. It was shown that there is a strong anti-essentialist trend within contemporary social theory (in disciplines such as sociology, social psychology and anthropology studies), which has had a profound impact on contemporary cultural schemata of interpretation about gender identity. This impact is less clear-cut within theological circles, hence the need for this introductory chapter.*

The researcher argued that a merely biological interpretation of gender will not suffice and pointed out that biology is no more primary or real than any other aspect of lived experience.

*Gender was described as what you do at particular times*, rather than a universal *who you are*. Thus, it is a process of becoming, a condition actively under construction - more by people, than by biology - and this construction is shaped by historical, cultural, and psychological processes. It was suggested that the 'male-female' dichotomy cannot explain the different ways people are gendered in time and place and that schemata of interpretation for masculinity and femininity as homogeneous and fixed binary opposites are not plausible any longer. Instead of viewing them as two ends of a spectrum, *the idea of masculinity/ femininity as 'cultural space' that men and women can choose to inhabit*, was put forward. Masculinities and femininities are not distinct and separate but are unstable and constantly changing. This notion was explicated because it will later form a core element of the dissertation and also then be further explored.

In addition, the researcher made a strong case for adopting a pluralistic view of masculinities rather than looking at masculinity as a unitary, cohesive concept that is uniform across time and place. The need for considering masculinity as a product of culture — influenced by class, ethnicity, sub-culture, age, geographical setting etc. — was emphasized. Subsequently, the important distinction was maintained between 'masculinity-as-experienced-and-enacted' and 'masculinity-as-represented'. This forms the template for understanding and exploring men and male attitudes/behaviours, as well as images and stereotypes/discourses of masculinity.

Furthermore, the important point was made that within the process of globalization, goods and profit become more important than people and being functions. The challenge was put to an anthropological (and hence a pastoral-theological) hermeneutics to assess human life, its significance and value, in broader terms than that of unqualified competitiveness, projected as the so-called key to success. It was contended that pastoral hermeneutics needs to find a deeper understanding and assessment of the schemata of interpretation which serves as motivators of the processes which daily affects the cognitions, identities and expectancies of people. This needs to be done in order to create a more humane society (community) and safeguard human dignity. A pastoral-anthropological perspective was thus already employed in order to start shifting the emphasis on male identity in terms of gender and sexuality, towards a spiritual understanding of male identity in terms of human dignity and human destiny (meaning) – but this will only be investigated in later chapters (specifically in chapters 5 and 6) in more detail.



The significant and pioneering role which feminism played and still plays in the articulation, politicisation and development of the questions concerning masculinities, was also examined. The concept of gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics can and should be fruitfully applied to studies of masculinities from a pastoral-theological perspective. The battle against patriarchy, and its consequences in the form of masculine sexism, has not merely humiliated women, but it indeed has in some ways robbed many men of their fixed identity and prescribed understanding of humanity too. Partnerships should therefore be built between men and women in ways that are positive, progressive, respectful and healthy. This will only be possible if men are committed to change their attitudes and mindsets on the gendered issues in society. If/When men become more aware of their capacity to change their attitudes and mindsets on the above-mentioned issues, it can establish an essential matrix for the transformation of male identity.

This introductory chapter also investigated the notion of the ‘crisis in masculinity’ and examined the extent to which the crisis is real or discursive. The complex connection between fathers and masculinity was also put forward as an example of the (perceived) crisis of masculinity. Fatherhood is a social role and an integral element in the construction of masculinities, but it can and should be understood and exercised in different ways. Particularly in the context of the developing world, other categories of father (than the biological) – i.e. economic and social – are important. The most prominent concern in research on fathers in the recent period has been the detrimental phenomenon of the absent father. Fatherhood should therefore be a role that integrates men into families, rather than separating them from children, women and other men.

The last part of the chapter focused on changes in some South African perceptions of masculinity – before and after the political transition in 1994. The metaphors and perceptions of masculinities that were transformed, alongside the diversification of ways of expressing it, were explored. However, it stayed very important to note that the responses of men to these changes cannot be generalised. Although men in general benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, they do not benefit equally. Indeed, many pay an extensive price.

In conclusion the main tenets of the so-called men’s movements - as attempts by groups of men world-wide to address the issue of masculinity – were explored. Masculinist retreats were

evaluated as one of the ways in which men currently struggle with their fears and their shame. The researcher concluded that, at the very moment that they work to break down the isolation that governs men's lives, they ignore the social power that men continue to exert over women. The privileges from which they (as the middle-aged, middle-class white men who largely make up these retreats) continue to benefit – regardless of their experiences as wounded victims of oppressive male socialization – is also in many instances still easily disregarded. Nevertheless, it was found that the mythopoetic approach to healing needs to be taken seriously because it is serious about making an important contribution in creating a safer, peaceful and equitable world order.

In light of all the above-mentioned issues that were discussed in this chapter, the researcher will continue in chapter 3 to further this cultural-hermeneutical exploration of men and masculinities within the all-pervasive and prescriptive mass media culture. This is necessary in order to gain deeper insight into the phenomena of 'masculinity-as-experienced-and-enacted' and 'masculinity-as-represented', the latter being the main focus of this next chapter. The ensuing chapters will then be able to engage theologically with these cultural-hermeneutical insights.

## CHAPTER 3: IMAGES OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES IN THE MASS MEDIA CULTURE–THE PRESCRIPTIVE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter it will be explicated why and how human identities in general - including gender and sexual identities - have become more diverse and malleable. Modern lives are less predictable and fixed than they were for previous generations, and identities today are more ‘up for grabs’ than ever before. This chapter will indicate that this is mainly the case because of the pervasive influence of the mass media and popular culture, which proposes to offer important tools to help men (and women) adjust to contemporary life.

Many of the academic books on ‘masculinity’ are - for the ‘average man on the street’ at least - disappointing, as they dwell on archetypes from the past, and have little to say about the real lives of modern men; whereas top selling magazines and popular self-help books - and, to a lesser but significant extent, TV shows and movies - are full of information about being a man in the here-and-now. Some parts of popular culture are said to be ‘reasserting’ the traditional forms of masculinity, whilst others are challenging them.

The mass media suggests lifestyles, forms of self-presentation, and ways to find happiness which may (or may not) be illusory. According to Gauntlett, “...to interpret the choices we have made, individuals construct a narrative of the self, which gives some order to our complex lives. This narrative will also be influenced by perspectives which we have adopted from the media. Our relationship with our bodies, our sexual partners, and our own emotional needs, will all also be influenced by media representations, but (of course) in complex ways which will be swayed and modified by our social experiences and interactions.” (Gauntlett 2002: 113 – 114)

One of the biggest debates about the social impact of the media can be boiled down to one question: does the mass media have a significant amount of power over its audience, or does the audience ultimately have more power than the media? In other words, does the media simply give a reflection of the social realities of life or do they create a particular reality independent of life itself in order to influence its receivers?

In particular this chapter provides an overview of some representations of gender, and more specifically men, in the media. Susan Bordo (1999: 215) asserts that: “we live in an empire ruled not by kings or even presidents, but by images.” Thus, attempting to talk about such a broad topic, the images of men (and women) within such a broad field - ‘the media’ - is a very big task. Each week a new set of movies is released. Every day, television programmes, documentaries, children’s entertainment, game shows, chat shows, lifestyle programmes, films, soap operas, music videos and more are broadcasted. Magazines, newspapers<sup>131</sup> and adverts all contain images of men (and women), and even songs on the radio (or played in shops and cafes) might feed into, or challenge, our ideas about gender.

The internet and World Wide Web bring even more information and ideas into our lives; the material we see online is more likely to be material we have requested quite specifically, but as online magazines and general entertainment sites become increasingly popular, and these merge with digital television, electronic media becomes yet another source of gender information. (Gauntlett 2002)

Men are daily bombarded with images of masculinities in the mass media. We see what men are “supposed to” look like, act like, be like. We are informed about the positive characteristics toward which we should aspire and warning against the negative facets of personality that we must avoid. Changing the definitions of manhood will therefore require a serious confrontation with images of power as well as structural realities of power in social life. Social scientists are only now beginning to understand the enormous influence that the media have in shaping our ideas about what it means to be a man. If masculinity is to be conceived of as a social construct,

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<sup>131</sup> See addendum E (Davis 2005) for a recent example of an article in a South African newspaper that focuses on this issue of the representation (and/or mis-representation) in the media.

what role do the media play in formulating it? How do men (and women) learn what behaviours are “manly”?

The mass media thus create artificial standards against which boys (and men) as well as girls (and women) measure themselves and others. According to Kimmel & Messner (2004: 505): “Virtually no men can approach the physiques of the cartoon version of Tarzan or even G.I. Joe...No wonder we often feel like we fail the test of physical manhood. We are constantly “seeing” masculinity, in the movies, in commercials, in pornography etc. Any effort to understand– let alone transform –masculinity must take account of the ways in which we see ourselves reflected through the lenses that record our fantasy lives.” (e.g. see image underneath)

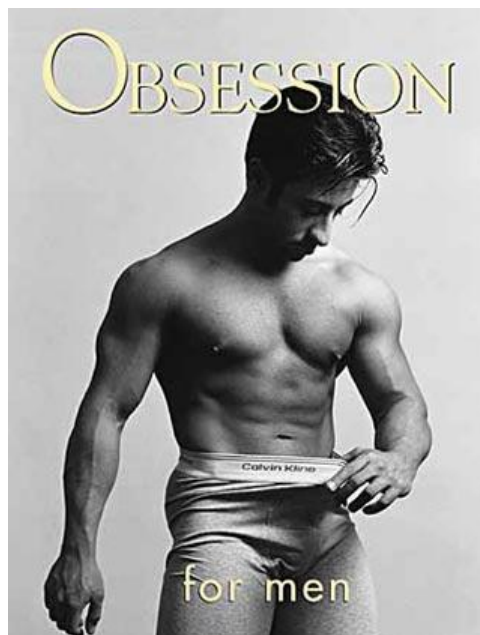


Illustration (nr.1) courtesy of [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)<sup>132</sup>

The main aim of this chapter is henceforth to analyse the popular culture and mass media communications as settings within which masculinity is enacted and performed. In order to come to a better understanding of some of the problematic issues surrounding manhood and masculinity in the third millennium, the researcher proposes that it is necessary to actively engage with the media representations that have influenced our schemata of interpretation.

Therefore, selected examples from (amongst others) popular films, the fashion industry and international men’s magazines will be made in order to understand how an interplay with these

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<sup>132</sup> Permission given by Adbusters (see Rogers, 2006 in *OTHER INTERNET SOURCES*).

cultural schemata of interpretation can assist theology to reflect critically on current images that determine male identity. By doing this more insight will be gained in terms of the dominating discourses reflected by images of men and masculinities in die global mass media. This will be analysed in more detail specifically via an empirical survey of some recent issues of Men's Health magazines. But firstly is it necessary to define what is meant by the mass media, and to engage with the contexts within which these mass media function.

## 2. THE INFORMATION AGE AND ITS CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

People living in the twenty-first century inhabit an *information* and *consumer* society, where the manufacture and dissemination of information has become an essential facet of modern democratic and commercial processes. The media and cultural industries now encompass multinational corporations, government agencies and departments, political parties, advertisers, public relations firms and many other forms of corporate, private and public organisation. These are locked into increasingly sophisticated networks of information gathering, management, manipulation and distribution in the specific sphere of institutionalised politics. Given these and related developments in the levels and dynamics of media saturation in the modern period, it is not surprising that the media have attracted considerable public debate and criticism.

Before some important remarks are made on the current cultural, media-saturated<sup>133</sup> context we live in, the researcher will focus on identifying the main features of what he considers to be the emerging, dominant social structure: the Network Society – which is (according to Castells, 1999) characteristic of informational capitalism, as constituted throughout the world. Castells (1999: 398-399) focuses on the structure/dynamics of the so-called network society. He proposes that it resulted from the historical convergence of three *independent* processes:

1. The Information Technology Revolution<sup>134</sup>, constituted as a paradigm in the 1970's.

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<sup>133</sup> The term 'media', in the established sense, usually refers to 'communication media' and the institutions and organisations in which people work (the press, cinema, broadcasting, publishing etc.) and the cultural and material products of those institutions (the forms and genres of news, road movies, soap operas which take the material forms of newspapers, paperback books, films, tapes, discs). (Lister et al. 2000: 9-10)

<sup>134</sup> It is important to note that the Information Technology Revolution did not create the network society, but without information technology, the network society would not exist. Without it, the network society could not be such a comprehensive, pervasive social form, able to link up, or de-link, the entire realm of human activity. The Network

2. The restructuring of capitalism and of statism in the 1980's, aimed at superseding their contradictions, with sharply different outcomes.
3. The cultural social movements of the 1960's, and their 1970's aftermath (particularly feminism and ecologism).

Shifting to the cultural realm, we see the emergence of a similar pattern of networking, flexibility, and symbolic communication, organized around electronic media (including computer-mediated communication networks). According to Castells, cultural expressions of all kinds are increasingly enclosed in or shaped by this world of electronic media. But the new media system<sup>135</sup> is not characterized by the one-way, undifferentiated messages through a limited number of channels that constituted the world of mass media. And it is not a global village.

“Instead of a global village we are moving towards mass production of customized cottages. While there is oligopolistic concentration of multimedia groups around the world, there is at the same time, market segmentation, and increasing interaction by and among the individuals that break up the uniformity of a mass audience.” (Castells 1999: 404). These processes induce the formation of what he calls *the culture of real virtuality*. It is called so, and not virtual reality, because when our symbolic environment is, by and large, structured in this inclusive, flexible, diversified hypertext in which we navigate every day, the virtuality of this text is in fact our reality, the symbols from which we live and communicate.

Media of communication are extraordinary diverse, and it sends targeted messages to specific segments of audiences and to specific moods of the audiences. These media are increasingly inclusive, bridging from one to another, connected throughout the globe and yet diversified by cultures, constituting a hypertext with extraordinary inclusive capacity. These media networks transform power relationships. Power in the traditional sense still exists: capitalists over workers, men over women etc. “Yet, there is a higher order of power: the power of flows in the networks prevails over the flows of power... This is why the affirmation of *identity* is so essential, because

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Society is, in its current manifestation, a capitalist society, “but this particular form of capitalism is very different from industrial capitalism.” (Castells 1999: 403)

<sup>135</sup> This term “new media” will be defined in more detail in the ensuing paragraphs.

it fixes meaning autonomously *vis-à-vis* the abstract, instrumental logic of networks. I am, thus I exist.” (Castells 1999: 410)

In the light of the latter discussions, it becomes clear that within the current globalising world context and the (above-mentioned) Network Society, the mass media and culture are of central importance to the maintenance and reproduction of contemporary societies. Different forms of media culture such as magazines, television, film, popular music, and advertising provide role and gender models, fashion hints, life-style images, and personality icons. The narratives of media culture offer moral messages, ideological conditioning, and various patterns of proper and improper behaviour, “sugar coating social and political ideas with pleasurable and seductive forms of popular entertainment”. (Durham and Kellner 2001: 1)

Culture first and foremost concerns the ways in which human beings understand and relate to social situations. People are socialised into a particular set of cultural orientations, rituals or ways of making sense of the world. According to O’ Sullivan (et al.) (1998:23), these encompass two particular dimensions. *Firstly*, culture (generally speaking) refers to the beliefs, values or other frames of reference through which we learn to make sense of our own experiences on a daily and ongoing basis. *Secondly*, definitions of culture usually encompass the various means by which people communicate or articulate a sense of self and situation. What is of particular importance to note here, is that the mass media are centrally involved and implicated in this production of modern culture<sup>136</sup>.

Likewise, media and consumer culture, cyberculture, sports, and other popular activities engage people in practices which integrate them into the established society, while offering pleasures,

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<sup>136</sup> The historical development of the media has subsequently been instrumental in the emergence of what we understand as modern social and cultural life. O’ Sullivan (et al.) (1998) identifies three key aspects of their presence: 1. They represent the emergence of large-scale systems of *public* communication, linked to what has been called the *public sphere*; 2. Simultaneously, these developments have also had important implications for the *private* sphere and everyday life ‘at home’; 3. The media and mass communications have interacted with pre-existing cultures, forms and values in a number of significant ways. Of these, perhaps the most central has been in the development of *popular* culture, that “‘site of struggle and contest’ which...contains a number of contradictory ideas: from ‘liked by many’ to ‘not elite or high culture’; from that of ‘the common people’ to ‘mass-produced’ culture, in postmodern times.” (O’ Sullivan 1998:29)



meanings and identities. Different individuals and audiences respond to these texts disparately, negotiating their meanings in very complex and often paradoxical ways.

### **3. ANALYSING THE MEDIA CULTURE IN A POSTMODERN PARADIGM**

Within the proliferating image and media culture, in which new technologies are changing every dimension of life from the economy to personal identity, fresh critical strategies are needed to read cultural texts, and to interpret the conjunctions of sight and sound, words and images - that are producing seductive cultural spaces, forms, and experiences.

Therefore it is imperative to understand and analyze the cultural environment if one wants to get a grip on these phenomena's impact on people's daily lives. There are numerous approaches to the study of media, culture, and society in separate disciplines and academic fields. Some critics take a single perspective and use a specific method and theory to understand, make sense of, interpret, or criticize media and cultural texts. Others eschew all methodological and theoretical critical strategies in favour of empirical description and analysis.

The researcher, in following the cues from some media experts (like Durham and Kellner, 2001), would advocate the usefulness of a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of media, culture and society. Although this dissertation will not explicitly apply a single method to analyze cultural and mass media influences, it is important here to take note of the variety, rich complexity and novelty displayed in contemporary constellations of rapidly expanding cultural forms and new media. Culture today is both ordinary and complex, encompassing multiple realms of everyday life.

There is not a single approach that contributes the "golden key" to cultural and media criticism. All given theories and methods have their limitations as well as strengths, their illuminating perspectives as well as their blind spots. A critical reading of media texts can reveal a wealth of meanings, values, and messages, often contradictory.

“Examining how people engage cultural texts, however, may reveal that audiences refuse dominant meanings and offer their own, sometimes surprising interpretations. Conjoining production/text/audience perspectives can thus help provide a more complex sense of how culture and media actually operate in everyday life<sup>137</sup>.” (Durham and Kellner 2001: 4)

People living in a media-saturated society can run the very real risk of taking the social significance of the mass media for granted. We need to be more fully aware of their social significance at both macro and micro<sup>138</sup> levels. At the macro level the mass media are important agents of transformation and social change, they are inextricably bound up with the capitalist project<sup>139</sup> and they play a centre stage role in the reproduction and continuation of various kinds of social inequalities at local, national and global levels. It is important to note the role that the mass media have played – and continue to play – in the transformation of societies from being traditional to modern and from being modern to postmodern<sup>140</sup>. (Devereux 2003:9)

McQuail (2000) acknowledges the rapidly changing environments in which the mass media operate, and offers a useful set of criteria through which we can define the contemporary mass media. He sees the mass media’s significance as arising from “its near universality of reach, great popularity and public character” (2000: 4). McQuail contends that these characteristics

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<sup>137</sup> There are many forms of media that saturate our everyday lives, and the cultural change of the current technological revolution is so turbulent that it is becoming increasingly difficult to map the transformations and to keep up with the cultural discourses and theories that attempt to make sense of it all. The researcher will therefore employ the term ‘culture’ broadly to signify types of cultural artefacts (i.e., TV, CD’s, newspapers, paintings, opera, journalism, cyberculture, and so on), as well as discourses about these phenomena. (Durham and Kellner 2001: 3)

<sup>138</sup> At a micro level the mass media act as agents of socialization, constitute a powerful source of social meaning and occupy a significant amount of people’s leisure time. The mass media are important agents of socialization. It reproduces dominant (and other) social norms, beliefs, discourses, ideologies and values. The transmission of these norms, beliefs etc. happens most of the time in an unconscious fashion. The mainstream media draw upon a wide range of taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world: assumptions that, more often than not, go unquestioned by media professionals and audiences alike. (Devereux 2003:10)

<sup>139</sup> The mainstream media industries – many of which in their own right are examples par excellence of global capitalist organizations – play a pivotal role in the continued spread of a consumer culture that drives and perpetuates global capitalism. (Devereux, 2003)

<sup>140</sup> The experience of living in modern and postmodern societies is defined primarily by the very existence of the mass media. In order to make sense of the bewildering variety of uses of the clusters of terms within the field of the postmodern, Durham and Kellner (2001: 26-27) propose distinguishing between: modernity and postmodernity as epochs or stages of history; modernism and postmodernism as developments within art; and modern and postmodern theory as opposed modes of theoretical discourse and intellectual orientations toward the world. A postmodern turn in culture and society would thus correspond to an emergent stage of global capitalism, characterized by new multimedia, exciting computer and information technology, and a proliferation of novel forms of politics, society, culture and everyday life.

have profound consequences for, amongst others, the cultural life of contemporary societies. With regards to culture, *the mass media* are the largest focus of leisure time interest, providing the shared 'cultural environment' for most people and more so than any other single institution; *constitute a primary source of definitions and images of social reality and the most universal expression of shared identity.*

## 4. THE MASS MEDIA

### 4.1 Mass media (communication) defined

Generally, the term *media* has referred to the technological media, such as radio, television, the printing press, etc. In contrast, the researcher will here attempt to introduce a wider argument about the process of *mediation*, where the whole context of the cultural practice of communication is implied, although the focus is on the media sphere.

Human communication (in distinction from animal or machine-to-machine communication) is discerned by De Beer (1998:7) into six different and distinct contexts, of which the last is identified as: *Mass communication* – the process when people (mass communicators) communicate through intermediate media such as television or newspapers or relatively large, heterogeneous and anonymous collections of individuals and groups (mass communication audiences). Mass communication is characterised by the fact that it cannot be separated from the individual or society. It is a very distinctive phenomenon of the twentieth century, a very pervasive force that affects every single aspect of our daily lives. Some elements of mass communication, such as television, satellite message distribution and compact discs, are marvellous technological wonders of our age, while others such as books and newspapers, go far back in history. (De Beer 1998: 5-6)

The mass media can therefore be divided into 'old' media such as film, magazines, newspapers, radio and television, and 'new' media such as the Internet, digital television, and WAP-based

technology<sup>141</sup>. Last mentioned has the capacity to enable communication with potentially large numbers of people in a diverse range of social settings. Traditionally, the mass media have been defined as those media that allow the communication of messages or texts between ‘senders’ and ‘receivers’.

Lister et al. (2000: 10-11) points to (among others) the following phenomena as indicative of wider kinds of change with which new media are associated:

1. *A shift from modernity to postmodernity*: a contested, but widely subscribed attempt to characterise deep and structural changes in societies and economies from the 1960’s onwards, with correlative cultural changes. In terms of their aesthetics and economies new media are usually seen as a key marker of such change.

2. *Intensifying processes of globalisation*: a dissolving of national states and boundaries - in terms of trade, corporate organisation, customs and cultures, identities and beliefs - in which new media have been seen as a contributory element.

3. *A replacement, in the West, of an industrial age of manufacturing by a ‘post-industrial’ information age*: a shift in employment, skill, investment and profit, in the production of material goods to service and information ‘industries’ which many uses of new media are seen to epitomise.

“New media are caught up with and seen as part of these other kinds of change (as both cause and effect), and the sense of ‘new times’ and ‘new eras’ which follow in their wake. In this sense, the emergence of ‘new media’ as some kind of epoch-making phenomena, is seen part of a much larger landscape of social, technological and cultural change; in short, as part of a new technoculture.” (Lister et al, 2000:10-11)

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<sup>141</sup> According to Lister et al. (2000: 9-11) the term “new media” is a blanket description that subsumes a whole range of different practices and processes. “New media” can therefore not be used as a collective singular noun as if it referred to a more or less coherent entity. It rather immediately suggests something far less settled, known and identified. On the one hand, it represents a rapidly changing set of formal and technological experiments and, on the other, a complex set of interactions between new technological possibilities and established media forms. “So, while a person using ‘new media’ may have one kind of thing in mind (the Internet), others may mean something else (digital TV, new ways of imaging the body, a virtual environment or a game). All use the same term to refer to a range of phenomena. In doing so they each claim the status of ‘medium’ for the thing they have in mind and they all borrow the glamorous connotations of ‘newness’.” (Lister et al. 2000: 11)

Media professionals working in the media industries produce media products, which are increasingly seen as commodities to be bought and sold in a globalised market place. Many of these products or texts have significance in the day-to-day lives of many audience members in different parts of the globe. The texts may be a primary source of information and knowledge about the social world and most significantly about relationships of power. Media texts have a further potency in the way in which cultural and political differences are constructed and defined.

An understanding of the mass media therefore has to go further than a narrow technical definition of the media as the medium of communication between senders and receivers. It should be understood as industries or organisations, where media texts are commodities as well as cultural products, and where and when the media act as powerful agents of social change and transformation. (Devereux 2003:8). Media audiences are informed and entertained by these above-mentioned mass media industries. A significant amount of people's leisure time is taken up with mass media consumption, and mass media content itself plays an important role in the day-to-day conversations and interactions in which members of society engage. Mass media content draws upon and contributes to the discourses or form of knowledge that we have about the wider social world.

## 4.2 The power of the mass media

As it has been made clear thus far in this chapter, it has become a truism to observe that we live in media-saturated societies. The mass media – and particularly television – have become the cultural epicenter of our world (McCullagh 2002: 1). It has become routine and normal in our everyday life to encounter the media. Media production is now one of the largest and most lucrative industrial sectors in the global economy<sup>142</sup>.

Yet for all of its dominant presence in our lives, there is a feeling that this kind of media saturation is not a 'good' thing. The media, and in particular television, have been credited with

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<sup>142</sup> According to McCullagh (2002) thirteen of the 100 richest people in the world are media magnates. "Media consumption is the predominant activity in the domestic sphere in industrialised societies, and second only to work in terms of the time spent on it." (McCullagh 2002: 2)

‘fabulous’ powers to change people and have been blamed for contributing to most social ills. It has been blamed for the undermining of trust in politics, the decline of religion, the increase in crime and violence in society, the dumbing down of popular culture, the growth of permissiveness, and as, generally speaking, having the power to corrupt and deprave<sup>143</sup>. (McCullagh, 2002; Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort (eds.), 2003)

O’ Sullivan et al. (1998: 3) gives attention to the importance of *ritual interaction* with modern media. This means that forms of media consumption - reading, watching, listening etc. – are particular ways of creatively participating in the life of modern culture. This active participation operates to express aspects of collective identity and to bind individuals into society and culture as a whole. In this manner, the media have been termed ‘consciousness industries’, involved in the manufacture or management of the public sphere, of consensus and consent. That is, in providing images, interpretations and explanations of events occurring in the wider world, the modern media do not simply and neutrally provide information about that world, but actively encourage us to see and understand it in particular ways and in certain terms<sup>144</sup>.

Rather than faithfully ‘mirroring’ the external world and its ‘reality’, O’ Sullivan et al. (1998:19-20) argues that the media have come to play an increasingly central role in constructing and interpreting the nature of that world according to cultural principles, ideological frameworks and certain values. For those engaged in the systematic study of the mass media, this recognition has resulted in a general and sustained focus upon questions of *media representation* – how and in what terms do the media *re-present* aspects of society and social process to their audiences.

**In short:** *media content acts as an extremely powerful source of social meaning.* The mass media are centrally involved in the social construction of reality for audience members, giving them an understanding – however limited – of both their immediate and their more distant social

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<sup>143</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the power of the media, see *Media and Power*, James Curran (2002).

<sup>144</sup> The communication vectors of the Internet, the dynamic spaces of videogames, the ‘technological imaginary’ of all of these are interwoven, fitting into the architecture of the home, established rhythms of family and social life, and dramatised by the instrumental fantasies of hardware and software producers and retailers and the action-filled narratives of popular culture. Thus, the everyday consumption of new media circulates through popular culture *and* computer culture. *Technology, media, performance, play, consumption, family and gender relationships are all intertwined.* (Lister et al. 2000: 279).

contexts. In this way -(with regards to this study's focus)- *the mass media "creates" and "reflects" a diverse variety of masculinity forms and schemata of interpretation to evaluate it.*

### 4.3 Mass media in a globalising world

Globalisation has been defined in various ways<sup>145</sup>. It can be seen as the process whereby political, social and cultural relations increasingly take on a global scale, and which has very real and significant consequences for individual's local experiences and everyday lives. Some social analysts maintain that globalisation has been one of the most significant changes to have taken place over the last three decades of the twentieth century, and its impact has been felt by individuals and nations world-wide. Globalisation has also become a 'buzzword' among media professionals and appears regularly in the press. However there is considerable disagreement over its possible consequences. Some who take an optimistic approach see globalisation as having many benefits, especially in empowering local communities to produce their own media products.

In recent decades there has been a revolution in communication systems - new technologies<sup>146</sup> such as cable and information communication technology have transformed the scope of the mass media. The global media culture embodies many Western capitalist values such as the free market, consumerism, individualism and commercialism. Globalisation is a dynamic process and the media world changes daily<sup>147</sup>. New mergers occur, more resistance is generated. (Jones and Jones 1999: 218-221)

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<sup>145</sup> Generally speaking, it can be said that globalisation fundamentally affects three areas of society, namely the economic, political and cultural spheres. Some definitions of globalisation (in addition to other definitions which has been referred to in earlier chapters) are: Globalisation is "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson 1992: 8); Globalisation refers to "the rapidly developing process of complex interconnections between societies, cultures, institutions and individuals world-wide. It is a social process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken – either physically or representationally – to cross them, so making the world seem smaller and in a certain sense bringing them 'closer' to one another" (Tomlinson 1999:165)

<sup>146</sup> Almost all of these new technologies are the products of advanced capitalist societies, as is much of the content. This is having important effects on globalisation and culture, for example: It exports the ideology of consumerism. National boundaries are dissolving as we increasingly learn to look at the world through global spectacles. The world is becoming media-saturated and we are able to experience world events simultaneously. (Jones and Jones 1999: 223)

<sup>147</sup> Therefore, there are two contradictory trends at work both globally and nationally: towards cohesion and/or towards fragmentation. Globalisation can promote both, it depends on the context. Media content can be understood

*So what is the real significance of media globalisation?* Whatever its shortcomings, as a process media globalisation is both extremely powerful and laden with various ambiguities and contradictions. It has come about because of the convergence of old and new media organizations and technologies to form immensely powerful transnational conglomerates<sup>148</sup>. (Devereux 2003:28)

A great deal of the reported globalisation of people's local lives is as a result of mass mediation. The emphasis within globalisation theory is on the supposed shrinkage between the distant and the local. "People's local lives are increasingly lived in the shadow of global phenomena. The 'spectre of globalisation' is present in people's everyday experiences and it is particularly evident in terms of our working lives, our consumption – especially in our shopping and eating – and our mass media activities." (Devereux 2003: 31)

## 5. MEDIA INFLUENCE ON GENDER REPRESENTATION AND RELATIONS

Whose version of 'reality' do we mainly see or hear about in the media setting? Does the predominance of a hegemonic discourse about class, ethnicity or gender have a bearing on what audiences believe about the social world? What does media content tell us about unequal relationships of power? Cultural studies scholar Douglas Kellner asserts, "Radio, television, film and other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless...media culture helps shape the prevalent

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and interpreted in many different ways by audiences, so that the fear of potential cultural damage from transnationalised media cultural products may well be exaggerated. However we do not know whether the same status is given to all readings. (Jones & Jones 1999: 232)

<sup>148</sup> Media globalisation has been made possible by the ongoing changes and developments in information and communications technology. Cable, ISDN, digitalization, direct broadcast satellites as well as the Internet have created a situation where vast amounts of information can be transferred around the globe in a matter of seconds. Media globalisation is also defined in terms of the restructuring of media ownership. "The global media industry is dominated by a small number of powerful transnational media conglomerates that own and control a diverse range of traditional and newer forms of media...Those who are critical of media globalisation now speak of the 'information-rich' and the 'information-poor'." (Devereux 2003:35) Globalisation has therefore resulted in the creation of a series of interconnected but unequal global villages. While the global has become more prominent in people's local lives, other forms of identity – the ethnic, the local, the regional, the national, the subcultural – clearly remain alive and healthy. They are especially powerful in determining how audiences read and interpret media texts. (Devereux 2003:47)



view of the world and its deepest values: it defines what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil". (Kellner 1995: 1)

This assertion affirms the prevalence of the array of messages within media content<sup>149</sup> which people daily read/see about gender roles. Do these messages challenge or perpetuate what are currently viewed as the 'appropriate' gender roles in a specific social setting or cultural context? What do these messages tell people about masculinity and femininity? What sorts of assumptions are inherent in these media messages about being a 'man' or a 'woman' in the early twenty-first century? What aspects of being male or female are downplayed or ignored altogether in these media messages? If one was to compare how these messages concerning gender politics vary with those reproduced in the mass media, for instance, twenty years ago, how do they differ, and why?

According to Lemon (1991: 126) media messages convey certain 'preferred meanings' which reflect the interests of the dominant group(s) in society. In this way the media perpetuate and maintain images and world views, such as dichotomous gender divisions, which are compatible with the goals and objectives of the dominant group(s). In this sense, the media play an important role in perpetuating and legitimising patriarchal ideology, and the traditional male sex role. Because in most Western societies the media are controlled and dominated by (white) men, whose fundamental interests lie in maintaining the patriarchal status quo, the media invariably present a white, male dominated, capitalist perspective.

Within media content and across a variety of media genres we are presented with a range of representations about gender. Media content plays a hugely significant role in shaping our perceptions of what is to be 'male' or 'female', and it thus reflects changing dominant discourses

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<sup>149</sup> Content is at the centre of the relationship between the media industries and media audiences. An appreciation of how and why we should analyse media content is important, because it is - as has been indicated convincingly thus far in this chapter - a powerful source of meaning about the social world. Even though media content does not equate with social reality, it is essential that we examine how media content represents, or more accurately 're-presents', the realities involved in social, economic and political relationships. Analysing media content however, is contentious. If audiences are active agents in the construction of meaning why should we bother to analyse content at all? A balance needs to be struck between the power of media audiences to deconstruct and resist media content and the power of media content to shape public perceptions about the world.

about femininity and masculinity. It also carries a set of hegemonic assumptions about human sexuality, but its representations pertaining to being ‘a man’ or being ‘a woman’ are not fixed entities; they, demonstrably, change over time.

This is not to say that media content is a mirror image of the realities of gender identities in the social world. The gulf between representations and reality has been much commended upon. Van Zoonen and Costera Meijer (in Devereux 2003: 131) for example, argue that:

“It is indeed easy to see that real women are much more different and more diverse than their representations in the media would seem to suggest. If media images were indeed a reflection of reality, ‘real’ women would be relatively rare in most parts of the real world, and Black, older, disabled, lesbian, fat, poor, or Third World women would be virtually nonexistent.”

Notably in response to the women’s movement and growth of feminist scholarship, conventions for representing gender in mass media have come under increasing scrutiny during the past two decades<sup>150</sup>. Up until the early nineties however, these efforts have been limited in at least two ways. First, content analyses have focused almost exclusively on women, and men’s roles in media have been implicitly viewed as unproblematic. Second, most studies have relied on mainstream sex-role theory, which assumes that mass media transmit stereotypical gender images that shape role expectations and, in turn, inform behaviour and identity. It has been stated in chapter two that sex-role theory oftentimes ignores or underemphasizes power differences between the sexes, the relational processes through which gender identity is socially constructed, and dynamic linkages between gender images and larger systems of ideology and social structure. (Sabo and Jansen 1992: 169)

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<sup>150</sup> Media professionals’ lack of knowledge of gender and development is one of the major challenges facing not only the international women’s movement, but also media professionals who have to be trained. The 1995 Beijing Conference on Women identified the media as one of the critical areas of concern for the advancement of women’s equality and development, in an era of globalisation. See the article, *Globalisation and gender training for the media: Challenges and lessons learned* (2000), wherein Patricia A. Made discusses her experience of developing gender training for media professionals. One local South African example of this growing scholarship is Lizette Rabe (2002). See her article, *Eve-olution: the status of female voice in South African media*, in which she examines the status of women in South African media, both as providers of and subjects in media. The stereotypical representation of women in news is questioned against an historical overview of women as news providers. The need to focus on gender - and specifically the position of black women - in media, is also addressed.

In history then it mostly appears, unsurprisingly, that the mass media used to be very stereotyped in its representations of gender. In his book *Media, gender and identity*, Gauntlett (2002) indicates that, as well as showing men being more active, decisive, courageous, intelligent and resourceful, television and movies also showed a much greater quantity of men, compared to women. There were exceptions, of course - it's not hard to think of the odd clever, brave, or challenging female character from the past - but these remained exceptions to the norm.

But during the early 1990's and into the new century things have been changing quite considerably. Gender roles on television became increasingly equal and non-stereotyped - within some limits - although the majority of lead characters were still male. Men and women are seen working side by side, as equals, in the hospitals, schools and police stations of television-world. Advertisers have by now realised that audiences will only laugh at images of the pretty housewife, and have reacted by showing women how to be very sexy at work instead. (Gauntlett 2002: 57)

Therefore, media representations of gender today are more complex, and less stereotyped, than in the past. Women are seen as self-reliant heroes quite often today, whilst the depiction of masculinity has become less straightforward, and more troubled. Advertising, and the broader world of stars and celebrities, promotes images of well-toned and conventionally attractive women and men. Simultaneously, gay and lesbian characters have started to gain greater acceptance within the TV mainstream, and even in some films and magazines.

Overall, then, modern media has a more complex view of gender and sexuality than ever before. The images of women and men which it disseminates today may be equally valued, but remain distinctive, and diverse.

## **6. MEDIA AND MASCULINITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXTS**

The birth of the 'new' South Africa (27 April 1994) have shifted social configurations. Identities are in the process of being renegotiated and cultural borders are being transgressed. While it

could be expected that the new political, economic and cultural situation in post-apartheid South Africa might render obsolete the old binaries of 'self' and 'other', opening up new possibilities and a variety of new themes, past oppositions have not completely disappeared. Material power relations weaken against a boundless reshaping of the cultural landscape.

Stuart Hall (1994: 393-395) contends that cultural identities can be seen as involved in a process of becoming rather than a state of being, if it is accepted that identities are not pre-given but come into being within representation. However, identity construction in post-apartheid South Africa does not only take place as creolisation<sup>151</sup> or hybridity. Exclusionary notions of identity, based on race and ethnicity, are still operative among certain sectors of post-apartheid South African society. The present South African society still suffers from the legacy of an identity-assigning colonialism and racialism<sup>152</sup> imposed by successive minority governments. (Zegeye 2001: 3)

South Africa cannot escape the era of accelerated globalisation that on the one hand impacts on the ways in which culture and identity are being conceptualised, and on the other, hegemonizes locally dominant political and societal discourses. This means that culture and identity have been privatised, commodified, branded and become a function of a distinct form of economic organisation, namely market capitalism, with profound impacts for forms of social and political order. The political and social changes that South Africa is undergoing can be viewed as mediated – by media in a broad sense, thereby including mass media, art and cultural expression. But this mediation takes place within a complex and ever-changing set of power relations, both global and local. This process is further played out on a variety of fronts, ranging from the mass media and new media to mainstream art forms such as theatre or the urban aesthetics of graffiti art, poetry, intellectual property, and *hip-hop*, *kwaito*, television and drama etc.

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<sup>151</sup> Nuttall and Michael (2000) employ the term "creolisation" to describe the cultural dynamic of post-apartheid South Africa. Creolisation, they contend, is a process whereby individuals of different cultures, languages and religions are thrown together and invent a new language, Creole, a new culture, and a new social organisation.

<sup>152</sup> Colonialism and racialism were powerful factors in forming the identities of Africans. Race in particular, and class, have been the master narratives of most South African texts in the post-apartheid context, and although there have been attempts to break with it, this seems easier said than done. While care should therefore be taken not to afford race and class over-determining importance, they remain key determinants in the formation of cultural and social identities and can therefore not be taken out of the equation completely. (Wasserman and Jacobs 2003: 17)

Lene Øverland (2003) examined the perpetuation of the dominant patriarchal ideology in advertising. She focused on advertising content and represents a snapshot case study of gender representations in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa<sup>153</sup>, and asked the following important questions: do race and class mediate messages that reflect gender and sexual stereotypes? How do members of various communities read and reflect around gendered and sexual stereotypes<sup>154</sup> and what impact do these messages have on people's lives?

Øverland's findings are based on audience research and perception analysis conducted on the basis of focus groups organised by the Women's Media Watch, a Cape Town-based media-monitoring organisation, during the second half of 2001. Further data was produced by studying advertisements in the popular magazines *You*, *Drum* and *Huisgenoot* in October 2002. The participants for the study came from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, class, sexuality, geographical location, occupation and educational background.

Working definitions of terminology such as "gender" and sexuality were dealt with as preliminary matters before the participants started analysing adverts. This also was done in order to create an understanding of sexuality in the media and the advertising industry. "Both male and female participants spoke mostly about how women were portrayed in adverts and how female sexuality was used to sell products and to communicate to people about how one should look to be cool or popular. They also questioned whether the human body was no more a private construction but rather a public satisfaction and utility maximising machine." (Øverland 2003: 271)

Models in the advertisements seemed to represent role models; people do want to look like the people in the adverts, meaning white or exotic (in most cases). Further, women want to look naturally beautiful, and men smart, sophisticated and muscular. These are some of the

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<sup>153</sup> Given the fact that non-sexism and non-racism stand side by side in the South African Constitution, it is regrettable that critical voices are not able to theorise and argue race in relation to issues such as gender and sexuality. "However current South African advertisements that portray mostly white people, and more half-naked women than fully dressed women, do not seem to take notice of the Constitution anyway." (Øverland 2003: 267). Despite the formal commitment to gender rights (referred to in earlier chapters) in the new South African Constitution (which came into effect in 1996), gender is still being sidelined or seldom regarded as being as significant as race issues.

<sup>154</sup> See e.g. Jordaan (2007: 351-370) for a responsible view on overcoming the problem of sexual stereotyping.

stereotypes, which also are closely related to body images reflected in South African advertising. The groups critically studied several magazines, hunting for images of the non-stereotypical kind, but had to conclude that current advertising reveals containment, sexualisation, beautification and objectification of the white female body. It was observed that the female body was often offered to the reader purely as a spectacle object of sight and a visual commodity to be consumed. Furthermore, more women than men were portrayed in adverts; however, when men were portrayed they were more often than women portrayed in dignifying positions.

The issue of sexual preference was also raised, especially in terms of the media demonising other sexual choices than the heterosexual. It was found that the dominant portrayals in South African advertising 'normalise' forms of passivity, dependency, beauty and domesticity for women, and control, strength, intelligence, exploitation and access to power for men. This portrayal contributes to the stereotypical, racial and gendered system where beauty, often represented by slim bodies, blond hair and blue eyes, can be viewed as a normalised discipline. (Øverland 2003: 272-273)

In some adverts it was found to be clearly evident that the underlying message seems to be that men look at women, and that women look at themselves. It seems that this has become a normalised action in a society which has defined masculinity as strong, active and in possession of the gaze, and femininity as weak, passive and to be looked at. "In other words some adverts reinforce common ideology, saying that a man will look at a woman when she adheres to the beauty ideals promoted, and maybe even invented, by the mainstream media." (Øverland 2003:277)

**In short:** Media perceptions represent practices in which the construction of gender identity takes place. The characters in advertising function as textual constructions of possible modes of femininity and masculinity: as embodying versions of gendered subjectivity, these could be fantasy models of femininity and masculinity and hence offer opportunities to the advertising agencies to try out different subjectivities that might encourage the consumer to buy their

product. *The challenge hence lies in getting the media to acknowledge the existence of the diversity of South African women and men*<sup>155</sup>.

## 7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE MEDIA

### 7.1 Theological incentives<sup>156</sup> to view films as texts of life meaning

The realms of both ‘religion’ and ‘the media’ are themselves transforming and being transformed. According to Hoover & Clark (2002: 2-3), religion today is much more a public, commodified, therapeutic and personalised set of practices than it has been in the past. At the same time the media are collectively coming to constitute a realm where important projects of ‘the self’ take place – projects that include spiritual, transcendent and deeply meaningful ‘work’. Religion and media are therefore increasingly converging, meeting on a common turf: the everyday world of lived experience. Both the sacred and secular, as traditionally conceived, can be seen to be active in both religion and the media (and specifically in films as texts of life meaning).

“A great deal of what goes on in the popular media can be (and has been) described using religious terms. Sporting events have been called ‘religious rituals’; advertising has been said to manipulate ‘sacred’ impulses; media figures have been described as evoking religious charisma.” (Hoover & Clark 2002: 4). Critics have raised concerns about the impact of such ‘secular’ phenomena on authentic, sacred, explicit religion. Religion, according to some, is thought to

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<sup>155</sup> Evidence of the media in South Africa beginning to acknowledge this diversity is evident in media such as the Nedbank television advertisement, which depicts a diverse group of South African house owners – among who a young gay (male) couple. This is the first serious and unambiguous depiction of gays in a mainstream-advertisement. For a more detailed discussion, see Wasserman (2006).

<sup>156</sup> Since the invention of motion pictures a century ago, Johnston (2000: 41) observes five differing theological responses that the church has made to film, as it has learned from and has sought to influence Hollywood. He labels these responses avoidance, caution, dialogue, appropriation, and divine encounter. According to Johnston (2000:64) there are (at least) six theological reasons why a Christian should enter into dialogue with film:

- (1) God’s common grace is present throughout human culture.
- (2) Theology should be concerned with the Spirit’s presence and work in the world.
- (3) God is active within the wider culture and speaks to us through all of life.
- (4) Images as well as words can help us to encounter God.
- (5) Theology’s narrative shape makes it particularly open to interaction with other stories.
- (6) The nature of constructive theology is a dialogue between God’s story (Bible, Christian tradition, and a particular worshiping community) and our stories (the surrounding culture and life experiences).

have a set of ‘authentic’ forms and practices, which can be experienced only directly. Revelation, prayer, private piety, worship, community, and religious instruction are each thought to have special benefits (or indeed to be accessible) only when experienced without mediation. Mediated communication is thought necessarily to intervene in such direct experience and thus detract from it, or even destroy it.

Instead of thinking of it in separated domains, media, religion and culture should be thought of as an interrelated web within society. Hoover & Lundby (1997: 3-4) asserts that “transformations in the religious cultures of the Judeo-Christian parts of the world - where religious institutions have been said to be in decline for most of the second half of the twentieth century - has taken place at a time when the institutions of the media have emerged as the most important actors in the public sphere”. The media now determine and condition access to that realm – a situation that impacts religious institutions as it does all others.

“People might share attitudes about the popular arts – that television is having a negative effect on individuals and society; that most movies aren’t worth the price of the popcorn; that pop singers and Hollywood celebrities have too much influence with young people – but these attitudes do not necessarily reflect their behaviour. The same people still go to the movies, have more than one television set in their homes, and purchase videos and CD’s.” (Romanowski 2001:30)

As image, film assumes an artist and a viewer<sup>157</sup>. As story, film assumes a speaker and a hearer. That is, although we might be watching a movie while sitting silently in a theatre, we are still part of a dialogue. For movies seek to engage us, their viewers, as whole human beings. They invite – we might almost say, demand – our response. Therefore, the “question is not what you look at, but what you see” (Henry David Thoreau, in Johnston 2000: 15)

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<sup>157</sup> According to Johnston (2000: 95) “We are now moving from a culture dominated by the printed word to one dominated by moving images”. In an increasingly visual culture film images are an important source of knowledge. It is from movies that we get our ‘collective images’ of ourselves, our values and our social world. “Movies both identify our anxieties and reveal our society’s values; they ‘tell’ us something about the age we live in” (Johnston 2000: 64)



Film is an accessible medium in which competing issues of public and private life in a pluralistic society are formulated and represented for consideration and interpretation. Films articulate a range of values, fleshing out these values in characters, and narrating the conflicts that arise as characters endeavour to live out their commitments. It can represent the most intimate and private confrontations of values, as well as the most public moments in which these values come out into the open, clash and are violently or peacefully negotiated.

Religion and film *share* an interest in, and attention to, values. The connection between film and religion has, however, not always been obvious or simple. For example, during the first decades of the twentieth century, when film was becoming increasingly popular, religion was retreating from public to private space. New media for public communication – including film and radio – reached a vastly larger audience than books and newspapers had formerly reached<sup>158</sup>. Because it affected so many more people, the new media began to “challenge ‘the interpretive monopoly of religious and state authorities’ in a way that newspapers and books had not.” (Miles 1996: 3)

“Religion...is not confined strictly to what happens in a synagogue or church but is manifested in diverse cultural formations in our society, including popular films...If we want to understand American culture, we need to study Hollywood films.” (Martin & Ostwalt 1995: vii). Films, as with other cultural forms, have the potential to reinforce, to challenge, to overturn, or to crystallize religious perspectives, fundamental values and ideological assumptions. Film is an extraordinary popular medium today, but films do much more than simply entertain. They bolster and challenge society’s norms, guiding narratives, and accepted truths.

**In short: *films can and do perform religious and critiquing functions in society.*** The cinema may function both as a *mirror* and as a *window*, but is primarily a *lens*<sup>159</sup>. We see only what the

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<sup>158</sup> Movies, television, magazines, and billboards saturate us with images, images that have cumulative effects. Exploring media images tells us something about the preoccupations of our society. As has been stated earlier, media images are one of the most pervasive means by which people receive representations of identity and diversity, relationships, and social arrangements and institutions.

<sup>159</sup> Roy Anker, in his book *Catching Light* refers to this primary function of the cinema as a lens, in another fashion. He contends: “Obviously, cinema also depends on light – in several ways. In filmmaking, catching light is the means of making a story... In other words, Light refracts through a human prism, and the filmmaker refracts that light through the lens...The medium’s greatest significance and promise lies in its capacity to ‘shed light’ on the world it

camera lets us see, and we hear only what the writer has scripted. Movies do not merely portray a world; they propagate a worldview. The worldview and values propagated by the cinema – however subtly or implicitly this may occur – must be critiqued through a posture of constructive engagement rather than a silent standoff. (Stone 2000: 6)

Very few persons, entities, organizations, institutions or powers in society today even come close to rivalling the power of film and television to shape our faith, values and behaviour. Learning to live and think as Christians in our time requires learning to engage media and culture as Christians. Together we must become aware of the power of images and find both the tools to explore and critique<sup>160</sup> these images as well as the opportunities to shape that which so thoroughly shapes us. Therefore, the relationship between film and theology cannot be solely a relationship in which theology merely uses film to illustrate or advance its own ideas.

In contemporary life in the U.S.A. the film industry is only one of many secular institutions that have challenged or begun to replace religious institutions in the scramble for societal attention and participation. In fact, it might even be argued that the movie theatre has acted like some secular religion, complete with its sacred space and rituals that mediate an experience of otherness.

“To the extent that this event allows us to transcend mundane life for a prescribed period of time, we are part of a sacred space, a sacred time, and transfixed by the experience, we are confronted by an alternative reality, a ‘not me’, an otherness... We experience (films) in darkened conditions that are a respite from the everyday world; they have the plasticity and visual form of the dream; they are ‘larger than life’ myths... *Films are to the cultural unconscious what dreams are to the personal unconscious.* That is, films tell us truths about culture that we would often rather not see; they are compensatory to what we hide from view... Films are a blend of the archetypal and the ideological” (own italics) (Ostwalt 1995: 155)

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portrays, to see that world for what it is, illumining its perils, sorrows and delights – and how all these tangle together.” (Anker 2004: 3, 13)

<sup>160</sup> Film criticism should have a different goal than simply the negative or positive evaluation of a film. It should seek to initiate a process of inquiry and reflection in order better to understand a movie. It can do this by commenting on a movie’s style and story, its structure and theme.

If this is true, films have the potential to be one of the most effective cultural vehicles for expressing beliefs and values, for they operate simultaneously on the mythic and the ideological levels, both affecting consumers unconsciously and consciously promoting or reflecting a particular value system. The movie industry as such, constitutes a popular medium and an important one to modern life; films, therefore, have the ability and potential to do more than simply entertain. It (and other cultural forms) has the potential to mirror, reinforce, challenge, create, overturn or crystallize beliefs and fears. A film can become, and sometimes does become an important vehicle or critic of society's values and accepted truths. Popular films most assuredly reflect or otherwise interact with the 'social and moral values' of the predominant culture - they not only express values and identities but can also create them.

The above-mentioned assertions do not try to suggest that the cinema has replaced the sanctuary nor that the screen has superseded the pulpit. But, however, it does suggest that the power of film "can allow movie theatres to become sanctuaries and the screen a pulpit, complete with their own rituals, sacred spaces, and heroes that influence a secular society<sup>161</sup>. As the secularization process continues, many "secular" institutions and activities are taking on the functions formerly reserved for institutionalized religious ritual – namely, self-transcendence and self-actualization." (Ostwalt 1995: 157)

When one reflects on the essence of Christian theology, it becomes clearly self-evident that it is not merely the study of Scripture text, but of worldly context<sup>162</sup>. Theology always demands an intimate familiarity with both. Given this double requirement of theology, the cinema can be an important dialogue partner for Christians who are interested in thinking seriously about their faith. "Because we are commanded by God to form and reform culture, Christians have to be actively engaged with culture: studying it, discerning positive and negative aspects, and working

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<sup>161</sup> In accordance with this contention of Ostwalt, Martin Scorsese (in Johnston 2000: 93) says: "I don't really see a conflict between the church and the movies, the sacred and the profane. Obviously, there are major differences. But I can also see great similarities between a church and a movie-house. Both are places for people to come together and share a common experience...And I believe there is a spirituality in films, even if it's not one which can supplant faith...It's as if movies answer an ancient quest for the common unconscious."

<sup>162</sup> Stone (2000:3) affirms this assertion powerfully by saying: "When we read the Bible but are not able to read the world, we risk reducing the gospel to either a weapon or a toy."

to redeem it. We are to be in the world but not of it, working to restrain evil and advance redemptive potentials.”<sup>163</sup> (Romanowski 2001: 43)

In a sense, the cinema is a source of revelation – not necessarily about the nature of God, the significance of Christ, or the path to salvation. Rather, the cinema is regularly and quite amazingly a source of revelation about ourselves and our world. “...astonishment, anguish, tears and especially laughter can show a great deal about the nature of the God who has variously whispered, sung, blinded, warmed, or rescued ordinary people as they’ve travelled their way.”<sup>164</sup> (Anker 2004: 13)

***In summary: when we explore films theologically we are busy with theology as hermeneutical space in dialogue with contemporary culture.*** In our postmodernist culture our imagination is to a large extent stimulated and formed by the media-driven culture in which we live. What we find interesting and amusing is determined by multinational corporations which earn huge amounts of money if they can give us the feeling that we desire and resonate what they present to us. We encounter this media-world (amongst others) in films, which are rich sources of theological material. As theologians we can utilize the cultural display of films as illustrations for theological reflection, insights and resources. This is also a perspective which can help us to find new ways of transmitting the Christian faith in a medialized and commercialized image culture.

***The public task of theology is therefore, amongst others, to interpret the cultural representations in our globalising culture within theological frames of reference. In terms of the aim and theme of this dissertation, films are also crucial media to analyse in order to understand male identity in a more comprehensive way.*** In many ways there are hidden religious

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<sup>163</sup> The researcher is convinced that we need to look, as Christians, at the stories that contemporary culture is telling us by learning how to discern and evaluate perspectives in these representations of life in God’s world. And as Christians we also need to create popular art that shows what it means to live everyday life in God’s world, “while others consume and eavesdrop on our contribution to the cultural conversation”...artwork can “give us insight into what it means to be a human creature living in God’s good but fallen world.” (Romanowski 2001: 19, 106)

<sup>164</sup> According to Stone (2000: 5) “The cinema reveals what we value as human beings, our hopes and our fears. It asks our deepest questions, expresses our mightiest rage, and reflects our most basic dreams....There remains in human beings a deep hunger for images, sound, pictures, music and myth. Film offers us a creative language – an imaginative language of movement and sound – that can bridge the gap between the rational and the aesthetic, the sacred and the secular, the church and the world, and thereby throw open fresh new windows on a very old gospel.”

dimensions and symbolisms in films which lay the connection between our existence as men (and women) and the Ultimate. In other words, many films represent a certain spirituality which symbolises the ultimate and projects meaning. The researcher suggests that this is in a significant way a matrix for our understanding of our selves and our identity as men (and women). *Thus, theological perspectives on the content of films can and should enrich the dimension of meaning-making and the symbolization of (male and female) identity in life*<sup>165</sup>.

## **8. EXPLORING SOME FILMS ON MASCULINITY – IMPLICATIONS FOR VIEWING MASCULINITY AS PERFORMANCE**

### **8.1 Depictions of masculinity and men in films in the 1920's and 1930's**

#### *(a) Images of men and masculinity in the 1920's*

According to Lemon (1991: 45-49), the post-war period in America, frequently referred to as “the roaring twenties”, was marked by a period of considerable prosperity and pleasure. The mass media, and especially the cinema, thus began to assume unprecedented importance both for entertainment and as the ‘backbone’ of a developing consumer culture. Images of womanhood (in the popular press and in film) were embodied by the ‘flapper’, sexually provocative and emotionally tough, the symbol of a new and exciting image for women.

Images of masculinity in the 1920's included the legendary frontiersman, who embodied an independent and virile masculinity (*Davy Crockett*, 1917), (*The Indian massacre*, 1912). Other images include the Western cowboy (*Wild Bill Hickok*, 1923), (*The Iron Horse*, 1924), and the military man (*The fighting eagle*, 1927 and *The magic flame*, 1927). These male heroes represented men of action whose rough masculinity provided early models for later male images.

However, Lemon (1991: 50) contends that even more important than Western or War films, it was in the romance genre of the twenties that the masculinity of the hero was paraded before the

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<sup>165</sup> For a further elaborate discussion, see Ganzevoort and Knegt (2004).

audience – by heroes such as Douglas Fairbanks (in *A woman of affairs*, 1928), John Barrymore (in *Don Juan*, 1926) and John Gilbert (in *Flesh and the Devil*, 1926). Another extremely popular genre was the action or adventure genre which included films such as *Tarzan of the Apes*<sup>166</sup> (1918), *The Mark of Zorro* (1920) and *Robin Hood* (1922).

In summary it can be stated that while men of the twenties (as they were represented in films) were somewhat violent, on the whole they liked women, and preferred their company to that of their male friends. In some films, men would even cry or laugh at themselves, and were not afraid to express weakness or face humiliation. In short, the male image of the twenties was marked by optimism and confidence, and no one stereotypic image of masculinity can be associated with this period. (Lemon 1991: 51)

#### ***(b) Images of men and masculinity in the 1930's***

The Great Depression (1929-1939) brought the hardening of the male image. The new male image became fiercely competitive, domineering and aggressive. In many of the popular productions of the film industry in the 1930's, the traumas of the decade were put aside, and escapist entertainment prevailed. The gangster movie, a popular genre during the Depression, featured heroes who triumphed against all odds and whose lives were a success story in a disordered society. Furthermore, the war film of the 1930's also produced a hardened male image (*Dawn Patrol*, 1930).

Many films in the thirties insisted that only total freedom from the feminizing influence of women permits a male to be truly masculine. In these films (such as *All quiet on the Western front*, 1930), male love is consummated in war and in the course of battle. Real men never succumb to weakness or emotion, retaining an air of toughness and stoicism at all times. (Lemon 1991: 51-52)

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<sup>166</sup> Altogether 42 Tarzan movies has been made form 1918-2002 (including 1918's *Tarzan of the apes*, 1928's *Tarzan the mighty*, 1929's *Tarzan the tiger*, 2002's Disney's *Tarzan and Jane*) – for more detail, see: [http://www.tarzanmovieguide.com/tarzan\\_silents.htm](http://www.tarzanmovieguide.com/tarzan_silents.htm)

The cartoon characters of *Superman*, *Flash Gordon*, *The Lone Ranger* and *Tarzan* appeared for the first time as popular masculine images during the twenties and thirties. Cowboy heroes, such as John Wayne in *Stagecoach* (1939), whose sheer power and masculine competence were the best and only defences against disorder and chaos, were also popular. But, probably the most important film of the decade, and one of the most celebrated films of all time, *Gone with the wind* was released in 1939, starring Clark Gable (as Rhett Butler) and Vivien Leigh as (Scarlett O'Hara). Butler epitomized the image of the indomitable, successful, and irresistible rogue.

By the end of the thirties many films had been made which refurbished the image of the stoical, inexhaustible male who did not experience self-doubt, or view the world as ambiguous, but was to be tall and square-jawed and almost anti-septically clean. "However, during the 1930's there was a subtle but noticeable shift in the perception of the hero. His masculinity was no longer evaluated on the basis of his ability to control situations and determine his own life, but by his ability to withstand experiences and events (i.e. *Mr Smith goes to Washington* (1939))." (Lemon 1991: 54)

## 8.2 More recent depictions of masculinity and men (in films of the 1980's-1990's)<sup>167</sup>

Discussions on gender, sexuality, representation, and the cinema over the past two decades (1980's and 1990's), has tended overwhelmingly to centre on the representation of women. Only within the gay movement have there appeared specific discussions of the representation of men. Most of these, as far as the researcher is aware, have centred on the representations and

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<sup>167</sup> For more detailed discussions on images of men and masculinity in the period between 1940-1980, see Lemon (1991). She summarizes the period from 1900-1990 as follows: "In summary, the traditional Western hero of the early 1900's, gave way to the romantic lover in the affluent twenties. During the depression, the rugged tough male image dominated the screen, the strong, silent tough hero, and continued on into the forties. After the second World War, films began to reflect a more introspective and thoughtful male image. The fifties saw the birth of the television industry and the burgeoning of a consumer culture. This brought with it images of virile, competent male heroes and the reassertion of traditional masculine values. However, the cultural and sexual revolutions of the sixties and seventies, produced considerable confusion and uncertainty, and a great deal of hostility and suspicion developed between the sexes. While traditional one-dimensional male heroes continued to be seen, some films and television programmes began to offer alternative images of masculinity. The changing images of men have culminated in the 1980's and 1990's with the emergence of the so-called new 'New Man', a sensitive, caring man, who is more in touch with his feelings and is unafraid to express his emotions, take care of children, and share household duties." (Lemon 1991: 92)

stereotypes of gay men<sup>168</sup>. Both within the women's movement and the gay movement, there is an important sense in which the images and functions of heterosexual masculinity within mainstream cinema have been left un-discussed. "Heterosexual masculinity has been identified as a structuring norm in relation both to images of women and gay men. It has to that extent been profoundly problematized, rendered visible. But it has rarely been discussed and analyzed as such." (Cohan and Hark 1993: 9)

Hollywood cinema has, in diverse ways, in the past (until the early nineties) made masculinity highly visible and central to the cultural politics of gendered representations. In the book, *Screening the Male* (Cohan and Hark 1993), several different essays make praiseworthy efforts to establish that masculinity is an effect of culture – a construction, a performance, a masquerade – rather than a universal and unchanging essence.

Yvonne Tasker (1993: 230-244), for example, explores the status of masculinity within Hollywood's representational system through an analysis of four films and their stars; namely Sylvester Stallone and Kurt Russell in *Tango and Cash* (1989); Stallone in *Lock Up* (1989); Bruce Willis in *Die Hard* (1988) and *Die Hard 2* (1990). She does this from the perspective of the marketability of the male body in a consumer culture where gender roles in the world of work are changing. The resultant anxieties, she explains, are worked out over a beleaguered male body commodified as spectacle: resorting either to images of physical torture and suffering or to comedy, the body of the hero, his excessive 'masculinity', is subjected to humiliation and mockery at some level.

Tasker asserts that these films and stars exemplify, in different ways, a tendency of the Hollywood action cinema toward the construction of the *male body as spectacle*, together with an awareness of *masculinity as performance*. "What is further evident is the continuation and amplification of an established tradition of the Hollywood cinema – play upon images of power

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<sup>168</sup> One noteworthy recent exception to this tendency to portray gay men stereotypically in films, is *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). This is a raw, powerful story of two young men, a Wyoming ranch hand and a rodeo cowboy, who meet in the summer of 1963 shepherding in the harsh, high grasslands of contemporary Wyoming. They form an unorthodox yet life-long bond - by turns ecstatic, bitter and conflicted. This film depicting a gay relationship between cowboys, prompted an avalanche of responses, especially from conservative Christian groups.



and powerlessness at the centre of which is the male hero.” (Tasker 1993: 230). That masculinity can be seen as performative, as insistently denaturalized, has been something of a touchstone in recent discussions of the Hollywood cinema. “The action cinema is often seen as the most ‘Neanderthal’, the most irredeemably macho of Hollywood products.” (Tasker 1993: 242)

Masculinity in Hollywood films of the 1980’s was largely transcribed through spectacle and bodies. Throughout this period, the male body (principally the white male body) became increasingly a vehicle of display – of musculature, of beauty, of physical feats, and of a gritty toughness. According to Jeffords (1993: 245) “External spectacle – weaponry, explosions, infernos, crashes, high-speed chases, ostentatious luxuries – offered companion evidence of both the sufficiency and the volatility of this display. That externality itself confirmed that the outer parameters of the male body were to be the focus of audience attention, desire, and politics.”

In the 1990’s, however, the emphasis on externality and the spectacle male body seemed to shift in focus. It began to give way to a presumably more internalized masculine dimension. In contrast to the physical feats of Sylvester Stallone in the *Rambo: First Blood* films, the determined competitiveness of Bruce Willis’s John McClane in the *Die Hard* films, the confrontations of Clint Eastwood’s *Dirty Harry*, the whip-cracking Harrison Ford’s *Indiana Jones* and the steely authority of *Robocop*. Recent Hollywood male star/heroes have been constructed as more internalized versions of their historical counterparts. More film time is devoted to explorations of their ethical dilemmas, emotional traumas, and psychological goals, and less to their skill with weapons, their athletic abilities, or their gutsy showdown of opponents, for example *Field of dreams* (1989), *Robin Hood* (1991), *The Doctor* (1991), *Regarding Henry* (1991), *Switch* (1991), etc. (Jeffords 1993: 245)

Other exceptions to the rule are the films *Fight Club*<sup>169</sup> and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. The American Dream and the concept of success play central roles in American depictions of male

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<sup>169</sup> According to Boon (2003: 276) (Chuck Palahniuk's novel) “Fight Club is populated with men at the end of the 20th century who are struggling to preserve their male heritage. Their opponent, the force that threatens to disavow their manhood, is not people, political movements, or authoritative institutions; it is the episteme of contemporary American culture that drives human perception. Culture cannot be escaped, only altered, so these men have laboured

accomplishment and masculinity in contemporary American culture. The authors Patricia Highsmith and Chuck Palahniuk each create subversive readings on those concepts, in these two films. Tom Ripley and *Fight Club*'s anonymous narrator and Tyler Durden, his alter ego, constitute critiques of the conventional male models and their striving for success (in America). Examining these conventions leads both authors to exploit and to re-invent the conventions.

According to Tuss (2004: 94), when one filters historic and conceptual analyses through American culture, four of its masculine images, namely: the American Dream, the Rugged Individual, the Golden Boy, and the Horatio Alger story comes to the fore and gives an indication of the contemporary debate on masculinity and success. American culture often represents itself in such iconic terms through the media, in print, and on film. And in exploring Highsmith's (1955) *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Palahniuk's (1996) *Fight Club*, insights on masculinity and success can be derived, both from the original print versions and the recent film adaptations that suggest that, while the traditional notions about masculinity and success persist in twentieth-century America, they are increasingly susceptible to the efforts of individuals who seek to recast the terms in subversive and reinterpreted forms<sup>170</sup>. The main characters Ripley and Durden stand out as significant revisions of masculine success<sup>171</sup>.

***In summary:*** It may be argued that the *mass media*, and the film and television industries in particular, have ***played a significant role in perpetuating the stereotypes and myths associated with the traditional male sex role***. In broad terms, the media have been responsible for perpetuating the "big lie" of female inferiority and thus, by implication, male superiority.

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to satisfy the two primary demands placed on them: they have tried to conquer in a world without frontiers and remain physically powerful while eschewing all violent behaviour."

<sup>170</sup> For another very insightful discussion on the film *Fight Club* and its relationship to other scripts (such as the book of Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*), see Clark, 2002. He asserts (2002: 65) that both the film (*Fight Club*) and the book (*Stiffed*) "insist that men have been emasculated by consumerism; that the post-war legacy of the so-called good life has shifted men from active, heroic, confrontational roles into the passive, ornamental roles usually assigned to women; and that, without a Great Depression, or Great War, or any other dragon to slay, emasculated men have become imprisoned in their job cubicles and possessed by their possessions, often with not only negative, but even violent repercussions." According to Clark, ecofeminism and ecotheology provide the tools for better understanding this idolatrous false god of consumerism, as well as for beginning to explore how the economics of plenty affect seemingly privileged men.

<sup>171</sup> In their examination and their re-invention, Highsmith and Palahniuk postulate new ways to view masculinity and the means whereby male behaviour merits respect and recognition. In the process, both authors and the main characters in their novels (and subsequently in the films) provide an enriched context in which to consider what it means to be male and what constitutes success in contemporary America.

However, in recent years, the media have also begun to provide alternative roles and images for men. While the majority of films tend to provide unprecedented support for the traditional, hyper-masculine macho image, since the 1970's an ever increasing number of films and television programmes have begun to challenge some of the traditional conceptions of masculinity, imaging men as capable of being sensitive and caring, giving rise to e.g. the 'New Man' image of the 1990's (and many images after that, which will be discussed here below).

## 9. THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES

### 9.1 Recent typifications of men and masculinities

In the early 1980's new visual representations of masculinities appeared in advertising and on television. The male body-form started to be eroticized and objectified in ways that had previously been applied to the female body, henceforth the commercial exploitation of men-as-sex-objects became very big business. The voyeuristic sexualisation of the female body (and its packaging as visual erotica<sup>172</sup>), was now transferred to the male body, ultimately in order to sell it.<sup>173</sup> Appearance and possessions became vehicles that could give off meanings. It was the growth point for a renewed consumerism and the niche-marketing of a sensuous imagery of young, affluent masculinity. According to Beynon (2002: 108-109) the new, glossy men's style magazines were the principal vehicle for this commercial project based on male narcissism. For this reason the impact of these men's style magazines<sup>174</sup> - as principle vehicle for this commercial project - will be analysed empirically and discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>172</sup> The effects of this commercial exploitation of men and women as sex-objects and the concomitant voyeuristic sexualisation of their bodies (with its packaging as visual erotica), is evaluated critically by Du Preez (2007: 249-260). She affirms: "*Erotica has become a powerful commodity*, especially in a world where the senses and sensuality are increasingly retrieved and mediated by the technological media...The erotic, which is about fictional and visual material that awaken sexual desires, is now transmitted via appearance and images. *These images simulate the erotic and the bottom line thereof is not necessarily erotic fulfilment, but it much rather creates the need to consume more commodities in order to fill the void that was left by the erotic.*" (2007: 249). Later Du Preez (2007: 258) illuminates the fact that the media-saturated reality in which we live, eradicates the possibility of an encounter with an erotic other. "*The erotic images that seductively glisten from magazine covers, is merely a simulation of an erotic encounter with the other, whilst that which is desired continuously here is, the Self.*" (own translation out of Afrikaans and own italics and bold).

<sup>173</sup> See Culbertson (1998) for some indication as to why it has mostly been the female (and not the male) body that was/is presented as exotic and fascinating to scrutinize and imagine.

<sup>174</sup> One of the most recent and inclusive additions to the discussion of men's lifestyle magazines is Betham Benwell's edited collection *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle magazines* (Benwell, 2003). The collection highlights

Young men were being sold images which damage traditional icons of masculinity. They were stimulated to look at themselves and other men as objects of consumer desire. They were getting pleasures previously branded taboo or feminine. According to Beynon (2002: 98) "a new bricollage of masculinity was the noise coming from the fashion house, the marketplace and the street." The 1980's also witnessed a change in the politics of looking as the 'male-on-male' gaze joined the 'male-on-female' (along with female-on-male and even female-on-female) as socially acceptable, especially among young, fashionable metropolitan men with high disposable incomes.<sup>175</sup>

In the past twenty years (from the early 1980's) several new trends and concepts were coined in the popular culture's view of manhood and masculinity. One of the first of these was the term 'yuppie' (although the term 'yuppie' was also applicable to women, its connotations were - and remain - essentially masculine). The typical 'yuppie' was a conspicuous consumer and had a ruthless determination to be regarded as successful. Whether it was property, cars, clothes or personal artifacts, consumption was a dominant feature of the yuppie lifestyle.

According to Tim Edwards (2006: 39) more recent attention to the question of men's lifestyle magazines has been concerned mostly with the perceived shift from New Man to New Lad

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the growing sense in which the field of analysis of men's lifestyle magazine is both expanding and diversifying. While sticking with the overall iconography of the New Man and the New Lad, the volume also illustrates the growing tension between perspectives providing an analysis of men's lifestyle magazines as specific cultural texts and those concerned more with men's magazines as a general cultural phenomenon. The volume also raises some newer dimensions. For instance, a number of authors highlight the increasing sense in which cultural intermediaries such as editors and advertisers may play a key role in developing the direction, and indeed identity of any given magazine more widely.

<sup>175</sup> The feminist movement initially explicated the power of the "male gaze" on the way women perceive themselves and allow themselves to be perceived by men and other women. The rise of the men's movement(s) has led to an increasing interest in how men in the post-feminist age define themselves. Still, while many writers on masculinity deal with the relationship between feminism and masculine identity, few investigate overtly the role played in male identity by the female "gaze." Goddard (2000) examines the influence of the "female gaze" on the construction of masculinity. He attempts to show (2000: 23) that masculine identity cannot be interpreted separate from the image of men projected by, or perceived to be projected by, women. Using examples from literature, popular culture, and gender theory, he argues that men's identities are closely tied to their perceptions of what they think women expect of them. Goddard suggests that one way of overcoming the power struggle inherent in gender stereotyping is to rethink the gender-based role of language itself. According to Culbertson (1998) we know a fair amount about what happens when the heterosexual male gaze is turned upon women. The victims of that gaze are increasingly finding their own voices and refusing to submit to objectification. But he asks further important questions: what happens when the heterosexual male gaze is turned upon another heterosexual male? What happens when a heterosexual male turns his own gaze upon himself?

iconography<sup>176</sup> as “a *prima facie* example of ‘what’s going on with men and masculinity today’ or, more simply, as a potential response to second-wave feminism.” Moreover, Edwards (2000) distinguishes between what he identifies as three contemporary versions of masculinity in Britain, the ‘old man’, ‘new man’ and the ‘new lad’. All three ideal types are media-created and media-driven inventions with its chief objective to make money.

These ideal types can be described as follows:

- (1) The ‘*old man*’ is married and has an ordinary job. He remains somewhat sexist and homophobic in mind-set, and is quite oblivious to fashion trends. In essence he lives with nostalgia for a bygone era.
- (2) The ‘*new man*’<sup>177</sup> is narcissistic, progressive and ambivalent in his sexuality, yuppie-influenced and generally anti-sexist. For him, everything centres around health and appearance, and is perceived as having a love affair with clothes, cars and possessions. When he first appeared on the scene he was viewed as the same old man, but in designer clothing. He is very willing to market and display the newest fashions as well as the emotional side of his human nature<sup>178</sup>, and appears to be a revolutionary in his relations with women.
- (3) The ‘*new lad*’ can be described as a commercial product of the 1990’s (and specifically associated with the magazine *Loaded*), who symbolised the resurrection of the historical figure of ‘Jack-the-lad’, a rowdy young man enjoying life to the full. The ‘new lad’ is ambivalent in his attitude towards women (he has pornographic notions of them rather than relationships with them) and he believes (as a typical hedonist) life should be one

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<sup>176</sup> Edwards (2003: 132) contends that men’s magazines are, it seems, “all about sex, booze and fags” revealing a raft of blatant front cover images of scantily clad young women and headlining of articles concerning sex or alcohol – induced practical jokes. Images of cigarette smoking are also common, whilst male homosexuality is either rarely or poorly represented. In addition, New Lad, in contrast with New Man, is often deeply concerned not to appear ‘faggy’ or effeminate and the tobacco, alcohol and sex industries are well represented in terms of the advertising space they occupy. Edwards deconstructs this phenomenon and demonstrates that contemporary men’s magazines often invoke issues of lifestyle and sexuality, particularly as they relate to masculinity. Much of this also centres, he asserts, “on their uneasy relationship to matters of men’s fashion and style.”

<sup>177</sup> According to Beynon (2002: 165) the term ‘new man’ has often been used in at least two senses. “In the first, originating in the 1970s, the new man is a pro-feminist (the ideology-led ‘nurturer’ tradition), attempting to put his ‘sharing and caring’ beliefs into practice in his daily life. In the second sense, originating in the 1980s, he is a hedonist, seeking out the latest fashions and taking a great interest in grooming and appearance (the consumerism-led ‘narcissist’ tradition).” Beynon contends that these two have more recently become closely linked in a vague, generalized ‘new man-ism’.

<sup>178</sup> The ‘new man-as-nurturer’ was a response to feminism, to male consciousness-raising and the activities of men’s groups and male and female intellectuals. Widely criticized as being middle class, elitist, ‘western-centric’ and remote from the lived experience of ordinary men, the stereotypical image of the anti-sexist, caring, sharing man nevertheless gained power and validity.

huge alcohol and drug-induced party. His attitude towards fashion can be described as aversive and resistive.

While there appears to be universal agreement that masculinity has changed considerably during the last two decades (1980's and 1990's), there is, seemingly, no longer any clear consensus as to what the 'new man' actually stands for. How deep or common was the change he initiated? Was it a media-driven illusion of change or a real change in the consciousness and behaviour of men? Has masculinity just become something which is now sold and is a 'design-driven' or 'branded'<sup>179</sup> affair, or is this proof of an actual transformation in masculinity? Was the commodification of masculinity a genuine development in the nature of masculinity and an advance in sexual politics, or just a savage marketing tool?

As it has been stated earlier (in footnote above), Beynon (2002) asserts that the two lines of thought on the 'new man'<sup>180</sup> have been woven together in the public mind into a vague and generalised '*new man-ism*'. The only defining feature that one can point to with any degree of certainty is that he is undoubtedly not the 'old man', his father.

"The present-day young have all been touched by this new man-ism in one form or another. Conveyed by television, film, pop songs, radio, advertising and the press, as well as in everyday social interaction, new man-ism remains a highly pervasive and masculine 'message' (Ian Harris 1995), one that bombards men in various forms from all angles." (Beynon 2002: 120-124)

## 9.2 Interpreting discourses and images from men's magazines

It has been stated that the emergence of the style media for men was arguably among the most prominent features of popular culture in the 1980's and 1990's. In the press pages diverse and mobile masculinities were created: in both layout and content these were new kinds of magazines for new kinds of men. They constituted a new commercial project and served as lifestyle manuals offering new ways of placing men-in-the-mirror (Edwards 1997). Men in the 1980's were probably not changing because of sexual politics, but through commercial pressures. Lifestyle magazines for men are a relatively new occurrence, mostly launched in the early

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<sup>179</sup> Here underneath the concept 'branded masculinity' will be discussed in more detail.

<sup>180</sup> See also Lemon (1991: 190-193) for more information on the so-called 'new man' in the mass media.

1990's. These magazines had 'a lot more to do with new markets for the constant reconstruction of masculinity through consumption' (Edwards 1997: 82).

Various ideas of manhood are conveyed by the magazines, some of it is simply mainstream vehicles for old-fashioned sentiments and 'soft porn' pleasures, whilst others are offering new models of male identity to modern men. Although not all men read these magazines, and every person who does look at them will make a selective reading, the magazines are nevertheless a 'significant site' for discourses of masculinity<sup>181</sup>, which are reflected, reproduced and perhaps even manipulated on their pages. ***These magazines<sup>182</sup>, thus increasingly become significant mediums through which masculinity is portrayed and represented in today's culture.***

Gauntlett (2002), in his analysis of the men's lifestyle magazines like *FHM*, *Loaded*, *Front*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Arena* and *Men's Health*, has argued against the view that these magazines represent a reassertion of old-fashioned masculine values, or a 'backlash' against feminism. According to him certain pieces in the magazines might support such an argument, but this is not their primary purpose or selling point. Instead, he suggests, "their existence and popularity shows men rather insecurely trying to find their place in the modern world, seeking help regarding how to behave in relationships, and advice on how to earn the attention, love and respect of women and the friendship of other men." (Gauntlett 2002: 180)

Therefore, although the magazines' conceptions of gender seem remarkably narrow, he nevertheless argues that their "playfulness and their (usually) cheerful, liberal attitude to most things – apart from the occasional nasty sting of homophobia – suggests that some fluidity of

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<sup>181</sup> Discourse – broadly, and very simply put - means 'a way of talking about things' within a particular group, culture or society; or a set of ideas within a culture which shapes how we perceive the world. When the researcher refers to 'the discourse of men's magazines', for example, he is referring to the ways in which men's magazines typically talk about men (and women and social life), and the assumptions that they commonly deploy. In this chapter some of these will be analysed critically. This practice can be termed as "Critical Discourse Analysis" (CDA), and provides "an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance" (Van Dijk 1993: 282). It involves the analysis of linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, textual structures, and punctuation to reveal hidden ideological assumptions on which discourse is based (Fairclough 1992).

<sup>182</sup> According to Lemon (1991: 183) today's popular magazines, advertising, hard- and soft-core pornography, are all saturated with images of masculinity as some type of insatiable sexual appetite. The mass media play a significant, if not dominant, role in perpetuating this dimension of the traditional male sex role. Images of male virility, and sexual representations of the power of the phallus as the ultimate symbol of male sexuality and power, proliferate in the mass media.

identities is invited. Furthermore, the humour and irony found throughout these publications doesn't hide a strong macho agenda, but conceals the nervousness of boys who might prefer life to be simpler, but are doing their best to face up to modern realities anyway." (Gauntlett 2002: 180).

In the light of the above-mentioned conclusions the researcher will henceforth present a more detailed look at where some of these magazines come from (specifically *Men's Health*), and what their main content denote, in order to ascertain whether assumptions like Gauntlett's hold truth or not?

### **9.2.1 Some British men's magazines**

In Britain's culture the popular image of masculinity is largely defined by their men's magazines. A decade ago, one would have had to qualify that statement in terms of hetero- and homosexual definitions of masculinity, because of the difference between their respective representations of the male body. But over the last decade (1990-2000), advertising, which is always concerned with seduction and with creating authentic freedom, has gradually undermined the white heterosexual male's defensiveness and "persuaded him to shine like his homosexual counterpart." (Sharkey 2000: 170)

British men's magazines are increasingly full of photographs of semi-naked young women. This trend was established shortly after the 1980's advertising trend for the objectification of the male body (as was noted here above). Magazines – like *Arena*, *Loaded*, *FHM*, *GQ* and *Esquire* – now feature scantily clad women on their covers, and on several of their editorial pages. These magazines are now openly flirting with pornography in ways that would have been unthinkable even in the early 1990's. Imelda Whelehan (in Gauntlett 2002: 152) argues that magazines like *Loaded*, *FHM* and *Maxim* are an attempt to override the message of feminism, promoting a laddish world where women are sex objects, and changes in gender roles can be dismissed with an ironic joke.



The remarkable financial success of these above-mentioned magazines has led to other areas of the media to follow a similar trend. Television, newspapers, women's magazines, advertising, and the Internet are all increasingly loaded with soft-core imagery. What all this naked female embodiments seem to indicate, however, is a deep crack in the heterosexual British male's self-image. For all their rampant flaunting of macho attitudes, and the supposedly ironic postures which accompany them, men's magazines are desperately trying to mask the poverty of contemporary masculinity. (Sharkey 2000: 173)

### **9.3 *Men's Health Magazine (MHM)* – something different (or not!?)**

The only other international men's magazine not mentioned here above is *Men's Health* magazine (MHM). This magazine regularly features semi-naked men, instead of women, on the cover. It has a broader assignment than its title suggests, and is perhaps the publication which most closely parallels women's lifestyle magazines. The main focus of MHM is mainly on the body and appearance of men, featuring fitness routines, healthy eating and ways to lose weight. It connects with that version of the 'new man' in whom fitness and appearance are high on the list of responsibilities and, in the process, strongly echoes the nineteenth century physical culture tradition and the self-improvement ethic. With the right fitness routine and diet, MHM readers can attain not only a new body, but a new identity: cool, sophisticated and smart.

There is also a strong strand of psychology in MHM, including a lot of advice on positive thinking, improving self-esteem and using mental techniques for success. It furthermore includes articles on how to keep passion and romance alive in relationships – formerly the exclusive task of women's magazines – and sexuality advice, from erection problems to advanced techniques. This useful, everyday advice for the professional man is conveyed in a 'matey-pubby' style on what are perceived as 'men's matters' (for example, how to hold a drink or how to avoid being 'stabbed in the back' etc.). In the USA, the magazine has generated a junior version, MH-18 – advertising "Tons of useful stuff for teenage guys" – a complete lifestyle guide for young men.

Gauntlett (2002: 163) summarises MHM in the following way:

*What people think it is:* Health and fitness information for men.

*What is really is:* A clever ‘masculine’ packaging of everything that women’s magazines are expected to be about – looks, sexuality, relationships, diets, psychology and lifestyle.

*Men’s Health Ideal man:* Supremely fit and good in bed, knowledgeable, considerate. *Men’s Health’s* ideal man is everybody’s healthy man – although this is potentially intimidating.

### 9.3.1 A closer look at men’s health

According to the WHO (World Health Organization), ‘health’ can be defined as “a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”<sup>183</sup> Therefore health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living. It is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities.

Men’s health has increasingly exercised the attention of the media during the 1990’s. *It has been argued that macho attitudes and health do not mix* and that, in a health sense, men are the ‘weaker’ sex (Sabo and Gordon 1995)<sup>184</sup>. Courtenay (2000b) suggests that there is a link between the construction of masculinity, male power and unhealthy behaviour, asserting: “By successfully using unhealthy beliefs and behaviors to demonstrate idealized forms of masculinity, men are able to assume positions of power – relative to women and less powerful men – in a patriarchal

<sup>183</sup> Source: WHOTERM (the WHO Terminology Information System)

<sup>184</sup> *World-wide reports* of increasing stress, declining fertility, Viagra, rising obesity, prostate and testicular cancer, ignorance of their bodies and a marked reluctance to visit the doctor - all have fuelled the growing debate about the state of men’s health and what to do about it. *In Australia* it is reported that men have higher mortality rates and suffer from more serious and chronic illnesses than women (Woods, 2002). *In America* all 15 of America’s most common diseases claim the lives of more men than women (Cowley, 2003). Men are also at greater risk (two more than women) to be killed and murdered. American men are also 4-6 times more likely to commit suicide than women (Miller, 2003). *In South Africa* the Department of Health confirms this trend by stating that 79% of suicides in SA are male (statistical notes from the Non-Natural Mortality Surveillance System, NMSS, 2000). An article in the (South African newspaper) *Sunday Times* (on April 6th, 2003) “The weaker sex”, reports that disorders such as autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorders are predominantly male (Anthony, 2003). Substance use and abuse as well as other addictive disorders are also more prevalent in men (Clare, 2000). Furthermore, 28% of South African males 15 years and older are dependent on alcohol, as compared to 10% of females. (SA Demographic and Health Survey, 1998). According to Watson (2000: 17) “**Recent health statistics for the UK** paint a depressing picture. They show that women live five years longer than men...A prevailing explanation for such differences, among health professionals, is that poor men’s health results from their trying to live up to a macho image and that male lifestyles are dangerous to health.” *The ironic problem remains that stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about masculinity give rise to risk taking behaviour and a reluctance to ask for help. Help seeking is seen as a sign of weakness.*

society that rewards this accomplishment” (Courtenay 2000b: 1397). The idea that men act in ways that damage their health to gain power and privilege, has profound implications both for gender equality and for health promotion.

In this regard Sabo (2004) highlights the irony in the fact that the lives of two of the best-known actors who portrayed the heroic figure<sup>185</sup> *Superman*, ended in tragic collapses. George Reeves, who starred in the original black-and-white television show, committed suicide, and Christopher Reeve, who portrayed the “man of steel” in recent film versions, was paralyzed by an accident during a high-risk equestrian event.

“Perhaps one lesson to be learned here is that, behind the cultural facade of mythic masculinity, men are vulnerable...Some of the cultural messages sewn into the cloak of masculinity can put men at risk for illness and early death. A sensible preventive health strategy for the 1990s calls upon men to *critically evaluate the Superman legacy, that is, to challenge the negative aspects of traditional masculinity that endanger their health, while hanging on to the positive aspects of masculinity and men’s lifestyles that heighten men’s physical vitality.*” (own italics and bolded part) (Sabo 2004: 330-331).

It should furthermore be noted that there are substantial differences between the health options of homeless men, working-class men, lower-class men, gay men, men with HIV, prison inmates, men of colour, and their comparatively advantaged middle- and upper-class, white professional male counterparts. Therefore, current debates on the issue of men’s health should pay ample attention to unique and personal accounts and perceptions of maleness.

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<sup>185</sup> According to Boon (2005) the hero figure is the oldest and most prevalent of all character types, dating from antiquity (Gilgamesh) and remaining to this day the dominant figure in contemporary American narrative (cf. Tyler Durden, central character in *Fight Club*). Thus, the mythic figuration of the hero thrives in contemporary American culture, functioning as both an unattainable ideal against which contemporary masculinity is measured and a mythic means of assuring survival. “This figuration places contemporary men in a double bind, or paradox, which offers two alternatives: (1) reject traditional definitions of masculine behaviour and risk being labelled by culture as less than a man, or (2) embrace the testosterone-based behaviours that define the hero figure and pursue the impossible acquisition of superhuman qualities, a goal that by its nature must result in failure.” (Boon 2005: 301)

According to Watson (2000) this is precisely what is lacking, namely the presence of knowledge grounded in the everyday experiences of men themselves. “I will be suggesting that current medical and social debate around men’s health is undermined and under-informed by a failure to explore men’s perceptions of health and maleness as a personal, cultural and social phenomenon.” (Watson 2000: 2) He asserts that the understanding of individual-level everyday experience illuminates the working-out of broader social forces. Watson subsequently sets out to explore the basic premise behind the challenge that masculinity is intrinsically damaging to men’s health. He does so by developing a theoretical and empirical exposition of an embodied approach to men’s health.

“This approach suggests that embodied experience of masculinity is central to understanding the limits and potential of social, political and economic transformations on the individual.” (Watson 2000: 3). *True masculinity and men’s bodies are therefore intimately linked with health, providing the focal point of self-construction as well as health construction.* But, within the parameters of professional understanding, male embodiment remains largely ‘unproblematic’, fixed and immutable. In response, Watson seeks to illuminate something of the nature of male embodiment and its relationship to health, culture and identity. “I would support the notion that one is, in fact, advocating a ‘sociology of embodiment’ rather than a ‘sociology of the body’”. (Watson 2000:5)

**In short, then:** although health has not conventionally been a male concern, the shared concept of men’s health within the public domain has progressively started developing in the past few years. One of the leading contributors in the development of this concept is Men’s Health Magazine (MHM). Henceforth, in the light of its above-mentioned essential relevance, the researcher justifies the following empirical analysis and discussion - which will explicate this magazine’s role in this regard.

### **9.3.2 The harmful roots of hegemonic masculinity in MHM’s focus**

The main discourses of MHM are based on some ideological assumptions. In the article, *Health and the social construction of masculinity in Men's Health magazine*, Arran Stibbe (2004) critically analyzed six issues of Men's Health (June-December 2000) to reveal these ideological assumptions. The evidence that is presented suggests that "Men's Health magazine, while giving abundant health advice, does so in a way that reproduces a type of hegemonic masculinity associated not with health, but with a variety of negative health behaviors." (2004: 31)

According to Stibbe (2004: 33) "hegemonic masculinity is reproduced through discourses that make it seem natural, inevitable, and morally right that men behave in particular ways." Hegemonic masculinity is mostly embodied in heterosexual, highly educated European American men of upper-class economic status. To its commercial advantage, MHM is aimed at exactly this group. But, hegemonic discourses both can be and are challenged through counter discourses, such as the discourse of feminism, which offers a means to challenge some of the aspects of hegemonic masculinity that lead to negative health behaviour. The problem is however, Stibbe argues, that MHM is steeped in traditional masculine ideology and fails to challenge the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the interest of health.

MHM appears to have a masculinist agenda of power and is therefore in an anomalous position. It is written for the men who are most exposed to and have most to gain from the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, and it has an openly admitted agenda of promoting "the traditional view". In contrast, traditional masculinity has been shown to involve a large number of negative health behaviours, such as excessive alcohol consumption and risky behaviour.

Stibbe's detailed analysis is done within a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. The CDA focused on the interaction of three aspects: (1) the discursive construction of masculinity in the magazine through the creation of images of the ideal man, (2) the magazine's role in reproducing male power, and (3) men's health behaviour, particularly certain negative health behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity (Stibbe 2004: 34-35). He highlights several aspects of the ideal man constructed by MHM, ideals which appear to go beyond simple health considerations. These 6 ideals are (the ideal man as): a bodybuilder; a meat eater; a beer drinker; a convenience food eater; a sexual champion and a television watcher. For the purpose of this

dissertation, the researcher will just briefly refer to the ‘body builder’ and ‘sexual champion’ aspects, respectively.

### *The ideal man as a bodybuilder*

What does the ideal male look like? How can he use his body to prove that he endorses hegemonic masculinity? Some researchers<sup>186</sup> have found that most boys and men from 5 years old through college age want the “muscle man” look: a wide, well-developed chest, strong arms and shoulder muscles, and a tapering to a narrow waist. MHM provides a graphic insight into how the ideal physical image of manliness is depicted at the start of the twenty-first century, denoting health, strength fitness and energy connotative of material success. But above all else, the MHM male body is celebrated as an object to be admired and enjoyed.

Stibbe (2004: 37) contends that the *primary goal of the magazine*, established through imperatives, *is increasing muscle size*. The ideal body shape is reflected by the “cover models”, a group of identically shaped men – hugely muscular, lean, tanned, body hair shaved etc. If men compete with each other for power according to muscle size, men as a group triumph over women. The construction of the ideal man as hugely muscular<sup>187</sup> therefore serves the ideological goal of reproducing male power<sup>188</sup>. But, Stibbe indicates that ideals of muscularity can lead to steroid use, negative body image, eating disorders, and the recently occurring ‘muscle dysmorphia’ disorder<sup>189</sup> in bodybuilders.

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<sup>186</sup>cf. Mishkind et al., 1986. “The Embodiment of Masculinity: Cultural, psychological, and behavioral dimensions.”

<sup>187</sup> See, e.g. McCreary, Saucier, and Courtenay (2005) who found that men who wanted to be more muscular were experiencing conflict with regard to society’s expectations that they be successful, powerful, and competitive, and they reported that finding a balance between work and leisure is difficult.

<sup>188</sup> Michael Messner (1988) asserts that muscularity in men is seen as a sign of power over women and other men who exhibit different masculinities, in part because strength is linked with skill, aggression, and violence – that is, with hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, for young boys and men, just having a strong body is often not sufficient to claim masculinity. Male ballet dancers also have strong bodies, yet people are not quick to endorse their masculinity. Men must also engage in appropriate activities to achieve this coveted label. These activities must be physically demanding (in order to support the idea of male physical superiority), must have clearly marked outcomes and goals, and must be competitive.

<sup>189</sup> **Muscle dysmorphia** is a very specific case of *body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)*, sometimes referred to as bigorexia or reverse anorexia nervosa. Individuals with this disorder become obsessed with not being muscular enough, constantly check themselves in a mirror; become distressed if a gym session is missed, or take potentially dangerous drugs (e.g. anabolic steroids), neglecting jobs/relationships/family due to exercising. However, to be diagnosed as muscle dysmorphic they must exhibit symptoms of the type and degree outlined in the DSM-IV-TR for BDD, not merely appear over-interested in their physique or engage in behaviours other people would find unrealistic. Researchers indicate that the incidence of these type of disorders among men is on the rise (see Bordo 1999: 218). Empirical evidence suggests that ideals of masculinity are affecting men’s and boys’ understanding of their self-images and behaviours negatively. Pope (et al. 2000:6) coined the term “**the Adonis Complex**” to describe “an array of usually secret, but surprisingly common, body image concerns of boys and men.” These concerns range from a preoccupation with building muscles, eliminating fat, using anabolic steroids, binge eating, hair loss and penis

If the most desirable or ideal male body is strong-looking and big, then the question should be asked: why are bigness and strength such key components of this desirable body? Why not shortness or a smaller body build? It seems that bigness and body strength constitute the main ways in which the power of men becomes 'naturalized', i.e. seen as part of the order of nature (Connell 1995). Boys and men may also have learned that having a strong body provides security. They often settle disagreements with each other by means of physical aggression and are given implicit permission to do so.

### ***The ideal man as a sexual champion***

MHM, in accordance with most men's magazines, is written as if all its readers were heterosexual. Although the male body is celebrated as an object to be admired and enjoyed, "in MHM's 'politics of looking' a careful course must be charted to steer clear of the homosexual and promote the desirability of heterosexuality." (Beynon 2002: 126). It seems that MHM's front covers is also assembled so that masculine-on-masculine looking is permitted and encouraged in a way which strictly conforms to the template of mainstream heterosexuality (see the analysis following here underneath). Therefore, good quality heterosexual sex is another of the goals set up by the magazine. But the goal is not just quality sex but "tons of sex," with quantity also highlighted (Stibbe 2004: 47).

Research – see Courtenay (2000a: 101) - indicates that men are more likely to be sexually active, to have more sexual partners, and to have sex under the influence of alcohol than women. This makes the percentage of men at high risk for STD's, double that of women. In all instructions (analysed through CDA) on the best ways to have sex, and in all the stories and descriptions of great sex, condoms are never mentioned, creating a positive image of unsafe sex.

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size. Pope (et al. 2000) conclude that the significant number of boys and men suffering from BDD, particularly as manifest in muscle dysmorphia, is due in large part to the media-generated images of the "supermale" - fueled by the portrayal of overly fit characters of unattainable musculature in children's cartoons, such as G.I. Joe or Batman - combined with the male body industries that seeks profits built on male insecurities. According to Olivardia (et al. 2000) muscle dysmorphia is most common in males and often starts in the late teens - the average onset age being 19.4 years. It most often occurs in those who are already considered by others to be muscular and is often accompanied by depression. Alexander (2003: 539) contends "Girls have long dealt with unrealistic body expectations, with struggling to remake the body seen in the mirror into a tall, ultra-slim, large-breasted Barbie doll; boys now experience a similar gap between the reality seen in the mirror and the hypermuscular G.I. Joe action-figure image found in popular culture." These supermales not only in male action figures but also in sports, video games, movies, advertisements, and the escalating number of magazines such as *Men's Health* that serve men's body concerns.

***In summary:*** Stibbe (2004) discusses several areas within MHM that, while being inessential to health itself, seem to involve ideological agendas more closely related to the reproduction of male power and domination<sup>190</sup>. The main discourses of the magazine reinforces the attachment of symbolic importance to areas such as muscle size, alcohol tolerance, sports, and violence, which due to biological factors, men have advantages over women.

“The magazine tells readers what they want to hear at a time when hegemonic masculinity is being challenged by messages that red meat is harmful, excess alcohol is dangerous, convenience food is unhealthy, sexism is unacceptable, and animals have rights. And the reassuring advice, ostensibly backed up by the authority of science, comes from the mouth of a trusted buddy.” (Stibbe 2004: 49)

***The discourse of traditional masculinity is encouraging men to act destructively in the name of male power and privilege over women.*** The presence of men’s health (and of a magazine bearing that name) on newsstands and television broadcasts suggests the progressive increase of a shared public realisation of men’s health. “However, to truly address men’s health needs, all participants in the creation of this concept will need to challenge the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and work toward the social construction of a new, healthier form of masculinity.” (Stibbe 2004: 49)

### **9.3.3 The ideal man further defined**

Mention has earlier been made (in chapter 2) that ample evidence exists that a gender ideal<sup>191</sup> is socially constructed in a specific historical and cultural context, and that it changes over time and

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<sup>190</sup> See also Whitton (2001: 99-104), who indicates that the main discourses in MHM espouses a hegemonic masculinity that attempts to reconcile aspects of the ‘traditional’ man with those of the ‘new age’ man, with the final ‘product’ being at times confusing if not contradictory.

<sup>191</sup> According to Alexander (2003: 537) a gender ideal is formed by the shared beliefs or models of gender that a majority of society accepts as appropriate masculinity or femininity, and gender display is the variety of ways in which we reveal, through our verbal and nonverbal demeanour, that we fit in with masculine and feminine ideas.



according to environment. The construct of an ideal masculinity is influenced by a number of intervening factors, such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality, age and religion.

As boys and men consume popular culture and advertisements, they also consume the masculine gender ideals associated with certain specific products. Susan Alexander (2003: 540) contends that many advertisers and producers may unintentionally promote specific forms of gender socialization, but MHM's explicit goal is seemingly to shape the reader's views of masculinity in order to transform modern men into postmodernist consumers. Thus, male gender role resocialization *becomes* the product.

Alexander (2003: 535-554) examines a postmodernist construct of masculinity in which *male identity is based on consumption*, a traditional role for women, *rather than production*. She drew data for this qualitative content analysis from a sample of (USA) *Men's Health* magazines. Analysis of the front covers, stories and features, an advice column, and advertisements reveals a construct that she identifies as "branded masculinity". Branded masculinity is rooted in consumer capitalism wherein corporate profit can be enhanced by generating insecurity about one's body and one's consumer choices and then offering a solution through a particular corporate brand. The image of masculinity constructed purposely to sell a brand-name product also shapes the way men see themselves and others. "The form of branded masculinity found in *Men's Health* constructs muscles combined with a fashion sense and the appearance of financial success as the necessary characteristics for a real man today." (Alexander 2003: 535)

### **9.3.4 Messages in the bodies of men in MHM's focus**

Contemporary popular culture's work on gender images often focuses on the visual display of the passive body, with the audience giving meaning to the images. By contrast, Bordo (1999: 186) finds that images are active – they speak to us and seduce us. These images are suffused with subjectivity and exert considerable power over us – over our psyches, our desires, our self-image.

Bordo (in Alexander 2003: 539) examines the way in which male bodies speak to us today, particularly in popular culture. She identifies two messages in the bodies of men in magazine advertisements, “*face-off masculinity*” and “*the lean*”. **Face-off** masculinity occurs when the male models stare coldly at the viewer, defying the observer to view them in any other way than how they present themselves as powerful, armoured, emotionally impenetrable. **The lean** describes a body that is reclining, leaning against or propped up against something – a pose that is more typical in women’s imagery - not passive; but actively inviting the viewer to linger over the body. Bordo attributes the growing problematic with men’s bodies to the ever-widening sphere of contemporary consumerism, asserting that both messages (*face-off* and *the lean*) share the function of selling products to consumers.

## 9.4 South African MHM – an empirical analysis

### 9.4.1 Introduction

In the year 2005 *Men’s Health* was voted South Africa’s best men’s magazine for the fifth consecutive year<sup>192</sup> (see the January 2005 issue cover page’s main feature in Addendum A). The success of this relatively new men’s magazine (in South Africa) focusing on fashion, health and lifestyle, suggests that it is apparently providing its readership<sup>193</sup> with a view of masculinity that is more appealing than that presented in traditional men’s magazines.

According to the South African distributor’s (Touchline Media) website<sup>194</sup>:

“Men's Health is the largest male magazine brand in the world<sup>195</sup>, committed to helping men gain control of their physical, mental and emotional lives by focusing on five core areas - health,

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<sup>192</sup> In South Africa two new Afrikaans magazines on the issue of manhood and masculinity have seen the light quite recently. One is *Maksiman* (<http://www.carpediem.co.za/maksiman.php>) and the other *Manwees* (released in July 2006 – <http://www.manwees.co.za>)

<sup>193</sup> The magazine was launched in May 1997 in South Africa. In August 2006 it boasted 24 000 subscribers countrywide. According to the Audited Bureau of Circulation (at Touchline Media in South Africa) 90 058 issues were sold during the period July to December 2005, and 90 360 issues from January to March 2006. The official readership AMPS (i.e. the amount of people who read the magazine in South Africa) for 2005 and 2004 fluctuated between 700 000 and 719 000, respectively. (See Jennings, 2006 – under Other Internet Sources)

<sup>194</sup> Source – <http://www.touchline.co.za>

<sup>195</sup> See Addendum A for more information on *MHM*’s global releases, performance etc.

fitness, sex, stress and nutrition. The magazine explores these topics and offers actionable, well-researched advice that allows men to meet their daily challenges and live up to their potential in every aspect of their life. The magazine's self-deprecating, non-judgemental and irreverent tone brings the best of benefit journalism to readers in an entertaining way...In short it's filled with tons of useful stuff.”

Henceforth, the Mission statement of *Men's Health* reads:

“For goal-orientated men who want a magazine that empowers them to lead a balanced life, irreverent and intimate, *Men's Health* provides practical information you can't get anywhere else. The *Men's Health* brand promise to reach men who want to improve every aspect of their lives by providing useful information they can't get anywhere else.”

#### **9.4.2 An empirical analysis of 60 South African MHM issues<sup>196</sup>**

The researcher endeavoured on an empirical analysis of the magazine (from 2001 to 2006) in order to get a more accurate picture of the main trajectory of its themes and features. This specific magazine was chosen seeing that it enjoys a very wide readership internationally and in South Africa (as was indicated here above), and furthermore because it explicitly propagates the main aim of empowering men with advice on health issues. In light of the fact that the researcher is interested in the spiritual health of men, this specific magazine's focus aptly serves as primary research material. It assists the researcher and the reader in gaining insight into the cultural discourses regarding men's health. In later chapters this theme will be explored theologically and the significance of this empirical analysis will become increasingly relevant and meaningful, within the greater aims of the study.

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<sup>196</sup> The 60 issues of *Men's Health* in the (available) sample allowed analysis of 60 photographic images and 141 main cover stories and/or features. All covers revealed a uniform image and projection of masculinity. Thus the inclusion of additional issues would most probably not have added to this portion of the analysis. The main aim was to produce an interpretation of the meaning of one cultural site, rather than to supply universal statements. However, an analysis of other/additional men's magazines (other than was possible in *Men's Health*) covering both a longer period and a different demographical readership may provide different results (e.g. in China or Germany where *MHM* is also distributed).

A sample of sixty issues of Men's Health covering most of the months<sup>197</sup> in the period between April 2001 and September 2006 was used. The analysis is divided into *two main areas of investigation*: (a) front cover images and (b) the content of cover stories / features<sup>198</sup>.

### **(a) Front cover images**

A magazine's front cover is about the construction and presentation of genre identity and is obviously the chief selling point, characteristic of how it wishes to present its take on the world and distinguish itself from its competitors. In short, 'the cover serves to label not only the magazine, but the consumer who possess it' (McCracken 1993: 19).

Alexander (2003: 541) explains that men's magazines covers accomplish two purposes. Firstly, they are "windows of the future self," by serving as selective frames that color both our perceptions of ideal masculinity and what is to follow in the magazine. In the second instance, they are themselves advertisements that increase the publisher's sales and, perhaps more important, the sale of products and services promoted inside. In this way advertising revenue is most probably secured through covers that draw "quality" readers, implying ones with spending power.

Using Alexander's study as a starting point for a gender analysis of MHM covers, the researcher found that *Men's Health* covers reveal certain distinctive patterns. The central feature is the photographic image, which reflects a homogeneous "future self" to a very specific group of men.

#### **(i) The use of colour as eye-catching feature in the presentation of the magazine**

- 100% (60/60) of the *photographic images of the male models are all in black-and-white*, giving a distinctive appearance on the magazine shelf and, according to Alexander (2003: 542) "lending edginess to a magazine that features health and fashion ideas, traditional feminine pursuits."

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<sup>197</sup> The publisher only had 60 out of the possible 66 months (within the range from April 2001 to September 2006) available electronically for use and analysis by the researcher; and therefore the amount of 60 *MHM* issues were used in the analysis.

<sup>198</sup> These two main areas of investigation (front cover images and the content of cover stories) were selected because it is self-evident that it gives the clearest indication of the magazines' core features and intended messages. For an in-depth and detailed analysis of every front cover of these issues, see ADDENDUM A.

- 97% (58/60) of the black-and-white *photographic images are set in a white background*; the remaining 3% (2) backgrounds are dark grey and red respectively.
- 100% (60/60) of the covers are *significantly illuminated by flares of bright colour* in the snippets of texts on and around the cover image.
- 92% (55/60) of the *title-texts: Men's Health, appears in bright colours* like orange, red, blue or green; the remaining 8% (5) appears in grey.

**(ii) Who is featured on the covers?**

- 90% (54/60) of the covers in the sample featured *white men* estimated to be *between the ages of 23 and 36*. The remaining 6 men were black, in the same age group. Only on 4 main cover-images (out of the above-mentioned 54 featuring white men) there are women present (three in bikinis in a playful and seducing fashion; the other one seemingly without a shirt hiding enticingly behind a male model without a shirt). Three out of four of these last mentioned issues are boldly labelled: “Special Sex Issue!”

**(iii) The type of masculinity presented in the embodied images**

- 100% (60/60) of the cover images present the *image of masculinity as a well-toned and strong-muscled body*.
- On 83% (50/60) of the issues a *very good looking model man was pictured from (just below) the waist up*; out of the remaining 10 issues, 7 revealed the biggest part of the body of the (attractive) model (wearing long or short pants), and 3 issues pictures a partial head/facial shot.
- 85% (51/60) of the models *are presented in an unidentifiable location or setting*. The remaining 9 models are standing in water, 6 most probably by the ocean, the other 3 in an unidentifiable water setting (maybe pool or ocean). The geographical location is typically in an outdoor setting, thus providing good reason for being semi-clothed, as well as being resonant of healthy, open air activity. The lack of context for most of these images most probably implies that the models are not doing anything other than *posing for the viewers*.
- 82% (49/60) of the models are *shirtless (all of them have well-developed muscles - arms, pectorals, and “six-pack” abdomen muscles are well defined)*; the remaining 11 male cover models were wearing mostly revealing muscle shirts that accentuate their well-defined and muscle-toned upper bodies.

- 70% (42/60) of the covers embody a message about masculinity which Alexander (2003: 542) labels “*wholesome masculinity*”<sup>199</sup>. Here the gaze of the model is neither defiant, nor passive rather the model smiles at the viewer, sometimes broadly, sometimes shyly; out of the remaining 30%, 18% (11/60) could be categorized as *Face-off masculinity*, and 12% (7/60) as *The Lean* (using Bordo’s terms, 1999).

### (b) The content of presented cover stories/features

The texts accompanying the images on the front cover pages differ in typeface/font-size and colour. The main cover text is normally highlighted in different ways in order to catch the reader’s eye immediately, e.g.: by using capital letters or a bold typeface or by appearing in the middle or the top-left corner of the cover page (in a bright colour) (see illustration no.2 below as an example). Also, the texts are in marked contrast to the body depicted in the photographs (for example, ‘be your own doctor...you can stay stress free...you can lose that half a stone and can beat your biggest rival’, and so on), for this is a body not just to be admired but, importantly, attained with the minimum of exertion and discomfort. An analysis of this main featured textual content revealed the following distinct themes:

- 97% (58/60) of the MHM issues *mentions the word sex / contains sexual content* (normally referring to performance or virility). The remaining 2 issues do not do so because they are special editions (e.g. January 2004 - “Anniversary 75th edition”).
- 72% (43/60) *mentions words or themes connected to a “hard body”*, in other words: muscle / power / firm abs / best body.
- 48% (29/60) *mentions words or themes connected to “weight loss/ fat reduction”*, in other words: less fat / lose your gut / get fit / in shape.
- 5% (3/60) does not mention one of the two above-mentioned themes.

In summary, table 1 (here beneath) shows the 3 groups of topics that appear most frequently in the texts on the covers of *Men's Health*. Clearly, *the most significant message about*

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<sup>199</sup> “Wholesome masculinity stands in sharp contrast to the masculinity often presented on film, whether brute magnetism (Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*) or the stoic, hyperphysical (Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator 2 Judgement Day*). It welcomes viewers to join in the pursuit of health and fitness by perusing the pages of the magazine.” (Alexander 2003: 542)

*masculinity*, which is featured on almost all 60 covers, *is that men should be (hetero-)<sup>200</sup>sexually potent and performance-driven when it comes to displaying sexual virility*. To be able to be dynamically sexual you have to create and maintain a hard body with muscle power. *In other words masculinity is constructed as having the ability to create a particular appearance: a hard-muscled (and stylish) sexy body*. The third and a bit less prominent category of themes, i.e. of fitness, and fat/weight reduction is supportive of this last-mentioned secondary goal.

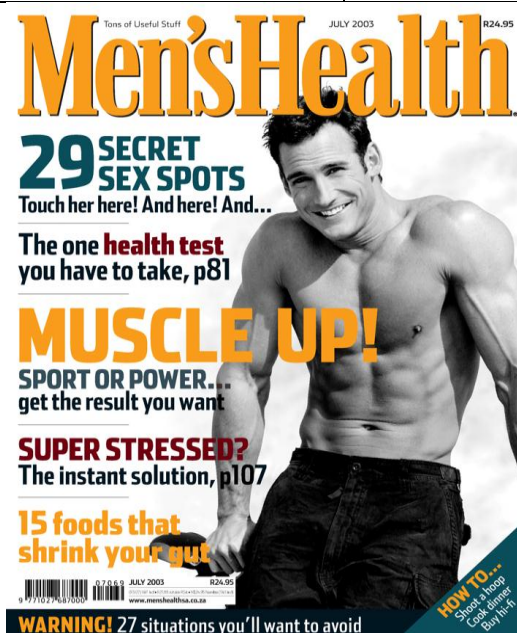
*A question which spontaneously arises in the researcher's mind is*: what would a man with a severe physical disability, or a man with erectile dysfunction, or a man who is homosexually orientated think and feel upon reading the MHM, if the above-mentioned discourses are accurate?

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<sup>200</sup> The researcher has found no messages in the 60 MHM issues that support or promote homosexual enactments of sexuality in any way. On the contrary, it seems that homosexuality is disallowed in terms of the discourse of what it means to be a "real man". This assumption is affirmed by Whitton (2001: 101) who states that the "sub-discourses underlying (MHM) sexuality illustrate particularly well the tensions inherent to the magazine's hegemonic masculinity. The most immediately noticeable sub-discourse is the total exclusion ('rejection' would not be too strong a word) of homosexuality (an exclusion common to most hegemonic masculinities)...Furthermore, heterosex is blatantly propagated as an integral component of what it is to be a man..."

**TABLE 1 - MHM Cover Themes<sup>201</sup>**

<i>THEMES</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE OF COVERS WITH EACH THEME</i>	<i>EXAMPLES</i>
<i>Sex</i>	<i>97%</i>	<p><i>“Guaranteed! Sex so hot she’ll speak in tongues” – Dec 2001</i></p> <p><i>“Bed-breaking sex – We dare you to try it” – Aug 2002</i></p> <p><i>“THE SEX OF YOUR DREAMS: Drive Her Wild – TONIGHT!” – Feb 2005</i></p>
<i>Hard body</i>	<i>72%</i>	<p><i>“Your new body is here – Gain muscle in just 15 minutes a day” – March 2002</i></p> <p><i>“ROCK HARD ABS: 14 WAYS TO LOSE YOUR GUT – February 2004</i></p> <p><i>“HARD MUSCLE MADE EASY: IN JUST MINUTES A DAY” – Sept 2006</i></p>
<i>Weight loss/ fat reduction</i>	<i>48%</i>	<p><i>“Strip away fat, See results in two weeks” – Feb 2002</i></p> <p><i>“GET BACK IN SHAPE – LEAN AND MEAN IN 4 WEEKS” – Oct 2003</i></p> <p><i>“GET A FLAT BELLY FAST! IN 15 MINUTES A DAY” – March 2006</i></p>



<sup>201</sup> Illustration nr.2 here above is used with permission given by Touchline Media (Representative Christopher Lee Jones - Art director for Men's Health SA). See internet reference in bibliography.



### **9.4.3 Branded masculinity as main feature of MHM**

After analyzing some main features, e.g. advertisements, in a sample of MHM, Alexander (2003: 550) concludes that: “Masculinity implies the ability to purchase the brands of a stylish hard body...The advertisements in *Men's Health* suggest that both clothes and cars serve as status symbols of male success – but only if they are the correct brands. *Men's Health* serves as an agent of masculine socialization by branding products in men’s minds; and men’s bodies become the walking billboards for brand-name products. Today, branded masculinity shapes men’s understanding of themselves and others.”

Branded masculinity is indicative of a distinct transformation of men’s understanding of masculinity, if not a complete break from the form of hegemonic masculinity associated with past generations. Men are encouraged and socialized to “read” masculinity as a consumer product that rests on one’s outward appearance rather than on the traditional male role of production. The traditional, hegemonic masculinity (as defined by Brannon, 1976 – “The Big Wheel” etc.) is contested by no longer defining masculinity by what a man produces, but instead by what a man consumes. Branded masculinity in MHM is firmly rooted in consumer capitalism and influences the reader by “constructing a well-toned body, a fashion sense, and the appearance of financial success as the necessary ‘products’ required by educated, middle-class men today. (Alexander 2003: 551)

Men’s capacity to consume any number of styles permits the construction of diverse masculinities. The analysis of MHM presents only one construct of masculinity, as a (stylish) sexy hard body, which is aimed at educated, middle-class men. But, for instance, in a fly fishing magazine, the product one consumes to display one’s masculinity (e.g., clothing bearing the brand names of fly fishing companies or tackle that display the names of the ‘right’ manufacturers) would be different from those in MHM, but consumption remains at the basis of the upcoming masculinity of a postmodernist society. *Even (Brannon’s) “real men” must today demonstrate their manliness through consumption of the right products.*

Within a postmodernist society - rooted in consumer capitalism - both femininity and masculinity are shaped by the images inherent in popular culture, and women and men progressively share the belief that constructing one's gender identity is nothing but a matter of buying appropriate brand-name products. Therefore, "the multiplicity of gender displays found in contemporary popular culture is exposed as capitalist hegemony in the form of branded masculinities purposely constructed by multinational companies for the purpose of increasing sales and profits, at the expense of any authentic understanding of what masculinity really means today." (Alexander 2003: 552)

### **9.5 Fashion shaping masculinity**

'Women are fashionable, men are not.' This, in most cases, is the popular opinion in many countries worldwide. Men supposedly dress for comfort and function, not style. At most, they will admit that clothing can function to enhance their status and help them succeed professionally. Men who are interested in fashion are thought to be peculiar – and probably gay. To the extent that some men develop a sense of style, they are thought to derive inspiration from films or by a process of identification with sports figures, actors or pop stars – not by looking at fashion magazines.

Nevertheless, as far as fashion is concerned, men have certainly become more style and appearance-conscious and have stepped into a domain once almost exclusively associated with the feminine. "Led by a gay subculture for whom clothing has long been a crucial identity marker, young men have increasingly come to value designer labels and are highly receptive to subtle, nuanced changes in dress code, much as women have long been." (Beynon 2002: 13). Gay men, predominant in the image and fashion industries, were blamed for what some perceived to be the 'feminization' of men's fashion. These critics strongly objected to what they held to be the prioritization of the 'gay look' in fashion, including the sending up of macho masculinity in terms hyper-masculinity<sup>202</sup>.

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<sup>202</sup> Hyper-masculinity is described by Beynon (2002: 162) as an exaggerated display of the overtly 'masculine', both in appearance and behaviour conveyed by, for example, shows of physicality and 'hardness' in the form of highly developed muscularity, tattoos, shaven heads, demeanour and speech.

The myth of the undecorated male had already begun to emerge in the middle of the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, 'fashion' had become primarily associated with femininity and frivolity. In the emerging world of capitalism and political democracy, men were increasingly assumed to be serious, hardworking, disciplined citizens, so bourgeois men adopted a civil uniform consisting of dark suits and starched white shirts. Workers and soldiers were perceived as being tough, brave and aggressive; they wore functional work clothes or uniforms.

Since their physical strength was conspicuous and their masculinity incontrovertible, they were permitted more colour and decoration in their clothing. "Yet as the cultural definition of masculinity continued to evolve during the 1980's and 1990's (in response to women's changing social roles), and as the consumer society continued to expand, journalistic discourse increasingly focused on the appearance of the "New Man" – whether dressed in Calvin Klein jeans or Armani suits." (Steele 2000: 79)

Fashion features (therefore) almost always include hyper-masculine elements. Very often the editorial strategy focuses on the creation of a 'manly' image through the presentation of unequivocally 'masculine' work clothes, such as blue jeans. Masculinity, like the empire of fashion, is increasingly fragmented. In contemporary culture, fashion is making use of the media game that derives from the enormous excitement generated by the reversal of the stereotype of male into a stereotype of crisis. Therefore, *nowadays fashion plays a central role in the everyday life of post-industrial societies – with the question of the male image (in fashion) as the most interesting point of observation.*

In the book *Material Man: masculinity, sexuality, style* (edited by G Malossi, 2000), it is clearly evident that ideas about masculinity are changing rapidly. The different contributing writers indicate convincingly how fashion, design and the media generate images and models that both reveal and create new concepts of masculine identity.

"The things you see these days. There's a man in the shower, naked, a great big man who could be a truck driver, a boxer or a football player...An archetypal male, with a shaved head and determined gestures, radiating the confidence that comes from an unexamined relationship with

one's gender. He is covering his body with a soft, white bath foam, the big brute. The camera continues to focus on his massive biceps, his athletic torso. Already the foaming gel that slides down the skin and muscles of this tough guy produces a vaguely unsettling effect...But when this latter-day Hercules, who is black by the way, realizes that he is being filmed, and addresses the audience, the real surprise hits: in a falsetto, a man imitating a women's voice, the big guy explains his preference for the product, parodying the movements and demeanour of girls doing a detergent commercial." (Malossi 2000: 24)

Fashion, along with advertising and popular entertainment, are specific expressions of the surface layers of culture, but they deal with material that originates at a far deeper level. This does not mean one should assume the men of tomorrow will wear high heels (to a football game or to the office) because 'we have reached this point' in a fashion runway presentation, but rather that the time we live in is beginning to question the rough shell that covers the male gender - a shell<sup>203</sup> made up of gestures, poses, and states of mind that have 'powerfully' characterized men in their external manifestations as much as in the way that men see themselves. "Why is this happening? After all, the mask of 'virile' masculinity has been a constant of the twentieth century, giving a face to the male domination that seems to be the natural state of things in the Western world." (Malossi 2000: 27)

Even though the male remains firmly in control, he implodes, collapsing due to internal fatigue, and as his image vanishes, all that remains is the empty shell of his desires. The reasons for the implosion of masculinity are numerous, going well beyond issues of gender specificity, but at least one reason for the general decline in the man's man is implicit in the internal dynamics of the communications and consumption of fashion, and in the economics of the spectacle that moderates relationships among people and between people and objects<sup>204</sup>.

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<sup>203</sup> This "shell" can also be called a masquerade. See Weltzien (2005) for an interesting discussion of fashion as a means to undergird the notion of masculinity as a masquerade. He asks the important question: to what extent is gender (and specifically masculinity) constructed by the act of changing dress?

<sup>204</sup> Goods (such as clothing) contain economic value in their immaterial aspects, consisting of the cultural references that they express, the information and the signs that they incorporate. To offer just one example, a pair of jeans and a double-breasted suit are not actually very different, any more than a miniskirt and a women's tailored outfit. But they are different in terms of 'sign value'. They create a different appearance; they modify the identity of the person who wears them. It is only a question of appearance, obviously, but in terms of appearance it is an important question.

The consumption of fashion tends - in this context, at least - to become autonomous cultural expressions, freed from such external presuppositions as tradition and religious ideological conventions. Thus, when a unified male identity was replaced by a manifold identity, wardrobes multiplied to match each of the possible new identities. The more nuances of identity there are, the more possibilities there are for desire to be generated or stimulated, and the more suits, outfits, and accessories can be sold. "Even masculinity, the stereotypical archetype, has become, paradoxically, the outcome of a 'project', a 'design'." (Malossi 2000: 30)

Lastly, men's magazines focus heavily on sportswear, just as the culture in general regards sports as the dominant male enthusiasm. Sporting activity not only provides license to display the male body, it also disciplines the body, emphasizing musculature – the prime visual sign of strength and virility. Therefore, utility sportswear is changing men's fashion. But clothes are only part of the new fashion picture. Whereas traditional male dress codes emphasized status and the body itself was largely concealed, the fashion today emphasizes the physical strength of the male body, which is more freely exhibited in casual sports clothing. "Although 'fashion' is still presumed to be a frivolous subject of interest primarily to women, the body has come to be central to the idea of fashioning modern masculinity<sup>205</sup>." (Steele 2000: 84)

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In the field of fashion, the primary requirement is to create goods and images that incorporate the greatest possible concentration of sign value and that are, for exactly this reason, easily replaceable and interchangeable. Nothing should be definitive and final in fashion. In order to allow all fashions to be the 'very latest', the 'last thing', none can actually be. Henceforth, under the effect of fashion, the figure of the body, its movements, and its poses are continually being modified by the dynamic of signs. "Men's suits, which once lasted for a lifetime, corresponded to an idea of the body that remained unchanged. Suits and clothing that must change continually take for granted that the body is flexible and undetermined, along with the body's mental image. The fashion industry has learned to control the flow of signs that generate this metamorphosis of the body." (Malossi 2000:28)

<sup>205</sup>Androgynous bodies, in all their ambiguity, are deployed to promote unisex fashion and beauty products such as cK One, Calvin Klein's eau de toilette for men and women. A further frontier is the blurring of gender categories in fashion, of which dresses for men is an extreme example. Brandes (2000: 139-140) hypothesises: "Let us go far beyond the idea that specific genders (male or female) are shifting in favour of androgyny (with the presence of male and female attributes in the same person). In the future, a third possibility will arise, in the middle ground between 'either one or the other' and the variant of 'both one and the other': the variant of 'neither one nor the other.' Without a doubt, this is a far more complex condition." This new space could make room for a new self that would reject both the polarity of male/female and the integration of male/female. What would thus develop would be a self that would overwhelm all the categories and classifications heretofore applied.

## 10. OTHER NEW TRENDS IN POPULAR CULTURE'S VIEW OF MANHOOD

Except for the newest fashion trends, the most recent Hollywood films and the latest men's magazines, the mass media are constantly creating and mirroring popular and spectacular images and descriptions of men and masculinity. These images and descriptions are the products of futurists, trendsetters and editors of newspapers, magazines and television shows, and it infiltrates every corner across the globe, influencing men in different ways. New 'types' of men are constantly being invented by the media. In the lead-up to January 2000, 'Millennium man' was constantly mentioned, along with the 'dad lad' (that is, the 'lad' grown up and settled down). In the past two to three years (2003-2005) two new popular catch-phrase descriptions - namely *Metrosexual* and *Übersexual* - have been coined and popularised with well-known icon-figures such as famous actors, sportsmen and musicians spearheading the trendsetting.

### 10.1 The Metrosexual<sup>206</sup>

At a fashion expo in London (in 1994), Mark Simpson, originator of the term metrosexual, was covering the "It's a Man's World" style exhibition, organized by GQ, when he noticed something curious going on in "Man World". Simpson gave this definition for the new breed of man he discovered that day:

"The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis—because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference. Particular professions, such as modelling, waiting tables, media, pop music and, nowadays, sport, seem to attract them but, truth be told, like male vanity products, they're pretty much everywhere." Simpson saw these

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<sup>206</sup> In 2003 the American Dialect Society selected "metrosexual" as the "Word of the Year". In the time since then, reaction to the word has moved from recognition to debate to backlash. Metrosexuals have existed for centuries, but metrosexuality didn't become a phenomenon until enough people were in on it, and until it had been publicly identified and plastered with a catchy moniker. Once the term was popularised, it was quickly monetized. Such world icon men as David Beckham (soccer player), Adrien Brody (actor), and Sting (musician), media in their own rights, made metrosexuality interesting and, for some, desirable.

men as dupes of consumerism, calling the metrosexual a "commodity fetishist, a collector of fantasies about the male sold to him by advertising."<sup>207</sup>

Since 1994 the term metrosexual has not been popularised by the media and trendsetting magazines<sup>208</sup> until it was done so by a group of influential American women, led by Marian Salzman<sup>209</sup>. While they adopted and adapted the term metrosexual from Mark Simpson, their view of who metrosexuals are and why they have come to exist, is quite different from his. Whereas Simpson looks at metrosexuality as "male vanity's finally coming out of the closet," they see metrosexual behaviors and attitudes as being less about vanity and pretense and more about having the strength to be true to oneself.

Metrosexuals, in their (Salzman and colleagues') view, are sufficiently confident in their masculinity to be willing to embrace their feminine sides – and to do so in a public fashion. Rather than adhere to the strictures of their fathers' generation, they are willing to move beyond the boundaries of rigid gender roles and pursue their interests and fancies regardless of societal pressures against them (which is not to say they don't enjoy catching sight of themselves as they pass by storefront windows).

Rather than overly feminine, narcissistic behavior, Salzman (et al. 2006) see metrosexuality as a welcome evolution in man's adaptation to the modern world. The metrosexual's interest in life beyond his apartment, his willingness to go against "macho" norms, and his desire to live more fully, shows that he (the metrosexual man) is becoming more aware of what's happening, involving themselves in the home life by choice rather than force, and genuinely taking interest in their children's development, sharing the good and the bad.

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<sup>207</sup> Source: <http://www.mariansalzman.com/about.html>

<sup>208</sup> See, for example M. Flocker (2004: 5) where Metrosexual is defined as: "1. mannelijke trendsetter in de 21e eeuw; 2. heteroseksuele stadsman met een groot gevoel voor esthetiek; 3. man die tijd en geld besteedt aan zijn uiterlijk en winkelen; 4. man die bereid is zijn vrouwelijke te laten zien."

<sup>209</sup> Marian Salzman is one of the world's leading futurists/global strategists, possessing extensive experience in the global advertising/marketing communications industry, with a particular focus on innovation in driving creative insights, marketing strategies, consumer intelligence, and leadership into client companies. Salzman is a leading creator of actionable intelligence for global marketers. In the world of trendspotting, she is a world leader, having identified such trends as: Millennium Blue; Singletons; and Metrosexuality. Her techniques include extensive consumer e-polls, online focus groups and interviews, and unique research methodologies—from closet studies to photo diaries to ethnographic interviews. See Salzman (et al.), 2006.

David Beckham - one of Britain's and the world's most successful soccer players – has become *the* global icon of metrosexuality in the past four years (since 2003). Beckham is a lean, boyishly handsome man with tastefully highlighted blond hair. He might easily have made a decent living as a male model<sup>210</sup>. According to some researchers Beckham's life - which presents a fascinating composite of new and traditional values –speaks volumes about the crisis facing (British) masculinity<sup>211</sup>.

Salzman (et al. 2006) explores the spending habits and aesthetic beliefs of a newly developing class of men – like Beckham - unafraid to devote time and money to their own appearances<sup>212</sup>. They are seeing an emerging wave of men who chafe against the restrictions of traditional male boundaries. "They want to do what they want, buy what they want, enjoy what they want – regardless of whether some people might consider these things unmanly."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Beckham is also spearheading the advertisement and marketing of Gillette's facial care products (specifically shaving foam, razors etc.). Even after Beckham was involved in a sex scandal, Gillette paid him millions as a global spokesperson to market their products. More recently (November 2005) he has brought out his own after shave fragrance (eau de toilette), called: David Beckham – INSTINCT. See <http://www.mariansalzman.com/about.html> for more information.

<sup>211</sup> Ironically, the struggle to define contemporary manhood, largely played out in the pages of (British) men's magazines, is underwritten by men's cosmetics and beauty products. For all its editorializing about boxing, football, and other so-called male pastimes, the men's magazine industry largely owes its expansion to the huge growth in sales of 'men's grooming products' – hair gel, foundation creams, lip balm, after shave, and cologne - which is the new boom area for cosmetics products. Sales of men's toiletries have increased by over 25 per cent in the last five years (1995-2000), with the annual European market net worth nearly \$1 billion. Yet essentially, despite the vanity and posturing, it seems that young men are unhappy. The fact of increased male longevity masks another, more telling statistic. Government figures show that three times as many British men commit suicide as women. Young men seem particularly prone to self-loathing and despair – among 15-24 year olds, suicide figures have doubled in the last decade. (Sharkey 2000: 177-178)

<sup>212</sup> See addendum F (Joubert 2007) for a recent example of an article in a South African (Afrikaans) newspaper that focuses on this issue of men's affinity for their appearances.

<sup>213</sup> While Salzman (et al. 2006) define metrosexuals as straight men who "are just gay enough," Simpson and some others use it to refer to both straights and gays who have adopted the characteristic behaviours and attitudes of the metrosexual. The word metrosexual is mostly used to describe straight men, but it is now also being used in the gay community – sometimes to explain gay men who act straight, even gay men who are occasionally bisexual and who get off on 'straight walking' (accompanying single women to glam events) as part of their metro lives. Others are using the terms MetroHetero and MetroGay to distinguish between straights who are "just gay enough" and gays who are straight enough to be highly desirable as dates for single women. Source: <http://www.mariansalzman.com/about.html>



## 10.2 The Übersexual

The (above-mentioned) trendsetting term metrosexual has evidently developed into a popular catchphrase for a particular group of men living in a postmodernist, globalised paradigm. But just when it started to sink in and became a familiar term, it has been challenged by a new trend:

“Just when men around the world had finally figured out how to be more metrosexual, a group of influential American women has come up with a new definition ideal man: the Übersexual. This new, new man is personified by Bono – the stylish but rugged lead singer of U2, who can talk politics with prime ministers, culture with artists, emotions with women and rugby with the guys down at the pub. That’s in stark contrast to the man of last year (2004), the metrosexual who was expected to be in close touch with his feminine side, sharing perfume and hair dye with his girlfriend, and preening before the mirror like a supermodel.” (Goldberg, 2005)

While this new paradigm might cause confusion among men worldwide, it seems that it fits in a lot better with traditional masculine qualities than the “nail-polished ideal” of David Beckham, or the decorating tastes of those style-masters from the quintessentially metrosexual hit TV show *Queer eye for the straight guy*. Salzman and her colleagues came up with the new definition<sup>214</sup>, describing the Übersexual’s attributes. They even made a list of the top 10 exponents of the Übersexual lifestyle. Top of the list is Bono<sup>215</sup>, seeing that he’s global, socially aware, confident and compassionate.

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<sup>214</sup> In *The future of men* (2006) Salzman’s co-writing colleagues are Ira Matathia and Ann O’Reilly. This book is an expansive attempt to understand what it means to be a man in the United States and other Western developed nations at the start of this new millennium and to divine how the life of the modern man is likely to further evolve in years to come. The writers have helped introduce the world to a number of key social phenomena, from the emergence of “wiggers” in the late 1980s to the rise of female “singletons” in the mid-nineties to the “metrosexual” in summer 2003. They are no strangers to media hype and scrutiny —having fueled it, as well as absorbed it. In their work over the years, Salzman (et al.) have witnessed and recorded a number of social changes among men, from the rise in male vanity to men’s increased involvement in the home. All the while, they have been cognizant of some underlying themes that suggest the consequences of the women’s movement, the evolution toward information-based economies, and shifting social mores and values are having what they would describe as a negative, even debilitating, impact on men’s position in society and within the family. Even more significant, these shifts appear to be having a negative impact on the male psyche, leaving modern man hesitant, disoriented, and, in many cases, more than a little depressed. (Source: <http://www.mariansalzman.com/about.html>).

<sup>215</sup> Bono is followed by actor George Clooney, who ‘appreciates the finer things in life (including his villa on the shores of Lake Como) and is strongly bonded with and loyal to a cadre of male friends’. In the third place is Bill Clinton: ‘A born charmer with Southern roots who is not afraid to cry...He is a supremely confident decisive leader. And he has supremely sexy hands’. Others on the top 10 list include actor/politician Arnold Schwarzenegger, Pierce

The descriptor ‘Über’ was chosen because it means the best, the greatest. Übersexuals are the most attractive (not just physically), most dynamic and most compelling men of their generations. They are confident, masculine, stylish and committed to uncompromising quality in all areas of life. “These are men who embrace the positive aspects of their masculinity or ‘M-ness’ (for example, confidence, leadership, passion, compassion), without giving in to the stereotypes that give guys a bad name (for example, disrespect toward women, emotional emptiness, complete ignorance of anything cultural outside of sports, beer, burgers and athletic shoes)”, says Salzman. (Goldberg 2005)

Salzman believes the days of metrosexuals are numbered. “Guys want their M-ness back...their tired of taking their behavioural and fashion cues from their female counterparts and from men’s magazines that boil men down to their basest, most basic selves,” she says. (Goldberg 2005)

### **10.3 Masculinity performed in popular advertisements**

#### ***10.3.1 Beer commercials as a “manual on masculinity”***

Mass media play a role in sensationalizing links between alcohol and male bravado. The manifest function of beer advertising is to promote a particular brand, but collectively the commercials provide a clear and consistent image of the masculine role. In a certain way they construct a guide for becoming a man and behaving appropriately as a male, in short a manual on masculinity. Of course, they are not the only source of knowledge on this subject, but according to Strate (1992: 79) “nowhere is so much information presented in so concentrated a form as in television’s 30-second spots, and no other industry’s commercials focus so exclusively and so exhaustively on images of the man’s man.”

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Brosnan and Ewan McGregor, while even Madonna’s husband Guy Ritchie and reality TV star and real estate big wheel Donald Trump get a look in.

Postman (et al. 1987) studied the thematic content of 40 beer commercials and identified a variety of stereotypical portrayals of the male role that were used to promote beer drinking: reward for a job well done; manly activities that feature strength, risk, and daring<sup>216</sup>; male friendship and esprit de corps; romantic success with women. The researchers estimate that, between the ages of 2 and 18, children view about 100,000 beer commercials.

Kunkel (et al. 2006) engaged in an experiment that assessed the effects of exposing college students to beer commercials with images of activities that would be dangerous to undertake while drinking. They found that those students exposed to the advertisements were more likely to believe in the social benefits of drinking than those not exposed, particularly among males. Those participants who reported seeing people engaged in risky activities as well as drinking beer had an increased tolerance for drunk driving. Their findings suggest that the imagery in beer commercials can contribute to beliefs about alcohol that predict drinking and to an increased acceptance of dangerous drinking behaviour.

Who play the roles in beer commercials? Rock stars, pick-up artists, cowboys, construction workers, and comedians - these are some of the major 'social types' found in contemporary American beer commercials. The characters may vary in occupation, race, and age, but they all exemplify traditional conceptions of the masculine role. Clearly, the beer industry relies on stereotypes of the man's man to appeal to a mainstream, predominantly male target audience. This is why alternate social types, such as sensitive men, gay men, and househusbands, scholars, poets, and political activists, are noticeably absent from beer advertising. The advertisements can be analysed as a form of cultural communication and a carrier of social myths, in particular the myth of masculinity<sup>217</sup>.

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<sup>216</sup> See also Capraro (2000: 307-315)

<sup>217</sup> Myths, according to Strate (1992: 78-79), are not falsehoods or fairy tales, but uncontested and generally unconscious assumptions that are so widely shared within a culture that they are considered natural, instead of recognized as products of unique historical circumstances. Myth, as a form of cultural communication, is the material out of which such structures are built, and through myth, the role of human beings in inventing and reinventing masculinity is disguised, and therefore naturalized. The myth of masculinity is manifested in myriad forms of mediated and non-mediated communication; beer commercials are only one such form, and to a large extent, the advertisements merely reflect pre-existing cultural conceptions of the man's man. But in reflecting the myth, the commercials also reinforce it. Moreover, since each individual expression of a myth varies, beer advertisements also reshape the myth of masculinity, and in this sense, take part in its continuing construction.

Myths provide ready-made answers to universal human questions about ourselves, our relationships with others and with our environment. For the most part beer commercials present traditional, stereotypical images of men, and uphold the myths of masculinity (and femininity). Thus, in promoting beer, advertisers also promote and perpetuate these images and myths. The myth of masculinity basically answers the question: what does it mean to be a man? This can be broken down into five separate questions: What kind of things do men do? What kind of settings do men prefer? How do boys become men? How do men relate to each other? How do men relate to women? The central theme of masculine leisure activity in beer commercials, then, is challenge, risk, and mastery – mastery over nature, over technology, over others in good-natured “combat”, and over oneself. Beer is integrated into this theme in obvious and subtle ways. (Strate 1992: 78-79, 82)

The theme of challenge (around which masculinity revolves in beer commercials), is an association that is particularly alarming, given the social problems stemming from alcohol abuse (and since beer commercials are a prominent subject in television’s curriculum, and although targeted at adults, are highly accessible to children). The myth of masculinity *does* have a number of redeeming features (facing challenges and taking risks are valuable traits in many contexts), but “the unrelenting one-dimensionality of masculinity as presented by beer commercials is clearly anachronistic, possibly laughable, but without a doubt sobering.” (Strate 1992: 92)

## 11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In all the above-mentioned *mass media messages* that were analysed and mentioned in this chapter *there is a tendency to convey double meanings*. On the one hand men are nowadays expected to be in touch with their ‘softer feminine side’, and on the other hand they are simultaneously challenged to remain potent and hard, ‘essentially masculine’. Given this projection of double messages – power and vulnerability simultaneously – it is not surprising that many men seem confused and uncertain about their masculinity and male sexual identity! *Nothing seems to be constant, in contrast everything is fluid and contradicting*<sup>218</sup>.

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<sup>218</sup> According to Feona Attwood (2005: 97) one of the most interesting things about the ways in which representations of heterosexuality - in the media (and in men’s magazines specifically) - are changing is an

Furthermore, the analysis of the MHM's explicated the underlying problematic which the mass media in general represent for our interpretation of masculinity today. The problem is not (just) situated in the content that MHM presents, but in its intention of commercialising manhood. ***This creates an ethical dilemma, seeing that masculinity can become toxic and destructive when its illusionary and unattainable ideals of manhood is used to feed the consumer-mentality and branded masculinity, in stead of life-giving intimacy and vitality.***

In light of these above-mentioned trends the researcher therefore contends that most men (within a Christian religious framework) need another interpretation scheme except for the secular and the popular culture's trends to go by, in order to understand themselves as men and find meaning and real intimacy within a technocratic culture. Although the researcher is cognisant of the fact that the mass media also in some ways - as was concisely indicated by referring to the health and aesthetic ideals of many new trends - present a constructive element to the formation of meaningful and healthy masculinity, ***men need more than the dominant images and interpretation schemes produced by the mass media.***

In essence, ***most men need a new type of Christian spirituality and relationship with God that can facilitate a more balanced and integrated manhood*** amidst the fluidity of a globalizing culture and post-traditional society. This is the challenge which will be taken up in the last part of this dissertation. But before that can be done the next chapter will focus on embodiment and power as challenges to a pastoral anthropology, seeing that ***men first primarily need to re-position themselves in relation to their own bodies and to the commanding power relations within which they function, before they can re-construct alternative ways of being men.***

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uncertainty about the extent to which they seem to be new and the extent to which they simultaneously appear to stay the same. She suggests that there are clear indications of new figures of masculinity, of emerging sexual styles and sensibilities, and of increasing variety in the forms of presentation used to construct male heterosexuality. Yet, as with contemporary representations of female sexuality, a recycling of traditional notions of sexual difference is evident, thus at the same there is time a bricolage of those familiar and rather old-fashioned signifiers of masculinity, 'tits and ass and porn and fighting'. Subsequently she identified a need to develop far more situated and careful analyses in order to interpret and contextualize contemporary constructions of male heterosexuality.

## CHAPTER 4: EMBODIMENT AND POWER – CHALLENGES TO ENCOUNTERS OF MALE INTIMACY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER

The terms “femininity” and “masculinity” are typically used to describe gender (as indicated in the previous chapters). But what do such terms mean when applied to the body? What is a masculine or a feminine body? Do all women look feminine because they are female? Are all men masculine? Do these words describe ways of doing things or essential being? What do we mean when we say, “he looks effeminate” or “she acts masculine”?

In this chapter the focus will fall on images of men and masculinities within the realm of embodiment and power. Within the sociology of masculinity it seems that the male body is omnipresent yet relatively invisible. Tim Edwards (2006: 152) contends that although studies of the reconstruction of masculinity through consumer culture are increasingly prevalent, these analyses are for the most part ‘disembodied’, often paying little attention to the body *per se*. Although studies are made of the embodied category of men, theoretical and empirical examinations of men’s embodiedness are few. Exceptions are the important contributions made by Watson (2000), Connell (1987, 1995, 2002) and Peterson (1998), all of whom, though drawing on different theoretical perspectives, deconstruct any notion of givenness to the male body while highlighting the relationship between gendered bodies and gendered power. According to McKay (et al. 2000) most of the critical gender perspectives on the male body have concerned themselves with the relationship between men’s sense of embodiment, masculinities and sport.

Pro-feminist literature on men and masculinities has been unable or unwilling to grapple with the male body, other than to suggest, in social constructionist terms, that the body is ‘a field on which social determination runs riot’ (Connell, 1995: 50). Within sociology itself debates about the body have only a relatively recent history, being driven, particularly, by feminist scholarship (see Price and Shildrick, 1999; Bordo 1999) and cultural studies.

In contrast to the academic sphere, the mass media - as was partly indicated in chapter 3 - now endlessly dwell on and scrutinize men's bodies<sup>219</sup>. Some theorists may even argue that the male body is now subject to objectification and (patterns of) consumption in a similar way to that which has long been experienced by female bodies. Nevertheless, new discourses surrounding men's bodies have emerged into the public arena. "In particular, they include growing concern about men's health and new scrutinies on men in terms of body shape, style and deportment." (Whitehead 2002: 182)

Subsequently, the *first concern of this chapter* is to explore some of the ways in which men's sense of themselves as embodied entities serves to inform their physical presence in, and relationship to, the world, others and ultimately to God. Furthermore, to recognize that male body existence with all its possibilities, performs multiple projects - wherein being and becoming (a male) carries with it the (political) power potentialities of gender identity. In other words, *to consider the notion that the material form of the male body is inevitably inscribed with masculinities; and similarly, that masculinity by definition, speak to and of the male (body)*<sup>220</sup>.

In the light of the fact that the most analysis of the body in men's studies has been a-historical and inattentive to the specifics of culture and to the operations of power relations, the male body is rarely seen as a product of power/knowledge. Although social constructionism has increasingly influenced analyses of the body, theoretical development has been limited by a discourse about whether the body is a natural or biological given or a socially constructed entity (as was noted in earlier chapters). *Therefore a second objective of this chapter is to explore male embodiment in order to give a critical analysis of how most male bodies have been objects and sites of power*<sup>221</sup>.

Ultimately, *the broad goal of this and the next two chapters* is thus *to make meaningful connections (within a hermeneutical theological framework), between a cultural analysis of the*

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<sup>219</sup> In her article, *The eschatological body: gender, transformation, and God*, Sarah Coakley (2000) argues that this obsessive interest in the "body" - which has been such a trademark feature of late twentieth-century Western culture - hides a profound eschatological longing; which she suggests can only be satisfied by a theological vision of a particular sort. It will be indicated in more detail in the next two chapters what such a theological (and implicitly) eschatological vision can entail.

<sup>220</sup> This issue of embodiment will later - in chapter 5 - also be shown to be a deeply anthropological question/problem.

<sup>221</sup> This issue of power will later - in chapter 6 - also be shown to be a deeply theological question/problem.

*sociological aspects of masculinity, and the problem of power and embodiment within a Christian spirituality.* One of the most dominating factors within this field is the abuse of power<sup>222</sup>. Subsequently, this main objective will lead the researcher to explore (at the end of this chapter) the deep intimacy-void which is experienced by many men because of an exacerbated achievement-ethos. And finally, also to explicate that men, in many instances, revert to power abuse through violence and crime, as well as power displays in the domain of sport, as illustration of their manhood.

## **2. MALE BODIES**

### **2.1 Gender, differences and men's bodies**

It has been argued in chapter two that gender is basically a social structure. What was not made clear is that it is a social structure of a particular kind, involving a specific relationship with bodies. Sometimes cultural patterns do express bodily difference. But often they do more or less than that or something else completely. In other words, gender concerns the way human society deals with human bodies, and the many consequences of that 'dealing' in people's personal lives. This implies that gender patterns may differ strikingly from one cultural context to another, but are still 'gender'. Gender arrangements are reproduced socially (not biologically) by the power of structures to constrain individual action, so they often appear unchanging. Yet gender arrangements are in fact always changing, as human practice creates new situations. (Connell 2002: 9-10)

David Whitson (1990: 23) points out that a boy does not automatically grow into manhood but has to learn to be a male – that is, “to project a physical presence that speaks of latent power...[to] develop body appearance and language that are suggestive of force and skill...to experience bodies and therefore themselves, in forceful, space-occupying, even dominating ways.”

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<sup>222</sup> Here it should be noted that when theology comes into play, the notion of power is immediately linked to a very specific understanding of God's power, i.e. the omnipotence of God. The impact of culture on God-images and the notion of a theology of culture should thus be explored. It will become clear in the next chapter that the researcher would want to advocate for a reframing of God's omnipotence in terms of God's vulnerability.



It becomes clear that *bodies are essentially affected by social processes*. Health, child development, and sport provide more than enough proof. The way our bodies grow and function is for instance furthermore influenced by (amongst others) sexual customs, warfare, work, urbanization, education and medicine. And all these influences are structured by gender. So we cannot think of social gender arrangements as just following from the properties of bodies. The widely-perceived assumption that testosterone is a ‘male hormone’ is the most popular current example of presumed (gender-related) character dichotomy in humans. But, testosterone is, in fact, present in all human bodies. So is the ‘female hormone’ oestrogen. Indeed, many women have higher levels of testosterone in their bloodstream than many men, and after age fifty, men on average have higher levels of oestrogen in their bloodstream than women. (Rogers 2000)

The concept of character dichotomy has decisively been refuted by sex similarity research. Therefore, Connell (2002: 47) contends: “we must reject all modules of gender that assume social gender differences to be caused by bodily differences producing character differences.” When one does this, a new understanding of the relation between body and society (in gender) will become possible.

“‘Difference’ theories of gender respond to one pattern of bodily difference, the distinction between female and male. Of course there are many other differences among the 6.2 thousand million human bodies in the world. There are large and small, old and young, sick and well, plump and starving.” (Connell 2002: 47).

However, the huge multiplicity of bodies is in no way a haphazard assortment. The bodies are interconnected through social practices, the things people do in daily life. Bodies are body objects of social practice and agents in social practice. The same bodies, at the same time, are both. Bodies occur in historical time, and change over time. They add up to the historical process in which society is embodied. Connell calls this process social embodiment, and asserts that bodies are transformed in this process. Some changes are familiar: lengthening expectation of life, as a result of social changes; also rising average height and weight (as nutrition and child health care improve), and changing patterns of disease (e.g. polio declining). Connell (2002: 47-50)

## 2.2 Materialising men's bodies and masculinities

It is evident from the discussion in the previous chapters that masculinity transcends its illusory, mythological foundations to emerge as a physical presence in the world in the shape of the male, his behaviour and expectations. Jonathan Watson (2000) - in his book *Male bodies: health, culture and identity* - demonstrates convincingly that contemporary treatment of the male body has: mainly been theoretical rather than empirical; focused on the social body rather than the physical body; and tended to interpret the body from an etic (outsider/social science) perspective rather than from an emic (insider/lay) perspective. By contrast, female embodiment has, to an extent, been reclaimed and reassessed in the context of lay experience. (Watson 2000: 60)

Whitehead (2002) explored the male body as a critical, though contested, site for the inculcation and practice of masculinities. Recognizing that no male body exists in a singular, complete form, he argues that in order to appreciate the centrality of the male body to masculine formations, it is necessary to understand the multiplicity of male embodiment and in the complex ways in which masculinities come to materialize through men's physical presence in the world. "A key aspect of this presence of the male body concerns how maleness relates to space, movement, posture and presentation. The male body can be understood as a fluid and shifting materiality, invested through numerous truths and knowledges, the most powerful of which purport to locate the male body as grounded in an unchanging, biological essence." (Whitehead 2002: 203)

For the well-known French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962)<sup>223</sup>, the body is the original subject that constitutes space; in other words: there would be no space without the body. Thus the body of which we speak is not a biologically programmed<sup>224</sup>, predetermined entity, but a discursive constitution: a "contested terrain [upon which] the interplay of text and physicality

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<sup>223</sup> For an in-depth discussion on Merleau-Ponty's work on the philosophy of embodiment, see P. Reynaert, 2003. Unfortunately any further exploration of this important topic exceeds the limits of this dissertation.

<sup>224</sup> According to Roy Porter (1991: 215) this fact - that bodies are not merely biologically programmed and fixed over all time periods - is also relevant to a historical view on the body. "...the 'body' cannot be treated by the historian as a biological given, but must be regarded as mediated through cultural sign systems. The apportionment of function and responsibility between body and mind, body and soul, differs notably according to century, class, circumstance and culture, and societies often possess a plurality of competing meanings."

[render] a body in process, never fixed or solid, but always multiple and fluid” (Price and Shildrick, 1999: 4).

Therefore Connell (1987) asserts that the physical sense of maleness is not a simple thing. It involves a man’s size and shape, his habits of posture and movement, his possession of certain skills and lack of others. It also involves a man’s image of this body, the way he presents it to other people, the ways they respond to it, and the way it functions in work and sexual relations. Thus, *no bodies are un-gendered, and no bodies exist outside the cultural conditions of their own materialization.*

Mass culture, however, generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the practices of daily life. Concepts such as ‘real men’, ‘natural man’, and the ‘deep masculine’ are used regularly – for instance by advocates of mythopoetic men’s movement, Jungian psycho-analysts, Christian fundamentalists, sociobiologists and the essentialist school of feminism.

True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men’s bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body. Either the body drives and directs action (e.g., men are naturally more aggressive than women; rape results from uncontrollable lust or an innate urge to violence); or the body sets limits to action (e.g., men naturally do not take care of infants). These beliefs are a strategic part of modern gender ideology, in the English-speaking world at least. So the first task of a social (and theological) analysis is to arrive at an understanding of men’s bodies and their relation to masculinity. In light of the pervasive influence of the mass media in our contemporary world, this understanding can only be arrived at by interpreting male bodies in the media itself (hence the following heading addresses this need).

**In summary:** two opposing conceptions of the body have dominated discussion of the issue in recent decades. ***In one***, which basically translates the dominant ideology into the language of biological science, *the body is a natural machine which produces gender difference* – through genetic programming, hormonal difference, or the different role of the sexes in reproduction. ***In the other approach***, which has swept the humanities and social sciences, *the body is a more or*

*less neutral surface or landscape on which a social symbolism is imprinted.* Reading these arguments as a new version of the old ‘nature vs. nurture’ controversy, other voices have proposed ***a common-sense compromise: both biology and social influence combine to produce gender differences in behaviour.***

*Connell (1995: 46) argues that all three views are mistaken.* He underscores that a better understanding of the relation between men’s bodies and masculinity cannot be attained by abstract argument alone, and therefore introduces some evidence from a life-history study. He suggests: “...a rethinking may start by acknowledging that, in our culture at least, the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender. Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex. Bodily experience is often central in memories of our own lives, and thus in our understanding of who and what we are.” (Connell 1995: 52 – 53)

### **2.3 Male bodies in the media – an introduction**

The male body has not only come into focus within academic spheres recently (as discussed here above), but also through popular culture, saturated with the mass media. One of the most important studies which have been done on the male body through the lens of the mass media, is by Susan Bordo (1999) - *The male body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. By focusing on the social construction of masculinity (and femininity), Bordo aims at preventing the re-affirmation of men and women’s stereo-typical, constricting status quo. The main point that Bordo (1999: 38-39) makes very clear in her book is that: ***the way we experience our bodies is powerfully affected by the cultural metaphors that are available to us.*** Henceforth, it’s necessary to pay attention to both biology and culture – and their interaction – when thinking about the male body (or any body).

Furthermore, we need to think about ***the body*** not only as a physical, material entity – which it assuredly is – but also as ***a cultural form that carries meaning with it.*** We should therefore

recognise that when we look at bodies (including our own in the mirror), we don't just see biological nature at work, but values and ideals, differences and similarities that *culture* has 'written' so to speak, on those bodies. "What this means is that the body doesn't carry only DNA, it also carries human history with it." (Bordo 1999: 26)

Bordo depicts the historical development of the concept of masculinity in the latter part of the twentieth century by analysing films and advertisements. Although her analysis focuses on the popular American culture, it can be applicable to a wider spectrum, seeing that cultural expressions such as magazines, advertisements, film etc. are internationally comparable within the Western world (also in South Africa). According to Bordo the male body as explicit sex object was absent from films and advertisements for many decades. Women's bodies – as naked and near-naked sex objects – first appeared in pornographic magazines such as Playboy, after that it appeared in films (movies) and only after that in the fashion arena. According to Bordo (1999: 168) it went exactly the other way around with men's bodies. Fashion took the lead; the movies have followed.

Bordo has ambivalent sentiments with regards to the way in which the male body is presented in the public domain. On the one hand the expansion of the social construct of masculinity is a positive development. But on the other hand, pressure is currently put on men to reach for an (unattainably) high ideal set by these images of manhood. "We live in an empire ruled...by images. The tight buns, the perfect skin, the firm breasts, the long muscled legs, the bulgeless, sagless bodies are everywhere." (Bordo 1999: 215). For many years countless women have been exposed to this pressure, and now the same thing threatens to happen to men.

*The main problem* seems to be that we live in a culture that encourages men to think of themselves as their penises, a culture that still conflates male sexuality with something we call "potency" and that gives men little encouragement to explore the rest of their bodies (see the paragraphs here below). "Think, for example, of how many different advertisements depict women stroking their necks, their faces, their legs, lost in sensual reverie, taking pleasure in touching themselves – all over. In such advertisements, women are continually given permission to relate to their full bodies, even to become immersed in them." (Bordo 1999: 36)

In stark contrast, images of men in similar poses are extremely rare and scarcely employed by manufacturers and designers who are after a predominantly straight male market. “Touching oneself languidly, lost in the sensual pleasure of the body, is too feminine, too ‘soft’, for a real man. Crotch grabbing – that’s another matter. That’s tough, that’s cool, that’s putting it in their face.” (Bordo 1999: 36)

### 3. MEN, MASCULINITIES AND POWER

No single theory or academic approach can hope to capture and account for every facet of even a single man’s life, let alone the lives of men of all different socioeconomic classes, ethnicities or sexual orientations. However, one issue that an increasing number of social scientists appear to agree upon is the pro-feminist argument that any adequate theory of men and masculinity has to have the concept of power at its centre (Connell 1987, 2002; Kimmel 1987a; Brittan 1989; Kaufman 1994). Hence, the following paragraphs will deal with the question of power and its relation to men and masculinities.

One of the most dominating factors within this field is the use and misuse / abuse of power. Specific attention will thus be given to this problem - within the web of patriarchal power – specifically in the next chapter out of a hermeneutical theological angle of incidence<sup>225</sup>. Chittister (1998: 69) asserts “Misuse of power curdles spirituality at its roots. When we are our own gods, it makes God very difficult to find elsewhere in life.”

Henceforth, here below follows the introduction to some attempts to a theological (re-) interpretation of some of the above-mentioned dynamics and themes (related to embodiment and power). Initially, the intention in these following paragraphs is to deconstruct the question of power within spheres of masculinity. Later (in chapters 5 and 6) its influence on men’s

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<sup>225</sup> The researcher is very aware of the fact that, by focusing very exclusively on masculinity, there lurks the danger (amongst others) to unconsciously shut men out of a gender framework of analysis. Simply put: a focus on men alone can easily ignore their position within the web of patriarchal power. Therefore it is essential that studies on masculinity (inter alia) must investigate the institutions where men and women interact. The family was identified by early feminists as the core manifestation of patriarchal power, and it is a fallow land for research. Within the family gender identities are formed, hierarchies reside and (gender) power is exerted. Unfortunately a in-depth focus on these issues transcends the boundaries of this dissertation, but it is nevertheless mentioned, to be kept in mind throughout.

spirituality will be explored. In order to perform this proposed deconstruction of power, it is however firstly important to make some relevant remarks in connection with patriarchal power.

### 3.1 Patriarchal power

A traditional sociological definition of patriarchy asserts that it is: “A social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line.” (Webster in Verwoerd, 1996: 3). These type of definitions have however (recently) been broadened to include a complex field of oppression. Patriarchy is now instead comprehended as a worldview or philosophical paradigm which displays a set of common beliefs and values, as well as a common method. It can concisely be stated as the masculine dominance of the interpretation of reality, and simultaneously as the normative paradigm of socio-political operation in the Western world today.<sup>226</sup>

According to Chittister (1998: 25), patriarchy rests on four interlocking principles: dualism, hierarchy, domination, and essential inequality. These are the touchstones of the patriarchal worldview and imply, in essence, that reason and feelings are distinct, that the world runs from the top down and that the top is genetically coded. Therefore some humans are deemed more human than other humans and so are put in charge of the rest of them. Subsequently, hierarchy is given dominative power, and justifies all of the above-mentioned on the theory of intrinsic inequality.

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<sup>226</sup> Manuel Castells (1997: 134) asserts that: “Patriarchalism is a founding structure of all contemporary societies. It is characterised by the institutionally enforced authority of males over females and their children in the family unit. For this authority to be exercised, patriarchalism must permeate the entire organization of society, from production and consumption to politics, law, and culture. Interpersonal relationships, and thus personality, are marked, as well, by domination and violence originating from the culture and institutions of patriarchalism.”

According to Raphael (2005: 7007) Patriarchy may be defined as: “the ‘rule of the father’ that extends beyond the confines of the family to include the governance of men and the dominance of male values in society as a whole. Patriarchal dominance, whether that of male heads of extended families or the *andrarchy* of senior men within a given political dispensation, gives men control over the familial and political economy; limits women's freedom of sexual expression and alliance; marginalizes or excludes them from political and religious leadership; and limits their education and sometimes their freedom of movement.”

Chittister continues (1998: 67) to state that patriarchal power sets out to keep people at a distance, and to exclude and control. “The purpose of this kind of power is not to build the community, even when building the community is what maintains the power. Its purpose is to build a private kingdom, a power based beyond assault. Instead of stifling competition, however, patriarchal power breeds it.”

The implication of all this is that most men suppress most women. But it is not implicated that all men suppress all women to the same degree. It includes a complex interaction with class, race and economic dominance. Hence, Fiorenza (1984: xiv) formulates it: “Patriarchy as a male pyramid of graded subordinates and exploitations specifies women’s oppression in terms of the class, race, country or religion of the men to whom we belong. This definition of patriarchy enables us to...conceptualize not only sexism, but also racism, property-class relationships, and all other forms of exploitation or *dehumanization* as basic structure of women in oppression.” (own italics).

However, what is important to note, is *the systemic nature of patriarchy*. Whilst andro-centrism is an indication of a general male-centeredness grounded on a set of values, patriarchy signifies a social, political, historical, religious and economic structure. This systemic character is not unique to patriarchy, seeing that dominance has a typical systemic nature (e.g. the caste-system in India, apartheid in South Africa, colonialism etc.).

Therefore dominance, according to Thompson (1990: 59) can be defined as power which is systematically a-symmetrical. This causes certain groups to attain power which excludes and oppresses others. The complex institutionalisation of this power makes it extremely difficult for the excluded groups to ever become part of the power positions. Regarding the male dominance of women it seems that this is an especially obstinate and deep-rooted form of socialised and institutionalised exclusion and inequality<sup>227</sup>. The ironic paradox that continues to exist is that: ***Patriarchal masculinity cripples men – thus men are formed and broken by their own power.***

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<sup>227</sup> Chapter 2 has also made mention of sexual dualisms within whole question of gender, which still often maintains these above-mentioned “natural inequalities” by means of the gender role theory and numerous stereotypings.



James (1996: 44) contends that the reason for this is that: patriarchy, with its stereotypical way of defining masculinity, doesn't provide men an opportunity to experience unitive wholeness, "as it is too enmeshed into the 'shadow side' of the masculine psyche to encourage growth and emancipation." But *patriarchy* does not only cripple men in terms of their functioning in society on a human level. It *also influences their relationships with God in many fundamental ways*. According to James (1996), "Patriarchy is an example of a collective psychological projection onto God of a set of personality attributes. The patriarchal view of God looks suspiciously similar to the socio-political realities of ancient monarchies. Judgment, rule, control, punishment, sovereignty and dominance are the hallmarks of images of God that are enslaved to patriarchy." (James 1996: 44)

By conducting a critical review of the essential sociological and theological characteristics of the patriarchal paradigm, Brian Wren (in James 1996: 44-45) has developed a "Portrait of a Patriarchal God:

The Patriarchal God is in Control of everything.

The patriarchal God sits on top of a relationship pyramid.

The patriarchal God is almighty and omnipotent.

The patriarchal God is invulnerable, impassive and impassable.

The patriarchal God is male and masculine."

Implicitly, the effects of patriarchy upon the development of authentic masculine spirituality are profound. Patriarchal God-concepts lead to assumptions which influence men and their relationship to their community and to the divine. Within the system of patriarchy, in order to communicate with a transcendent God, one must develop a hierarchy of relationships. God is in 'his' heaven, and 'his' subjects are on earth, fulfilling 'his' will. A 'masculine' God is separated from 'feminized' believers, because patriarchy operates out of a rigid, dualistic framework. Furthermore, this framework denotes experiences of the transcendent as dichotomised from the immanent; the spiritual as separated from the material; creation as separated from creator. "Patriarchal consciousness is very either/or and has difficulty with both/and models of experience." (James 1996: 45)

This problematic asks for the exploration and evaluation of certain models for God in the Christian Theology. The researcher is of the opinion that a thorough religious-philosophical exploration and evaluation of certain models which is used for God (in the Christian theology), should be done<sup>228</sup>. By doing that, a contribution can be made to a better understanding of the problematic concerning (especially) the dominant model of God-as-Father, as well as a well grounded appreciation for the suppressed model of God-as-Mother.

It is pre-supposed that *religion and Christian theology*, in other words the way in which there is talked and thought about God, *exerts an important influence on the institutionalisation of patriarchal values and power*, and e.g. on the subsequent oppression of women etc. (also compare Ackermann and Armour 1989: 75).

The above-mentioned can contribute to the theoretical deconstruction of patriarchal power relationships, especially also with regards to the ideological charge<sup>229</sup> of our discourse about God. There should be a theological-critical and reflective participation in the wider social debate, in which the focus falls on the change of (oppressive) societal structures- and practices. Such an investigation unfortunately exceeds the limits of this dissertation, but some cursory remarks will be made in the next chapters. It can also be noted that a study which can make a meaningful contribution in this regard (for further research) is the M. Phil. Thesis of Melanie Verwoerd<sup>230</sup>.

### 3.2 Power in terms of Michael Foucault's conceptualisation

According to Petersen (1998: 11), most analyses of the body in men's studies has been a-historical and inattentive to the specifics of culture and to the operations of power relations. The

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228 A detailed investigation of these issues unfortunately falls outside the boundaries of this dissertation, but chapter 6 will attempt to highlight the core of this problem out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective - in as far as this is (directly) related to masculinity, and specifically masculine sexuality and spirituality within the question of power.

<sup>229</sup> A very clear example of the way in which theology can function ideologically (i.e. to establish and maintain structures of power and dominance) is the apartheid-regime (which was theologically justified) in the former South Africa. In the context of the apartheid-theology there currently exists very little uncertainty about the (Dutch Reformed) Church's defective support of a false hierarchical order in the society. Verwoerd (1996) asserts strongly that the theology with its central model as the model of God-as-Father, plays a role in the creation and maintenance of patriarchal societal structures. Just as the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church played a role in the affirmation and continuation of apartheid, the broader patriarchal theology, as it occurs in almost all Christian churches, played a similar role in the upholding of hierarchical structures between men and women.

<sup>230</sup> Compare Verwoerd (1996).

body is rarely seen as a product of power/knowledge. Starting from the premise that the very materiality of bodies is an effect of power, Petersen (1998) examines the processes through which particular male bodies, or bodily qualities, come to matter more than others. “Clearly, some male bodies are more visible, powerful and valued than others and, since the nineteenth century, the bodies of white, European, middle-class heterosexual men have been constructed as the standard for measuring and evaluating all bodies.” (Petersen 1998: 16)

It has also been indicated earlier that it is important to move beyond the terms of this essentialism/constructionism debate if one is to avoid essentialism and dichotomous thinking on this topic. There exists a great diversity of social constructionist perspectives on the body. The naturalism/constructionism dichotomy as an abstraction cannot do justice to the full range and complexity of contemporary theoretical and political positions in respect to the body.

A critical analysis of ‘masculinity’ should therefore include an account of how male bodies have been objects and sites of power<sup>231</sup>, and how this affects different men. It needs to be asked why some male bodies are invested with more visibility and more power than others, and how natural knowledge is deployed in the construction of difference. Power operating through institutions (i.e. power as relational and positional); and power in the form of oppression of one group by another (i.e. power as brute force, organized violence); is therefore an important part of the structure of gender. But there is another (third) approach to power, popularized by the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1998).

Under the influence of Foucault, many writers have challenged the naturalistic view of the body which has a fixed structure and immutable desires and behaviours. For example, rather than seeing bodies as biologically given, or pre-discursive, bodies have come to be seen as fabricated through discourse, as an effect of power/knowledge<sup>232</sup> (see, for example, Butler, 1993). As yet,

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231 Power, as a dimension of gender, was central to the Women’s Liberation concept of ‘patriarchy’, and to the social analyses that flowed from it: the idea of men as a dominant ‘sex class’, the analysis of rape as an assertion of men’s power over women, and the critique of media images of women as passive and trivial.

<sup>232</sup> According to Foucault (1980) power and power relationships is daily evident in normal interactions, techniques and practices of individuals who work in hierarchical relationships with one another. Foucault focused on the exposure of power on micro level, and on the periphery of the community: in clinics, jails, families etc. For him the central mechanism of power is constitutive or “positive” in nature. The modern system of power is, according to him, decentred and taken up, rather than centralised and exerted in a top-down fashion. Therefore his argument was that attempts to transform power practices in a community should address these practices on a local level – on the level of

there has been relatively little detailed analysis of how different male bodies have been constructed in discourse, and how differences between men and women, and within men, have come to be seen as natural differences.

This third concept of power draws attention to the importance of discourse as a means by which power is exercised and resisted, and through which male supremacy and power inequalities become legitimized. Drawing on post-structuralists such as Foucault, recent masculinity studies seek to understand the processes by which definitions and discourses reinforce gender inequalities; for example, by positioning men as strong and women as fragile; men as rational, women as emotional; heterosexual men as normal, homosexuals as abnormal, etc. (see Petersen, 1998, for discussion).

Foucault (1998) shows that particular ways of talking about things (discourses) shape the way that we perceive the world and our own selves. Today, popular media are obviously primary channels for the dissemination of prevailing discourses. The ability to influence a certain discourse is a form of power than can be exercised. The exercise of power always produces resistance, and so in this sense power is productive because it causes things to happen (which will not necessarily be the consequences intended by the original agent).

Furthermore, Foucault (1998) was sceptical of the idea that there was a unified, central agency of power in society. Rather, he argued, power is widely dispersed, and operates intimately and diffusely. It more specifically operates discursively, through the ways we talk, write and conceptualize. This diffuse but tenacious power operates close up, not at a distance. It impacts directly on people's bodies as 'discipline' as well as on their identities and sense of their place in the world.

For Foucault then, power is not an asset which a person can have; rather, power is something exercised within interactions. Power flows through relationships, or networks of relationships.

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everyday, obvious social practices. In his analyses of the constitutive dimension of power, Foucault reaches the conclusion that power and knowledge is inextricably linked together – he also then speaks of power/knowledge or knowledge/power.

People were not considered by him to be powerful, per se then; but one could say that they frequently found themselves in a powerful position, or had many opportunities to exercise power. Foucault (1998: 93) described this very clearly in the following way:

“Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere...Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.”

*The central point remains: power simply cannot be held by one group; power is everywhere and plays a role in all relationships and interactions* (though this may be to a large or small extent in each case). Unfortunately a further detailed discussion on this above-mentioned topic exceeds the limits of this dissertation. In summary, the following remarks should however be made:

In the researcher’s view, *power and masculinity are relational constructions*, processes of ongoing creation and action between individuals and political categories of individuals. Thus ideological power is not located in a single position and does not require external control in order to be sustained and legitimized. *Masculine power is largely exercised through self-regulation (a process of ‘identity work’), one consequence of which is to privilege and validate ways of being male/man/masculine in particular cultural settings.*

If we accept that power and knowledge are inextricably linked and that we simultaneously experience the effect of power and exert power over others, then we may not take our own actions and especially language practices (in therapy) for granted. We must accept that we simultaneously (consciously and unconsciously) participate in the fields of power and knowledge – we must be extremely aware of this within pastoral-therapeutical relations<sup>233</sup>. Reference has already been made (in chapter 2) to the fact that meaning making, within socio-constructionist relations, is dependant on language – in other words that we, through language, give meaning to

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<sup>233</sup> White and Epston (1990) have, for example, developed a family-therapy approach wherein which Foucault’s concepts are translated into therapeutical language. The “externalising of the problem”-approach focuses on the relationship and functioning of the power of the dominant story in people’s lives, and on how it constitutes their lives. This therapeutic language can and has been fruitfully applied to the field of narrative pastoral care.

our experiences and constitute our lives and relationships. When we however engage in language, it is never a neutral activity – it is also a part of our knowledge/power fields.

*What are the practical implications hereof for pastoral care? The researcher assumes that through creating a new theological field of language we can possibly deconstruct and make attempts to re-interpret masculinity in a very meaningful way. This will be attempted in the last two chapters.*

## 4. MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY AND THE QUESTION OF POWER

### 4.1 The impact of power on sexuality: the crisis of human dignity

The aim of the following paragraphs is specifically to focus on the way in which the hierarchical *abuse of power often causes a loss of (humanly) dignified, respectful and healing sexual practices*. In the modern Western Culture sexuality has often been perceived as central to masculine power. The equation of masculinity to sexual power, dominance and violence has inevitably led to the development of a powerful and aggressive male sexuality (Bly, 1991; Brod, 1987). Consequently uneven power relationships have had a very clear impact on people's sexual enactment. The researcher will contend (in the following paragraphs) that the core of this impact is the loss of human dignity<sup>234</sup>, for both perpetrator and victim in destructive sexual interactions.

According to Marvin Ellison (1996a): "Sexuality conditioned by male gender supremacy eroticizes power inequalities. Relations of domination and subordination become erotically tintillating. Many heterosexual men are turned on by female powerlessness...male supremacy feels good. Gender injustice even seems pleasurable...Male gender supremacy feels right to many people because it exists within a wider cultural matrix that teaches people to be

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<sup>234</sup> In this regard Vorster (2005: 909) concludes his article on *Human dignity and sexual behaviours: a theological perspective*, by suggesting that responsible sex ethics that can safeguard human dignity ought to contain (among others) the following elements: • The structural purpose of sexuality must be respected. Sex forms the dynamic that bonds male and female who are the same but also different; • The holistic nature of humans must be maintained. Sex can never be reduced to a mere physical act. It affects both the spiritual and physical aspects of human nature; • True sexual love manifests itself in mutual submission where the happiness of the other person is sought in the whole breadth of common existence (*eros* and *agapé*). Recreational sex treat human beings as mere objects of pleasure. □

comfortable with, and to normalize, human indignities and a variety of social oppressions.” (Ellison 1996a: 51)

In order to gain a better understanding of how patriarchal oppression distorts intimacy, John Stoltenberg (in Ellison 1996a) speaks about the dialectical connection between erotica and ethics – “between feeling good and doing right”. Ethics include: the loyalty to values and the commitment to the “right” behaviour. Erotica includes: the embodiment of sensation and feelings/emotions. *During sexual intercourse humans constitute their moral character, and they physically embody their values as moral agents.*

According to Stoltenberg people within Western patriarchal societies learn the importance thereof to do things right according to patriarchal values and norms. There are rewards for conformation (as well as sanctions for the abstinence from conformation) to the gender-role expectancies of what the “right male thing” and the “right female thing” to do, in public and in the bedroom, is:

“When many men have sex, the power and control they feel in the when, the how, and the ‘to whom’ they feel sexual are all matters that confirm, or fail to confirm, their socially constructed, gendered identity as men. Patriarchal sex reinforces men’s deeply felt, somatized sense of being social superiors. The patriarchal sex script focuses, for example on the male’s ability to perform sexually (genitally) and thereby experience himself as a real man.” (Ellison 1996a: 52).

Stoltenberg even speculates that many men’s experience of sexual tension may be because of socially induced gender-anxiety about, or their behaviour within, the ethical framework of what is right or wrong for their presupposed sexual identities. Patriarchal sexuality aims at confirming that people are “man/woman enough”. The ensuing self-knowledge and self-doubt becomes an existential part of people’s bodies, through which they meet each other and the world. There is, according to Ellison (1996a: 53) therefore a correlation between that which happens in the social order in terms of race, gender and other forms of oppression, and that which happens in people’s bedrooms.

This above-mentioned reticulation between identity and social structure can be summarised by stating: *we construct our sexuality through gender, and we confirm our gender through sexual behaviour*. For example, men who experience general sexual problems (such as erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, or low sexual desire), will rather define their problem in terms of gender than in sexual terms. Men will rather interpret their problem as an achievement-problem, a failure – not being “good enough”. Men with low sexual libido will often complain that they just don’t feel like a “real man”: “In compliance with the male supremacist script, a man may be concerned less about sexual pleasure and more with his validation as a properly gendered male.” (Ellison 1996a: 53)

#### **4.2 Male sexuality in a globalising, media-saturated culture**

*In order to discover new ways of meaningfully transforming masculinities as sites of power, the researcher proposes that a cursory examination should be done of how men are sexual in their cultural contexts today.* As was indicated earlier, sexuality is seemingly less a product of biological urges and more about the meanings that people attach to those urges. Men and women experience their sexual selves through a gendered prism, but the meanings of sex to women and men are in many instances very different - across social groups, among cultures and over time (see Kimmel and Messner, 2004).

As was argued earlier, globalisation can basically be understood as the range of shifts in the social, economic, and cultural spheres which are part of the growing movement of peoples, ideas and trade across the world. This definition implies that globalisation affects sexuality in a number of interconnected ways, probably most significantly through the pervasive presence of the mass media in every cultural and societal sphere. As people pour into the rapidly growing cities across the first and third world, they are exposed to new (mass) media images which offer radically different ways of imagining sex and gender arrangements and identities. (Altman 2004: 23)

According to Gauntlett (2002) the media has continually reflected - and may have partly led - the changing status of different sexual activities, attitudes and sexualities, spreading awareness of



different expectations and the existence of diversity. Discourses about sexuality and identity are strong ones, enthusiastically spread by the media and consumed by audiences. Sexuality is furthermore in many ways perceived as the key to happiness and knowing your ‘true self’. The private world of sex has certainly been flung (in totally new ways) into the popular public domain recently. Formal studies of the changing face of sexuality, alongside the representations of sexuality in films, magazines, news reports, pop videos, soap operas, and so on, all form part of the institutional reflexivity regarding sex - society talking to itself about sexuality. (Gauntlett 2002: 107)

The question can then be asked, if it makes sense to say that *sexuality is at the heart of human (and specifically masculine) identity today?* Gauntlett (2002: 122-123) argues that the answer is certainly yes, and more so than ever before. The discourses of magazines and self-help books, as well as many screen dramas, make knowing one’s sexual identity of crucial importance to inner happiness. “The media clearly suggests that, in order to be fulfilled en happy, you should: Understand your own sexuality; Have sex often; Seek help for sexual problems; Have a satisfactory sexual partner – or get a new one<sup>235</sup>.” (Gauntlett 2002: 123)

According to James (1996) unfortunately many men (including Christian men) have little understanding of the difference between sex and love, intimacy and intercourse. Within a Christian framework he contends (with James Nelson, 1988) that sexuality is about more than a physical act leading to ejaculation and orgasm. “Rather, it (Christianity) views sexuality as a part of a person’s constitutive psychic makeup which leads to expressions of vulnerability, passion,

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<sup>235</sup> It seems that these pervasive media messages about sex are increasingly (negatively) influencing not only men and women, but also young boys and girls. According to Brown (et al. 2006) sexually charged music, magazines, TV and movies push youngsters into intercourse at an earlier age, perhaps by acting as a kind of virtual peer that tells them everyone else is doing it. This is the first study to indicate that the more kids are exposed to sex in media, the earlier they have sex. Previous research had been limited to television. This study examined 1017 adolescents (in several schools in North Carolina) when they were aged 12 to 14 and again two years later. They were checked on their exposure during the two years to 264 items - movies, TV shows, music and magazines - which were analysed for their sexual content. In general it found that the highest exposure levels led to more sexual activity, with white teens in the group 2,2 times more likely to have had intercourse at ages 14 to 16 than similar youngsters who had the least exposure. The teenage pregnancy rate in the United States is three to 10 times higher than that found in other industrialised nations, making that and exposure to sexually transmitted infections a major public health concern. At the same time parents tend not to talk about sex with their children in a timely and comprehensive way, leaving a vacuum in which the media may become a powerful sex educator, providing frequent and compelling portraits of sex as fun and risk free. Interestingly one of the strongest “predictors of risk for early sexual intercourse for teens was the perception that his or her peers were having sex,” Brown (et al.) states (2006: 1025).

love and connection;” BUT in contrast: “A review of the contemporary sexual landscape reveals a far different picture. Sex for the sake of sex is commonplace, as are the plethora of diseases and disorders that accompany it. Movies and television shows portray little relationship between love, commitment, vulnerability and sex.” (James 1996: 85)

*To the extent that this distorted, commercialised and utilitarian view of sex<sup>236</sup> dominates the cultural landscape, it has the potential to rob men of the power and beauty of their sexuality, and inevitably their human dignity<sup>237</sup>.* A particular mythology of sexuality has developed, and men are seemingly driven to live the myth. The common masculine mythology for sex revolves around men as “sexual athletes”. This myth views sex as a sport, has its own language, involves score-keeping and conquest, and is oriented toward performance and reward. *Two predominant roles* of men can be identified within the sexual myth. Men are firstly expected to fulfill *the role of the “sexual warrior”* - to conquer and possess as many women as possible as a proof of their potency. Secondly, men must fulfill *the role of the ‘sexual worker,’* to “make love, perform, to produce the intended result - satisfying the women.” (James 1996: 86 – 87)

*Sexual behaviour therefore explicitly confirms manhood.* It makes men feel manly. Robert Brannon (1976) has identified (as noted in chapter 2) the four traditional rules of American manhood as “No Sissy stuff, Be a Big Wheel, Be a Sturdy Oak, Give’em Hell”. These four rules *lead to a sexuality built around accumulating partners (scoring), emotional distance, and risk taking.* Men are supposed to be ever ready for sex, constantly seeking sex, and constantly seeking to escalate every encounter so that intercourse will result. The emotional distancing of the sturdy oak is considered necessary for adequate male sexual functioning. Risk-taking becomes a centrepiece of male sexuality. Sex is about adventure, excitement, danger – taking

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<sup>236</sup> Vorster (2005: 906) contends that *a “utilitarian ethics” forms the foundational norm of modern sexuality.* Modern sexual attitudes and practices are closely related to a consumerist culture that is the product of market capitalism and economic globalization, and which practices a distorted form of utilitarian ethics that measures everything according to its utility. On the sexual terrain consumerism manifests itself in the *“performance attitude”*. As soon as a person loses his or her sexual attractiveness and capabilities he or she is deemed not worthy of sexual love anymore.

<sup>237</sup> *Sexual identity and human dignity are closely related to each other.* Grenz (1990:4) rightly states that sexuality runs deeper than the physical features that allow the reproductive function. It pertains to the deepest levels of our personality, entails a psychological, spiritual and biological dimension, influences a human being’s every act and determines our total response to life. *Though sex is a private act of intimacy that has direct consequences for our personal dignity, it also has an undeniable influence on the dignity of society as a whole.*

chances. Responsibility seems to be a word that seldom turns up in male sexual discourse. And this, of course, has serious medical side effects: STD's, HIV etc.

The effect of the current sexual pedagogy of a globalising mass-media culture is devastating to the psychic and moral health of young men. Depending on the cultural voices that a man chooses to listen to, sexuality is either celebrated or condemned. Therefore, many men experience a dualistic split as they feel driven to sexual experience, and yet react to prevailing cultural mores and trends.

“The vast amount of money and energy spent demonising or defending sexuality in our culture is indicative of the inordinate social fixation upon sexuality. Rather than being celebrated as a gift of God given to enhance and enrich life, sex has become a source of great pain for men... Whether gay or straight, men live with confusion and shame relative to their sexuality... an underdeveloped sexuality inhibits men's ability to love themselves, others or God.” (James 1996: 88-89)

#### **4.3 Sexual biotechnology and the masculine body as technological product**

In the well-known South African (Afrikaans) daily newspaper, *Die Burger* (11 October 2002), the heading of an article about masculinity by Emile Joubert states: “*Manne word net al hoe meer ontman*” (*Men are more and more emasculated*). In the introduction of the article he writes (*own translation*): “The ever-continuing conspiracy to emasculate men continues incessantly. You can nowadays not even turn the TV on without being exposed to something which questions your or your fellow male's virility.”

Joubert's introductory remarks therefore implicates that *men's masculinity is directly verified by their sexual performance-ability (virility)*. This affirms the researcher's assumption that the South African society (and the Western culture in general – as it is evident out of the sociological literature which was studied) - still (to an overwhelming degree) construe male identity by means of sexual interpretation schemes.

Joubert argues further (*own translation*):

“And in-between the smutty TV-advertisement prances wherein the soccer-hero Pele admits that he had erection problems. Just to rub it in, see. Because if the Sportsman of the previous century’s tools<sup>238</sup> collapse, what are the chances that Mr. John Citizen will evade the same fate? It all smells like a feministic conspiracy on the airwaves and self-doubt seems to be a daily phenomenon. With (good) reason.”

Joubert’s tone and style of writing is distinctively insurgent against the media’s apparent conspiracy to “emasculate men more and more” (“manne al meer te ontman”), as if men’s masculine identity is dependant on their ability to save their “tools” from caving in. Last-mentioned is throughout apparently still the hegemonic stereotypical masculine assumption.

In the past two to three decades there was an upsurge in research which was focused on the amalgamation of technology and medical science to create postmodern or “cyborgian” bodies<sup>239</sup>, including the construction of sexual or gendered bodies through operations, implants, hormones, substances, tools and procreative-technologies. This growing field of research about biotechnology and sex made a thorough exploration of the ways in which gender; sexuality and procreation were expanded, restricted, noted, researched and controlled by technology in the twentieth century<sup>240</sup>.

Bordo (1997) contends that - in a culture in which organ transplants, life-extension machinery, microsurgery, and artificial organs have entered everyday medicine - humans seem on the verge of practical realization of the seventeenth-century imagination of body as machine. But if we

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238 The use of this instrumental word is very insightful in terms of the everyday masculine understanding of sexuality. Nelson (1988: 34) asserts: “When we who are male think of sexuality, we usually think of ‘sex’, and that means genital experience...This genitalization also means that our sexual organs are highly important to our male self-images.” Although books about sexuality tell us “size isn’t important,” most men feel differently about it. Impotence further remains an enormous threat to men’s masculinity and well-being, as it is evident out of the quotations from *Die Burger*.

239 In this regard Anne Balsamo writes (1999): “...the technological production of identities (become) for sale and rent. Material bodies shop the global marketplace for cultural identities that come in different forms...the most dramatic (form) as the physical transformation of the corporeal body accomplished through surgical methods. Thus the natural body is technologically transformed into a sign of culture.” (Balsamo 1999: 280)

<sup>240</sup> See, e.g. Reuters, 2004 (ADDENDUM C)

have technically and technologically realized that conception, she argues that metaphysically we have deconstructed it:

“In the early modern era, machine imagery helped to articulate a totally determined human body whose basic functionings the human being was helpless to alter. The then-dominant metaphors for this body – clocks, watches, collections of springs – imagined a system that is set, wound up, whether by nature or by God the watchmaker, ticking away in predictable, orderly manner, regulated by laws over which the human being has no control. Understanding the system, we can help it to perform efficiently, and we can intervene when it malfunctions. But we cannot radically alter its configuration (Bordo 1997: 335). In place of that materiality, we now have what Bordo calls ‘cultural plastic’. “In place of God the watchmaker, we now have ourselves, the master sculptors of that plastic”. Popular culture does not apply any brakes to these fantasies of rearrangement and self-transformation. Rather, we are constantly told that we can ‘choose’ our own bodies.”

Therefore, in this era of late-modernity and capitalism Americans (and other people in technologically advanced countries) now possess a new, transformed relationship with biotechnology; one that now reaches past healing to the transformation of bodies<sup>241</sup>: “Thus, in a postmodern world, where bodies are a collection of various parts, and sexuality is fractured and dispersed in and around the body, the surgeon’s knife and hormonal treatments become tools for sexual enabling, reinvention, and goal-attainment.” (Loe 2000: 102).

#### **4.4 The creed of ‘big, hard and up’ remains intact**

In the light of the above-mentioned it can be argued that the twenty-first century therefore introduces a new era of mass-marketed sexual biotechnology. This is the era in which the “magic bullet” for sexual energy, confidence and masculinity arrive in the form of a pill. In the Viagra era large amounts of men joins the army of those bodies who’s “tools” collapsed, and need

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<sup>241</sup> See Bordo’s book (1993), *Unbearable Weight*, for an excellent work by one of America’s foremost feminist philosophers – on the multiple cultural meanings that have been laid upon the female body. Framing that body as contested terrain, Bordo both cherishes its vulnerability and celebrates its resilience and resistance.

“fixing”<sup>242</sup>. According to Meika Loe (2000)<sup>243</sup> most doctors and consumers agree that the loss of erectile functioning is apparently synonymous with the loss of masculinity. This confirms the main point of Emile Joubert’s article in *Die Burger* (referred to here above), as well as the main argument of a growing group of other researchers<sup>244</sup> on male sexual bodies, who contend that: ***sexuality is the area in which masculinity is proved, and that sexuality is consequently the most integral part of male identity.***

Loe (2000:118) describes the whole scenario in a striking way as follows:

“At the turn of the century, partly in reaction to the gains of women’s liberation and female sexual empowerment, at a time of self-help movements, great social change, and personal crisis, the desire to ‘fix’ and ‘erect’ male sexuality and power in a patriarchal society appears to be strong...it is now argued that men are ‘buying into’ commercially packaged manhood in many forms, including “amped-up virility”, and “technologically enhanced super-manhood.”

Viagra therefore epitomizes the rising acceptability of technologically improved bodies in the new postmodern era. After a history of medical expertise’s application of technology on women’s bodies, men are now also ear-marked for improvement. As Loe (2000) contends:

“As male bodies digress from ‘normal’ (erect and penetrating) sexuality, techno-scientific advances promise to ‘fix’ the problem, and thus the patriarchal ‘machine’. Thus, Viagra is both a

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242 Loe (2000) uses Michael Foucault’s understanding of power to explore the ways in which social theorists, doctors and consumers take part in a continuing dialogue about the construction of bodies, genders and selves. These consumers and doctors try to make sense of biotechnology and masculinity as they come into contact with Viagra: “Through multiple and varied discourses of ‘trouble’ and ‘repair’, consumers grapple with bodies, manhood and medical diagnoses and expose as constructs that which we take for granted. In this context, I argue that Viagra is imagined and utilized as a tool for ‘fixing’ and producing masculinity, but what form this takes and how this gets played out is varied and complex...Viagra is employed by practitioners as a tool, similar to jumper cables, to ‘jump-start the male machine’” (2000: 104)

243 Loe (2000) uses ethnographic data to examine the use and circulation of techno-scientific developments, together with the ways in which masculinity and heterosexuality are reproduced, as well as attacked, criticised and transformed by people who prescribe, distribute, market or use Viagra. She contends that Viagra is currently understood and implemented (within medical and social circles in America) as an instrument to try to ward off or treat the “crisis of masculinity”. Loe indicates that science, medicine, technology, gender and sexuality are very closely related in contemporary society; and she further exploits the ways in which consumers and doctors make sense of Viagra in terms of “trouble” and “repair”. She contends that Viagra is both a cultural and material instrument which is used in the production of gender and sexuality. Biotechnology was, according to her, used for the first time in America’s history to “fix” or promote heterosexual, male confidence and in that way attempting to avoid the “crisis of masculinity”.

244 One such a researcher is R.W. Connell in his book, *Masculinities* (1995), which has already been referred to in previous chapters.

material and cultural technology producing and reshaping gender and sexuality under the guise of techno-scientific progress.” (2000: 97)

Kevin Mumford (in Loe 2000: 100) explored the ways in which men’s impotence were treated, constructed and healed in the Victorian era. He investigated the “crisis of masculinity”<sup>245</sup> throughout the modernisation-processes (starting with advertisements that promise male virility), and the changed American assumptions about masculinity and male sexuality from the 1830’s to the 1920’s. During the era of colonisation “techno-fixes” like “aphrodisiacs” and “elixirs” were sold to and prescribed for men on a very restricted basis, as fertility-supplements. Mumford’s research indicated that male sexualities were explicitly formed by sexual science and technologies, social institutions, historical contexts and sexual politics over a certain time-period.

The implication of the construction of the male body as sexually potent, or as a technologically-improved “machine” can both be helpful and hurtful, as Loe indicated doctors and male consumers discovered. The status of cultural assumptions about masculinity in the West however often remains worrying: “We live in a culture that encourages men to think of themselves as their penises, a culture that still conflates male sexuality with something that we call ‘potency’...Today phallo-centrism is perpetuated by a flourishing medical construction that focuses exclusively on penile erections as the essence of men’s sexual function and satisfaction...(it) *perpetuates a detached, unemotional masculinity.*” (Leo 2000: 119, own italics).

The fact remains: *male sexuality is strongly driven in the direction of genital centrality.* According to Horrocks (1994: 157) the *two critical areas of the body* for many men are the *head and the penis*. The head is the instrument of thought, and therefore the source of intellectual and organizational power; and the penis, while potentially the most potent, is also the most vulnerable area. It is a place from where he expresses almost anything: love, hate, fear, tenderness, contempt, friendship, disgust. Horrocks (1994: 162) contends simply: *the penis is the man*. “One cannot talk about penises separate from their owners, just as we cannot talk about ‘sexuality’ in

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245 Reference was made earlier to the phenomenon and impact of the current experience of crisis among men. The limited scope of this dissertation makes an in-depth investigation thereof (more than what has already been said) impossible. Compare Kimmel (1987a) and Horrocks (1994); as examples in this regard.

abstract, or talk about ‘sexual problems’ separate from the problems that people have in relationships....So men feel about their penis as they feel about themselves: proud, shy, afraid, disgusted, ignorant, loving, hating, angry.”

These above-mentioned assertions imply that *the penis is simultaneously the source of a man’s greatest vulnerability, and his greatest feeling of power. Such an interpretation of the penis epitomizes the way the researcher perceives male identity: it is contradictory and ambivalent – simultaneously powerful and frail. It constantly wrestles with the feminine, absorbs it and then expels it; it purports to be tough, and then reveals its fragility; it seeks to hide neediness and intense feeling – and privately clings to others*<sup>246</sup>.

Ganzevoort (2003) also highlights this tension as *the tension between power (‘kracht’) and vulnerability (‘kwetsbaarheid’)*. It is especially true for boys and men (but also nowadays all the more for girls and women as well) that power is a highly appreciated characteristic: everything must be fast, powerful, robust and unshakable. Vulnerability, on the contrary, is evaluated in a more negative fashion. But Ganzevoort (2003: 111) contends that these two concepts are intricately interwoven: “The endurance of pain can indeed be experienced as heroic, but still it is rather than an indication of power than of vulnerability. Nevertheless these two – power and vulnerability – inseparably belong to each other.” (*researcher’s own translation*).

*However, the reigning creed on men’s bodies thus (still) seems to be: ‘big, hard and up’*<sup>247</sup>. Nelson (1978: 66-68) furthermore confirms the notion that there is an exaggerated male concern over the size of their genitals, a factor which is not unrelated to the *“bigger is better”-pattern of masculine cultural values*. Size of bodily structure is generally viewed as proof of masculinity and the ability to control. But last-mentioned nurtures self-aware, mechanistic perspectives about

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<sup>246</sup> Many men suffer great *anxiety and depression* because they are not ‘manly’ in the stereotyped manner, or because they have feelings that seem forbidden to men. They are very *lonely* because they do not know how to communicate to someone openly about feelings, and hence always remain cut off. They feel deeply abused, although often they don’t know how, or why, or from whom this happened?

<sup>247</sup> In a chapter titled “Up-manship,” James Dittes (1985: 71, 142) suggests that a man’s question ‘How was it?’ after lovemaking, “of course, means ‘How did I do?’ Did I reach, did I fill, did I last – enough?” To be a man is to be expected, and to expect oneself, to be forever “up,” even “one-up,” however capricious a man’s private parts in responding to appeals to performance-on-demand: “Batter up: You’re up, kid!” “Get your speed up,” “Wake up!” “Chin up!” “Grow up.” “Measure up.” (Dittes 1985: 140-141).



sex, and it leads to the decrease in capacities of self-sacrifice, tenderness, ecstasy and play (and consequently intimacy). The genitalisation of masculine sexuality implies the loss of whole-body erotica and sensitivity.

The cultural fantasy of the huge penis, like the idealized female body, still remains firmly intact, according to Bordo (1999: 70-73). Even before cosmetic surgeons began their campaigns, advertisements promulgating miracle products for increasing penis size both exploited and exacerbated already existing male insecurities by drawing on the equation: *penis size = manliness*<sup>248</sup>. The popular culture however not only compares penis size with manliness, but specifically only the hard, potent and erect penis is seen as “man enough” to comment upon. The erect penis is often endowed with an amplified consciousness that is bold, unafraid, and always ready. Indeed, “To be exposed as ‘soft’ at the core is one of the worst things a man can suffer in this culture”, according to Bordo (1999: 55).

Henceforth, a man always has to be able to perform powerfully and potently in the arena of sexuality – he has to get his penis erect and remain erect during sexual intercourse. If not, he is relegated to simply being not “man enough”. At least, this is the dominant message of the mass media. One example is a simple advertisement for erectile dysfunction / impotency placed in the newspaper, *Rapport*<sup>249</sup>, wherein the catchphrase at the top reads: “Regain you masculinity: return to a normal, active sex life out of impotence” (*translated out of Afrikaans*). The (problematic) implicit message is clear: if you lose your potency, you lose your manhood. What is the solution? Again: Viagra, the potency pill.

Bordo (1999: 42, 64) asserts very aptly:

“Look at viagra – not the drug itself, but the way men (both users and doctors) talk about it: Performance, performance, performance. I haven’t yet read one account in the newspapers or magazines in which a man talks about any increase in pleasure, either psychological or physical –

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<sup>248</sup> Very recently a “wonderbra” for men has even been developed (i.e. underpants that are specially developed to increase the appearance-size of male genitals). See addendum H (SAPA 2006) for more information. See also <http://www.aussiebum.com/>

<sup>249</sup> See Mens Clinic International, 2003.

beyond overwhelming relief, perhaps renewed pride. It's harder. It's firmer. It can go all night...The 'heart of masculinity' isn't a mechanical pump, and in imagining the penis as such, Viagran science actually administers more of the poison it claims to counteract."

Consequently, Bordo (1999: 59-60) contends that the concept impotence<sup>250</sup> should not be used to indicate erectile dysfunction, because it is loaded with humiliation and shame. Unlike other disorders, impotence implicates the whole man, not merely the body part. "He *is* impotent", unlike, "He *has* a headache". No attempt (in the Normal English language usage) is made to separate impotence from the total personality, and the personality is expected to perform like a machine<sup>251</sup>. Potency means power, and hence, Bordo suggests that the machine men (and their erect penises) are expected to perform like is a 'power tool.' (Bordo 1999: 59)

***In summary:*** *There are many different cultural messages<sup>252</sup> that proclaim contradictory orders to men all the time (via the mass media)<sup>253</sup>. Sometimes these messages are challenging and aggressive. Most models in advertisements and on magazine covers<sup>254</sup> stare coldly at the viewer,*

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<sup>250</sup> "Impotent", whose definitions are 'want of power,' 'weakness,' 'lack of effectiveness, helplessness,' and (only lastly) 'lack of ability to engage in sexual intercourse'? In keeping the term 'impotence', I figured, the drug companies would get to have it both ways: reduce a complex human condition to a matter of chemistry, while keeping the old shame machine working, helping to assure the flow of men to their doors." (Bordo 1999: 60)

<sup>251</sup> Therefore Bordo (1999: 65-67) also recommends that the term "hard" as it refers to the erect penis, should also be re-negotiated. When the erect penis is imagined as "hard", it is metaphorically endowed with armour (like a tank or a torpedo). She suggests that it is time to take that metaphorical armour off, so that the male body is conceptualized in terms of its varied feelings, rather than an imagined ideal of constancy. Henceforth it will be more suitable to speak about the *aroused* penis, not the "hard" penis. Seeing that arousal, by its very nature, comes and goes, and can take on a variety of forms, it is not a quality of "being," but implicitly suggest relationship – someone or something that has aroused another. In contrast to the aroused penis, the non-erect or flaccid penis has a unique ability to suggest vulnerability and fragility. It is more easily hurt than other parts of the body, and no other body parts offers that contrast. According to Bordo (1999: 44): "Unfortunately, the relation between the hard and soft penis often determines whether the soft penis will be cherished like a sleeping baby or derided as a flaccid piece of failure."

<sup>252</sup> Also refer back to Du Preez (2007) under the heading 9.1 ("Recent typifications of men and masculinities") in chapter four - where the effects of the commercial exploitation of men and women as sex-objects and the concomitant voyeuristic sexualisation of their bodies (with its packaging as visual erotica), was evaluated ; and the need to consume more commodities in order to **fill the intimacy-void - that is left by the erotic materials in the media** - was illuminated. See the next heading in this chapter for more detail on this intimacy-void.

<sup>253</sup> A closer look at the stereotyped images of men in our popular culture (in the previous chapter) showed that images are found which provide an insight into the expectations of the culture, and also into the unconscious depths of masculinity. The ambivalence was indicated in the double messages that are projected via mass media to men and boys. That is, both images that consolidate or reinforce the stereotypes of masculinity, and that subvert it. Both the messages of macho man and something quite different were found (it not only touched on embodiment, but with the whole experience of manhood and masculinity). This causes much of the uncertainty and confusion among men and their experiences of their manhood today.

<sup>254</sup> Refer to the previous chapter and Addendum A for a detailed analysis of these messages or discourses.

defying the observer to view them in any way other than how they have chosen to present themselves: as powerful, armored, emotionally impenetrable. “I am a rock,” their bodies (and sometimes their genitals) seem to proclaim. But, there are many men (including the researcher) that do not fully agree with these cultural messages that tell them their power resides in their pants. *The researcher has indicated that male sexuality is strongly driven in the direction of genital centrality, but that although the reigning creed on men’s bodies therefore (still) seems to be: ‘big, hard and up’, men need to re-evaluate this dominating discourse critically and learn to embody alternative ways of being men, i.e. valuing vulnerability as necessary equivalent to power.*

## 5. INTIMACY-VOID<sup>255</sup> CAUSED BY AN EXACERBATED ACHIEVEMENT-ETHOS

It has been made clear earlier that men constantly test themselves, perform heroic feats and take enormous risks, all because they want other men to grant them their manhood. In this regard masculinity can be seen as a homosocial enactment which is fraught with danger, with the risk of failure, and with intense relentless competition (as was indicated here above). Consequently: *if masculinity is a homosocial enactment, its overriding emotion is fear.* Michael Kimmel (1996: 232-233) contends that the great secret of (American) manhood is exactly this: “We are afraid of other men.”

Kimmel (1996) argues that homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood, that the reigning definition of masculinity is a defensive effort to prevent being emasculated. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. It is the fear (of heterosexual men) that other men will unmask us, emasculate us and reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not ‘real men’. Fear makes men ashamed, because the recognition of fear in them is proof to themselves that they are not as manly as they pretend. Kimmel asserts: “In our efforts to suppress or overcome those fears, the dominant culture exacts a tremendous price from those deemed less than fully manly: women, gay men, non-native-born men, men of colour. *This perspective may*

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<sup>255</sup> See the last section of this dissertation (at the very end of chapter six) for cues on restoring this intimacy void via a theology of the cross and resurrection of Christ, and specifically facilitated by a spirituality of vulnerable courage.

*help clarify a paradox in men's lives, a paradox in which men have virtually all the power and yet do not feel powerful.*" (own italics) (Kimmel 1996: 237)

Paradoxically then, it is assumed that *many men's feelings are not the feelings of the powerful, but of those who see themselves as powerless.* These are the feelings that come inevitably from the discontinuity between the social and the psychological, between the aggregate analysis that reveals how men are in power as a group and the psychological fact that they do not feel powerful as individuals. Many men might also feel powerless, partly because the rules of manhood are constructed in such a way that only the tiniest fraction of men come to believe that they are the macho sturdiest of oaks, the most lethal disclaimer of femininity, the most daring and aggressive. The overwhelming majority of men are disempowered by other means – such as discrimination on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, age or sexual preference.

These feelings of powerlessness are the anger and frustration of men who were raised to believe themselves entitled to feel that power, but do not feel it<sup>256</sup>. This may explain the recent popularity of the various men's movements that honour and respect men's feelings of powerlessness and acknowledge those feelings to be both true and real. The workshops and retreats in these movements are designed to help men claim their "inner" power, their 'deep manhood', or their "warrior within", but at a cost (as was indicated in the last part of chapter 2). (Kimmel 1996: 238-239)

The researcher contends that the above-mentioned *culture of performance-driven masculinity is leaving a huge cleavage in the way men experience and facilitate authentic and life-giving intimacy.* It is assumed that this void is greatly caused by the presence of this kind of

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<sup>256</sup> Capraro (2000) contends that traditional male identity and *gender role strain* results in the contradictory nature of masculinity: men are both powerful and powerless. In objective social analysis, men as a group have power over women, but in their subjective experience of the world, men as individuals do not feel powerful. In fact, they feel powerless (Capraro 2000:310). When men are not powerful (thus, when they experience gender role strain), they may often compensate for their lack of power or seek an alternative to obtaining social power through, e.g. exercising violence or abusing alcohol. In this regard Kaufman (1994) aptly concludes that men's social power is the source of individual power and privilege, but it is also the source of the individual experience of pain and alienation (Kaufman 1994:142-143). In this regard, *gender role strain theory can be related to the issue of power and performance.* See also Lemon (1991: 233) for reasons why, due to social, economic and political change, men have been confronted with the increasing irrelevance of the traditional male gender role, and how this has prompted a crisis of legitimacy insofar as the assumptions of hegemonic masculinity are concerned.

fear/anxiety that is infused in too many arenas in men's lives. Furthermore, it seems that the *competition-ethos* is steadily grounded in the pervasive masculine sexism which affects all humans. Marva Dawn (1993) writes the following in her book *Sexual Character: beyond technique to intimacy*, about the dearth of intimacy in the technologically-driven and globalising, post-traditional milieu: "...we must understand that the desperation in our society for intimacy often leads to genital experimentation by those who truly long instead for social affection...on the other hand, we intimize our technology...the very nature of a technological milieu prevents our social fabric from being conducive to the development of intimacy." (Dawn 1993: 17)

It is often the case that men must prove themselves within the arena of sexuality. The action of sexual intercourse all too often becomes the "test terrain" where the question: "Am I man enough?" must be answered. Masculinity is often something that must be proven and achieved within the Western Culture (Sherlock 1996: 198). This realisation generates an uncomfortable anxiety in many men's lives, since they can feel jeopardized by a sense of incompetence, namely: that they are not good enough, but should prove in some way that they are "man enough". Many researchers have indicated that these uncomfortable levels of anxiety ironically cause the unwanted effect of sexual "under-performance" - sexual dysfunctions such as premature ejaculation and erectile dysfunctions<sup>257</sup> are in most instances directly linked to the presence of high levels of anxiety.

There is subsequently *still a void/vacuum evident wherein men ask at an existential level: who am I / what does manhood mean today?* Within this post-traditional and globalising Western culture men are often uncertain about what is expected of them, and what they can expect of themselves. This uneasiness concerns millions of men who grew up with wholly different interpretation schemes of masculinity. It is furthermore also part of a much wider spiritual "uneasiness" which often reigns within a postmodernist culture – one that is not (any more) so sure of its values and place in the world. There is a supposed tendency that in certain areas of

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<sup>257</sup> Hedon (2003) indicates that anxiety plays a major role in the development of the problems associated with erectile dysfunction (ED). Psychological and behavioural responses to ED can lead to a vicious cycle of increased uneasiness, distance and conflicts. This in turn leads to a lower frequency of sexual encounters, less time spent together and lack of communication between partners in a relationship. In this review, methods to decrease sexual anxiety are discussed.

life, specifically with regards to love, intimacy and relationships, men has lost direction and don't know exactly where to find meaningful guidance.

### **5.1 Emotional mechanics of male intimacy: suppressing tenderness, self-acceptance**

In the post-traditional society relationships are entered into for the mutual satisfaction of emotional needs - unlike in the marriages of traditional cultures, which were (it is said) primarily for economic and symbolic convenience. By contrast, post-traditional relationships are consciously constructed, analysed, or broken up, according to how the partners are feeling. This is what Giddens (1992) calls the transformation of intimacy - in which an intimate and democratic partnership of two equals ('soulmates') becomes important for members of modern society.

*Especially on the terrain of sexual intimacy men are often estranged from their body-selves, and subsequently seldom experience integrated vitality and wholeness.* If real intimacy is understood as a space of unconditional acceptance wherein a person can disclose without the anxiety of rejection, where is the core problem for men situated? The researcher assumes strongly that **the problem originates (amongst others) with a lack of self-acceptance.** *Men often do not experience their body-selves as integrated whole.* The reason for this is, amongst others, the different dualistic interpretation schemes through which they try to make sense of their embodied masculinity.

Within today's culture, with the emphasis on achievement and production as highest goals, men are subsequently often sold out to the society's standards. Within those standards they must prove themselves, and they often come up "too short". Therefore it is difficult to primarily accept them selves as "good / man enough". Consequently a dearth of authentic intimacy-encounters (as defined here above) begins to exist.

James Nelson (1978) outlines the above-mentioned problem (of the exacerbated emphasis on achievement) as follows:

“The body as a whole should be the source of sexual pleasure – in responsiveness, feeling, giving and receiving. Under the pressure of the performance principle, however, our sexuality becomes genitalized, identified with specific ‘sex acts’...in our society, there is an exaggerated estimation of the virtue of competent sexual performance in genital intercourse...most of the street word synonyms for intercourse reflect the technological mind’s goal orientation rather than caring, sensitivity, and responsiveness. Body alienation does not nurture eroticized, sensitive persons who can love sexually; it produces technically competent, genitally-focused individuals who “make love”. (1978: 43)

The subtle power-game within sexual relationships is often brought to the fore during the act of sexual intercourse: “*For intercourse to be achieved, the man must ‘perform’*. He must produce and maintain an erection, and the threat of impotence is ever present. But in this sense, the woman never ‘fails’, and in some strange biological sense she always ‘wins’ in the sex act. The male organ is reduced to flaccidity and, for a time, to incapability, while the woman is capable of sustained sexual activity. Anxious and jealous the man retaliates with assumptions of his own superiority. Indeed, the anxiety he feels in face of his partner’s sexual power threatens to make him impotent, but by the transformation of that anxiety into aggression he can perform, he can dominate, and he can penetrate” (Nelson 1978: 62) (own italics and bold letters)

Henceforth it becomes increasingly apparent that the *anxiety which an achievement ethic elicits can often lead to deficient experiences of real intimacy, and furthermore, can (in the worst degree) cause aggressiveness and violence*, as is evident out of the under-mentioned quotation:

“One cost of male dominance is hyper-rationalism and its counter side, the truncated development of the affective life<sup>258</sup>. Many men simply do not ‘feel’ very well<sup>259</sup>...Fundamental to

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<sup>258</sup> According to Bantjes (2004: 57-58) males, at a very young age, are told that “boys don’t cry”. Boys growing up in western society learn to stifle their tears and other emotional displays – the message they receive is: “push it down, stuff it inside, don’t show that feeling otherwise you will be seen as weak and as a failure”. Furthermore they learn that in order to “be a man” they should hide their feelings and silence their fears. A boy in western culture is thus forced into a rigid mould (Bantjes calls it a “straight jacket”) of masculine toughness that denies him his emotions and robs him of the chance to develop a full range of emotional resources. In effect, restriction of emotional expression leaves boys to manage relationships, conflict, adversity, and change with a limited range of emotional tools, and may even result in maladaptive emotional expression, which in turn leads to unhealthy development and an impaired inability to form attachments. Within this regard, MacInnes (2001) argues that there is an astonishingly broad contemporary consensus which urges men to abandon what is imagined to be traditional masculinity in order

such narrowed rationalism is the male psychology of dominance and control...Competition is injected into situations which do not call for it. As an adjunct of this syndrome, violence becomes a manifestation of masculinity, with immense costs to both individual and group. ***A certain code of masculinity is purchased at the price of suppressing tenderness and self-acceptance.*** Socialized toward a deep fear of homosexuality<sup>260</sup> and toward a self-respect based in considerable measure upon sexual potency and conquest, the young man is torn by both cultural demands and fears about his own sexual strength. *The implications for social violence are unmistakable.*" (own italics and bolded parts) (Nelson 1978: 67)

Given many men's inability to form authentic relationships<sup>261</sup>, it is not surprising to discover that they look to others to provide them with feelings of acceptance, passion and significance. In a culture that places such a high value on sexuality (as indicated above), ***most men have been socialized to view sexual activity as the main vehicle of receiving intimacy and tenderness.***

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to get in touch with their feelings and develop their emotional articulacy, for they have "nothing to lose but their inhibitions, loneliness, and alienation from intimacy and the source of their humanity." (MacInnes 2001: 323).

<sup>259</sup> Another consequence of underdeveloped emotional life of many men is the difficulty many men have addressing grief in the midst of profound loss. Herbert Anderson (1997: 203-226) explores the ways in which the construction of masculinity contributes to this difficulty. Whereas traditional images of manhood lead many men to hide their feelings and suppress their grief over multiple losses, Anderson suggests how pastoral caregivers can help men enhance their freedom to grieve. One way is to help men develop new ways of thinking about being human and being men. He suggests that the Biblical stories of King David and Job, the lamentations of Jeremiah, and the example of Jesus can help critique and reconstruct masculine stereotypes that have been captured by a capitalist society. Another way is to help men discover a common language for sharing the pains, so that the loneliness of grief is transformed into sadness that can be shared through an experience of empathic mutuality, within a so-called community of sorrow. (Anderson 1997: 204). In this regard, see also Tong (2004), in whose qualitative research study, she journeys with a group of white, Afrikaans speaking men whose wives had died to due a terminal illness. Tong argues that dominant discourses in relation to masculinity and religion have placed restrictions on men when dealing with loss and grief, resulting in isolation and loneliness. Against a postmodern backdrop, and guided by social constructionist and poststructuralist discourses, she indicates how her research-as-narrative pastoral therapy makes it possible to co-author alternative ways of dealing with grief.

<sup>260</sup> This deep fear of homosexuality is also implanted at a very early stage in young males' lives. Messages such as, "stop acting like a girl", "boys don't cry" or "don't be a sissy" can lead boys to feel anxiety about and even fear of being like the opposite sex. Hence, according to Pollack (1998), boys learn that becoming a man is not simply a process of growing older, but is achieved by rejecting "feminine" behaviours and embracing those characteristics that are seen to be "masculine". In this process, mothers (as the embodiment of all that is feminine) are rejected in search of manhood. Western society seems to dictate that for a boy it is of paramount importance to distance yourself from your mother and all things that are feminine, otherwise you'll be considered "soft" or called "gay".

<sup>261</sup> According to Chittister (1998) men's inability to form authentic relationships is mainly the result of the patriarchal system that denies personal expression and causes personal relationships to suffer. "Men are trained to achieve and compete, not to support, not to understand, not to compassionate, not to stand by. They have buddies, not friends. To hide a fear of failure, they learn early to brag about their own exploits, regardless how mundane, and to discredit the efforts of others...Emotional development becomes a lonely, private enterprise. Getting ahead, making money, becoming powerful, having answers, suppressing feelings, and being in charge come to consume them. ***Life goes into work and power rather than into relationships.***" Chittister (1998: 27-28) (own italics and bolded sentence). See also Real (1998) for some explanations why men are finding it increasingly difficult to have and maintain intimate relationships.



This is normally done *under pressure of gender role strain*<sup>262</sup>. The theory of gender role strain (conflict and stress) emphasizes that men have emotional troubles because traditional masculinity tends to suppress emotion and deny vulnerability; therefore many men suffer from masculine stereotypes. However, it needs to be noted that the essential source of gender role strain has a close connection more with the issue of power than with feelings, although the focus of gender role strain has been more on males' feelings and their emotional articulacy.

## 6. MEN AND POWER ABUSE THROUGH VIOLENCE AND CRIME

A further important aspect which ensues out of the above-mentioned is the issue of wider social injustice (specifically violence and crime). For many men, masculinity is often the character-ideal which legitimates social injustice. Most men are socialized to obtain power-related traits and to accumulate wealth, control and status. If they fail, it is at least expected that they will exert control over people beneath them in the social hierarchy: "Men without status and power as well as men with status and power feel entitled to use whatever means are necessary, including violence, to assert their male prerogatives." (Ellison 1996a: 99).

Men regularly seek compensation for their pain ("intimacy-void") and powerlessness by means of the hierarchical social system, whereby they attempt to "prove" their masculinity within dominant power practices, and even through violence (e.g. rapes, abuses, domestic violence

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<sup>262</sup> On the basis of this above-mentioned discussion of masculinity, it can be argued that rigidly socialized stereotypes about masculinity are a primary contributing factor to masculine gender role strain. It can furthermore be hypothesized that masculine gender role strain could be revolving around the issue of power as competition, achievement, and control (as was indicated already here above).

etc.)<sup>263</sup> and crime<sup>264</sup> - which can serve as “suitable resources” for doing masculinity within the specific social contexts of the street, the workplace, and the family<sup>265</sup>.

Men are more likely than women to have structural power, and are therefore also more likely to abuse such power – as seen in economic greed, political corruption, and military massacres<sup>266</sup>. In many instances then, power leads to abuse by men. But, it can be argued that men’s greater abuse of power simply may be a function of their greater likelihood of being in positions of power. Yet, it has been indicated convincingly that gender is not incidental to men’s having greater structural power than women, nor is it incidental to the use of violence, the major form of abuse.

Although males, in general, do seem to have a greater predisposition toward aggression than females, aggressive behaviour is definitely learned and is responsive to a wide range of situational conditions. In Western culture male aggressiveness appears to be viewed ambivalently. Basow (1992: 311-312) contends that while violence and its social effects (crime, rape, wars) are overtly condemned, aggression and violence are covertly glorified in the media (films, books, and especially TV) and in daily interactions. Action films like the *Rambo* series are box-office hits mainly because the ‘action’ is violent. “Because of the link between masculinity and violence, one way of ‘proving’ one’s masculinity is by some form of aggression

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<sup>263</sup> Livingston (2002: 19) asserts that all dynamics involved in intimate violence centre around the issues of abuse, control and power. In this regard he quotes Dutton who contends: “One is reminded of Erich Fromm’s definition of sadism as the conversion of feelings of impotence to feelings of omnipotence. While batterers may appear powerful in terms of their physical or socio-political resources, they are distinctly impotent in terms of their psychic and emotional resources – even to the point of depending on their female partners to maintain their sense of identity.”

<sup>264</sup> It is a well-known fact that the vast majority of crime is committed by men (see Livingston 2002: 29). According to Messerschmidt (1993: 1): “Arrest, self-report, and victimization data all reflect that men and boys both perpetrate more conventional crimes and the more serious of these crimes than do women and girls. Men also have a virtual monopoly on the commission of syndicated, corporate, and political crime. Indeed, gender has consistently been advanced by criminologists as the strongest predictor of criminal involvement. Gender explains more variance in crime cross-culturally than any other variable.”

<sup>265</sup> See Moolman (2004).

<sup>266</sup> The evidence is overwhelming that violence is primarily a male phenomenon, linked closely to stereotypic gender roles and traits. Violence against women, in particular, reveals the gender dynamics of power and the cultural support of its maintenance, however many pronouncements are made to the contrary. “Until societal power becomes more equally redistributed, until the male gender role becomes disassociated from dominance over women, until norms develop that truly support equality and nonviolence, it is unlikely that we will see much change in the statistics of sexual harassment, rape, and battering.” (Basow 1992: 322)

or violence. Many male political leaders may try to prove their masculinity through macho talk and military intervention. In this sense, for many men war may be viewed as the ultimate proof of manhood.” (Basow 1992: 312)

### **6.1 Men’s talk about and agencies’ response to men’s violence**

Men’s violence may be acted out against many entities - themselves, women, girls, boys, each other, animals, etc. Jeff Hearn (1998: 4) contends that the term ‘men’s violences’ should be preferred to ‘male violence’ for several reasons. First, it is more precise: it attributes the violence to men. Second, it makes it clear that there is not any assumption of biological inevitability to the violence or a biological cause of the violence. In the third instance, it removes the ambiguity that there might be a special form of violence that is ‘male’ that is only one part of the totality of violence of men. Lastly, it acknowledges the plurality of men’s violences.

Violence in South Africa is an every day occurrence, much of it between men, but, even more, from men to women (see e.g. Dangor et al. 1996). It has provided one of the dominant stories (along with sport) through which men could understand who they are and their place in the world. The violence may have been institutionalised through conscription on the one side, or participation in freedom struggle on the other, or in systems of labour, or may have been interpersonal.

The extent of men’s violence to women is immense – it may be committed against known women, as wives, girlfriends, partners, ex-partners, mothers, other relatives, friends and neighbours; in the form of rape, date rape, wife beating, assault, sexual harassment on the job, verbal harassment etc. This is not to say that all men are violent towards women all the time, in all societies, in all contexts or cases. It is, however, to recognize the pervasive presence of those violences by men to women.

The killing of women by intimate partners (also known as intimate female homicide or intimate femicide)<sup>267</sup> is the most extreme form and consequence of violence against women. According to Mathews (et al. 2004), gender differences are globally found in homicide patterns. Men are at greater risk of being killed than women and this is mainly done by other men. Women, on the other hand, are primarily killed by the opposite gender. The murder of women by an intimate partner accounts for between 40 – 70% of all female homicides. This form of violence has received very little attention and the few studies that have been conducted have been mainly in developed countries.

Given the high levels of gender-based violence and the excessive rates of homicide in South Africa, Mathews (et al.) (2004) have argued that it is critical to establish the size of the problem and the pattern of intimate femicide in South Africa. The following brief report gives an indication of the findings of the first national female homicide study:

**Table 1: Rates of intimate femicide by race for women 14 years & older**

White	2.8 per 100 000
Coloured	18.3 per 100 000
Indian	7.5 per 100 000
African	8.9 per 100 000
Overall	8.8 per 100 000

The intimate femicide fatality rate by race group is shown in Table 1. The rate for Coloured women was more than double (18.3/100 000) the rate of African women (8.9/100 000), and more than six times that of White women. Perpetrators of intimate femicide were overwhelmingly male. Cohabiting partners were the most common perpetrators, followed by boyfriends and husbands (Table 2).

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<sup>267</sup> *Intimate femicide*: The killing of a female person by an intimate partner (i.e. her current or ex- husband or boyfriend, same sex partner or a rejected would-be lover). *Non-intimate femicide*: The killing of a woman by someone other than an intimate partner. *Female homicide*: Intimate and non-intimate femicide.

**Table 2: Relationship status in intimate femicide cases**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
Cohabiting partner	50.1%
Boyfriend	29.9%
Husband (include traditional marriages)	18.4%
Incest perpetrator	0.7%
Same sex partner	0.6%
Rejected person proposing love	0.3%

**The core of the findings can be summarised as follows:**

In South Africa 8.8 per 100 000 women (14 years and older) were killed by an intimate partner in 1999. This amounts to 4 women killed per day by an intimate partner, in other words: ***1 woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner.*** One in every two women killed by a known perpetrator is killed by an intimate partner.

In the light of the above-mentioned it is clearly evident that ***men's violence is a major public health problem.*** According to Sabo (2004: 330) men's anger and violence derive, in part, from sex inequality. Men use the threat or application of violence to maintain their political and economic advantage over women and lower-status men. Male socialization reflects and reinforces these larger patterns of domination. Therefore the reality and potential of men's violence impact women's mental and physical health can be surely assumed. However, men's violence also demands a cost on men themselves in the forms of fighting, gang clashes, gay-bashing, intentional infliction of injury, homicide, suicide, and organized warfare.

The researcher is convinced that ***a big part of transforming a culture of violence means transforming masculinity.*** In other words, *encouraging and enabling men to make other choices about what they do with their bodies, and insisting that men utilize their own agency to make*

*different sorts of choices, rather than freezing in a posture of defensiveness, defiance, and immobility.*

## 7. POWER DISPLAYS IN THE DOMAIN OF SPORT

*In sports, masculinity is also tied to aggression and violence.* The greater the danger of injury and the more contested the activities, the more likely it is that the sport and its players will be viewed as masculine. Thus, contact sports (such as rugby, hockey, boxing, wrestling and soccer) are viewed as more masculine than sports such as golf or swimming, which are neither combative nor extremely competitive. (Basow 1992: 312)

According to Beynon (2002: 18), there was (in Britain and the United States) in the latter half of the nineteenth century (following various socio-political traumas), a determined effort to re-masculinise men through sports and outdoor activities and to reverse what was held to be a loss of manliness. Since then manliness has been strongly associated with performance in sports.

Burstyn (1999: 21) contends that sport is a social text of information with the power of communication – which functions as a ceremonial ritual that actively involves unconscious as well as conscious participation. “As a widespread ceremonial ritual of the industrial age, sport is remarkable for its ability to express two apparently contradictory sets of qualities: on the one hand, modernity, abstraction, efficiency, science, concept, and mind; on the other, the past, archaism, worship, emotionality, sex and the body.”

The basic point remains that *many of the specific forms and actions of sport, and the idealizations of sport culture, are characterized by hypermasculinity<sup>268</sup> and surplus aggressivity.* On the one hand they exhibit an excess of the qualities associated with the most extreme potentialities of the male body and the competitive and violently instrumental masculine ‘role’. On the other hand they exhibit a relative deficiency of those qualities associated with the

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<sup>268</sup> See here under for a further explication of the phenomenon of hypermasculine displays in sport.

possibilities of the female body and the cooperative, supporting feminine 'role'. (cf. Messner, 1988)

Conventions for representing gender in mass media have come under increasing scrutiny during the past two decades. However, very few studies have focused on gender images in sport media, which is somewhat remarkable, given the omnipresence of sport programming and athletic imagery in media, as well as the fact that sport and masculinity have been culturally equated in many Western societies (including South Africa).

It has been noted at the start of this chapter that *the body has been ever-present within the marketing orbits of mass consumption, and has come to represent the central focus of consumer culture today*. Its worth rests not in its autonomous development, but in its ability to match popular ideals of youth, health, fitness and beauty (Shilling 1993). Central in this part of the chapter are questions about the way in which male and female bodies are diversely presented within the penetrative channels of consumer culture, and what the role of the sport industry is within this process. It will subsequently be very concisely considered how men (in particular) are depicted in relation to sporting practice, and how this might influence popular perceptions of the male 'self'. In other words: *how does the relationship between sport and consumer culture directly affect popular perceptions of masculinity and the body?*

Indeed, the inner logic of consumer culture depends upon the cultivation of an insatiable appetite to consume images (Bordo 1999). Through its widespread employment of body imagery, the media makes individuals more conscious and more aware of their bodily state. Satisfaction with outward appearance often appears to dominate inner feelings. The degree to which we measure up to 'the look' has come to represent the currency of social relations, our value within society and our potential for social acceptability (Shilling 1993).

Andrew Parker (1996: 131-136) affirms that the development of the sport/media relationship has had a dramatic impact on the way in which both male and female bodies have been presented and perceived. Men, as well as women, are expected to respond to the influential and pervasive

forces of consumer culture. Masculinity is clearly defined within this realm, particularly within the context of sport. Parker illustrates the changing nature of sport as a cultural site in which a range of heterosexual masculinities are produced. He maintains that dominant elements of the current change are the powerful discourses around health and the male body<sup>269</sup>. “Emanating from film, television, videos, books, and magazines, notions of muscularity, strength and power emerge, wrapped up with generous helpings of fearless domination, to produce images of the ideal man.” (Parker 1996: 131)

Parker insists on the recognition of the existence of a multiplicity of masculinities according to the diverse cultural values in place at any given time. These divergent masculine forms are arranged in terms of hierarchical position, above which specific hegemonic ideals set the masculine agenda. In this sense, he endeavours to show that “ultimately, sport, via its links with consumer culture, does have a role to play in the promotion and maintenance of such ideals.” (Parker 1996: 136)

But, *sport does not exclusively have a (potentially) “negative” impact on masculinity* by the development of detrimental discourses with regards to health and the body. In contrast, some psychologists are becoming ever more aware that for instance soccer (and the recent 2006 World Cup in Germany in particular) seems to have a *positive effect* on mental health. In an article titled, *The World Cup, Men and their emotions*<sup>270</sup>, an in-depth survey by the Mental Health Foundation in the United Kingdom highlights how men feel about football, and shows that football grants men the opportunity to convey tension and emotion, which is essential for maintaining health. From the survey, at least 64% of men indicated that football made it easier for them to share feelings. The researchers also found a reduction in numbers of emergency psychiatric admissions during the World Cup finals.

Dr. Andrew McCulloch, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, says: “It is encouraging that football makes it easier for men to talk about their feelings as traditionally, men

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<sup>269</sup> Some of these issues concerning the interplay between male bodies, power, health and the media have been discussed in this chapter and some at the end of the previous chapter. A more detailed exploration will furthermore be continued in the next chapter (out of a pastoral-theological perspective).

<sup>270</sup> See “*The World Cup, Men and their emotions*”



are far less likely than women to share their innermost thoughts. It is important that men feel able to express their emotions in whatever way they find most comfortable. Socialising and talking about our feelings are vital for good mental health and well being, as is exercise.” It is also postulated that watching and supporting football presents men with the opportunity to connect and bond. From the survey 64% of men said they enjoyed watching a football match with their family.

### 7.1 Sporting bodies, power and its masculine idealisations

It has been mentioned that Foucault (1979) views the body and its discursive interpretations as sites at which the material effects of power can be explored. It is a tangible enactment and representation of these intersections. “The body is directly involved in a political field...power relations have an intimate hold upon it; they invest it, train it, and torture it, force it to carry out its tasks, to perform ceremonies and emit signs” (Foucault, 1979: 25). Therefore, *sport is the approved dominant physical culture* – ceremony in Foucault’s sense – in our era, *defining benchmarks (‘emitting signs’) for beauty, performance and elite display* that involve the bodies and imaginations-within-bodies of billions of people in extended interactions.

In Western thought, *the athletic male body has been a mark of power and moral superiority for those who bear it*. Those who have these physical characteristics, along with others such as the “correct” race and class status - in terms of white, middle-class heterosexual, i.e. hegemonic masculine traits – are assumed to be inherently “morally” superior<sup>271</sup>. Which bodies are marked as superior is however not static, but contested in many diverse ways. (Dworkin & Wachs 2004: 507-510)

According to Burstyn (1999) one master-narrative – the one of hypermasculinity – survives and thrives through the culture of sport and its erotic, heroic, masculine idealizations. “Power,

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<sup>271</sup> This assumption is confirmed by Peterson (1998: 16) who states: “Clearly, some male bodies are more visible, powerful and valued than others and, since the nineteenth century, the bodies of white, European, middle-class, heterosexual men have been constructed as the standard for measuring and evaluating all bodies.”

forceful instrumentality, and control, up to and including the issue of violence, are the terms of hypermasculine sexual display within heroic masculinity in the sporting arena. They are the elemental components of a language of heroic masculinity that all members of society understand, even if all do not speak it.” (Burstyn 1999: 36)

Therefore, physical deployment and display of the body in sport has an erotic dimension because bodies are not merely collections of muscles, bones and will; they are also animated by sexual drives, which are biologically based and socially shaped. In many cases – including that of sport – the treatment of sexuality in contemporary human life and culture has been distorted and, its presence has been minimized or entirely disavowed. Yet sexuality, particularly as it relates to power, is a subject that deserves much more attention and understanding in our analysis of sport, gender culture, and the social order. Unfortunately, the exploration of this subject transcends the limit of this dissertation, but it nevertheless deserves mentioning.

## 7.2 Sport, muscles and Christianity

In addition to the above-mentioned relations between masculine embodiment, sport, power, surplus aggressivity and media representations in this regard, another aspect will now concisely be added: **sport, muscular masculinity and (Christian) religion.**

Stewart van Leeuwen et al. (1993: 288–289) explains that membership in many nineteenth-century Protestant churches consisted primarily of girls and women. Here the concern arose that boys and men, and especially Christian boys and men, would become too womanly, since many of the qualities associated with being Christian were those traditionally associated with being female. It was also argued that women had come to dominate the church and had effeminised religion and Christianity. During this era<sup>272</sup> a major campaign was launched to regain the church

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<sup>272</sup> This era refers to the years between **Theodore Roosevelt’s** accession to the Presidency in 1901 and America’s entry into the World War in 1917, which is conventionally labelled the ‘progressive era’. It was epitomised by the values and ideals of President Roosevelt, who elevated compulsive masculinity and military adventurism to the level of a national myth. According to Lemon (1991: 39-41), “Roosevelt was regarded as a ‘man’s man’, providing a model of masculine power and efficiency for a generation of young men who felt that life had passed them by. Indeed, Roosevelt’s progressivism had many features of a Christian revival, being essentially moralistic and idealistic. During this time, even the image of the church and of Christ was altered to fit the new masculine image,

for men. Feminised religion was replaced with a “*muscular Christianity*”<sup>273</sup>. In short, attempts were made to *equate true Christianity with true manhood*. Consequently, concerned church leaders alert to wider social norms began to shift their emphasis from what they saw as ‘feminized’ values such as meekness, humility and submissiveness to a new set of ‘manly values’.

“Christianity emasculates no man, makes no man effeminate, depreciates no manly virtue. There is nothing that puts so much iron into the blood; nothing that tones and builds up the manly nature; ...nothing that emphasizes and exalts manliness, as does Christianity. The purpose, the incarnate idea of Christianity is to make magnificent manhood, to make men like Christ, the manliest of all men.” (Grimes 1906, quoted in Lemon 1991:41)

Putney (2001:11) states: “Muscular Christianity can be defined simply as a Christian commitment to health and manliness. Its origins can be traced to the New Testament, which sanctions manly exertion (Mark 11:15) and physical health (1 Cor. 6:19-20).” It surely sounds simple, but indeed the researcher deems the issue is more complex. Muscular Christianity assumes that a person’s physical shape has religious significance because the “body is the temple of God”. Physical prowess is equated with moral strength, and a strong and healthy-looking body is often taken as a sign that a person exercises self-control and discipline.

According to Michael Kimmel (quoted in Stewart van Leeuwen et al. 1993: 289), “the image of Jesus was transformed from a beatific, delicate soft-spoken champion of the poor into a muscle-bound he-man whose message encourages the strong to dominate the weak.” The church was thus advised to change the image of Jesus to a more masculine and heroic one, instead of the artistic portrayal of a mild-mannered and gentle Jesus, with dreamy eyes, long hair and a resigned expression, which prevailed in modern art. A number of authors during this period wrote that

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and attempts were made to transform the image of the reformer as a weak, effeminate type of person, into one of vigorous, forceful manhood.”

<sup>273</sup> The concept of “*muscular Christianity*” also provided the ideological link among sport, religion, and the endorsement of hegemonic masculinity. According to Beynon (2002: 158) there existed another (sub-)type of masculinity called “Arnoldian masculinity” – which was based on Christianity and promoted by the reforming educationist Dr. Thomas Arnold (1795 – 1842), who was appointed headmaster of Rugby School in 1828. A feature of Muscular Christianity was the promotion of physical fitness through a regime of physical exercise and participation in team sports. A picture of Rugby School in Arnold’s time is provided in Tom Brown’s *Schooldays* (1856), a novel by Thomas Hughes (1822-96).

what modern man needed was an image of a virile, energetic Jesus Christ, with strong facial features, physically strong and robust, the very essence of manliness.

Another example of efforts made to restore the traditional values of aggressive masculinity was the new and serious attention afforded to fatherhood and the father-son relationship during this period. In order to counter the ill effects of women on boys, a number of boys' clubs and groups were organised to reassert masculine values. Organisations such as the **Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)** and the **Boy Scouts** were founded. The Boy Scouts was founded with the objective of preserving many of the Victorian standards of masculine conduct, such as honour, courage and moral character. (Lemon 1991: 40)

Many church leaders began to incorporate sports programs into church activities in order to attract males and especially teenagers. But by doing this without constructing different practices in and meanings for sport, church leaders implicitly endorsed secular hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, athletic participation and prowess became too strongly equated with manliness, even in many Christian communities. (Stewart van Leeuwen et al. 1993)

This problematic connection (between sport and hegemonic masculinity) can and do still continue today as long as Christians endorse society's idea of hegemonic masculinity (which is grounded in a view of gender relations characterised more by dominance and subordination than by equality and mutuality). *This hegemonic masculinity will then also manifest itself in the life of Christians in various ways, including the ways in which we use the body for sport.*

Stewart van Leeuwen et al. (1993: 297) suggests meaningfully that *Christian men should challenge the current form of hegemonic masculinity, by developing a masculinity that is more consonant with the command to serve one another with love and to live by the fruits of the Spirit*, i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). "To this list the apostle James adds the following: we are to be peace-loving, considerate, mutually submissive, full of mercy and good works, impartial, and sincere. This does not mean that we necessarily have to abolish sport; but we do have to shape it

differently and create other meanings for it. Sport could be used for self-mastery, creativity, and building the skills of cooperation...”

## 8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter considered the phenomena of embodiment and power as core challenges to men’s experiences of intimacy within cultural contexts. The first concern of this chapter was to consider the notion that the material form of the male body is inevitably inscribed with masculinities; and similarly, that masculinity by definition, speak to and of the male (body). Secondly, male embodiment was explored in order to give a critical analysis of how most male bodies have been objects and sites of power.

It was asserted that bodies are essentially affected by social processes but that we cannot think of social gender arrangements as just following from the properties of bodies. Furthermore, that in order to appreciate the centrality of the male body to masculine formations, it is necessary to understand the multiplicity of male embodiment and the complex ways in which masculinities come to materialize through men’s physical presence in the world. “True” masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men’s bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body.

The researcher contended that the way we experience our bodies is powerfully affected by the cultural metaphors that are available to us. Henceforth, it was necessary to pay attention to both biology and culture – and their interaction – when thinking about the male body (or any body). The core framework within which embodiment and power was viewed in this chapter was patriarchy - as the masculine dominance of the interpretation of reality, and simultaneously as the normative paradigm of socio-political operation in the Western world today. It was found that paradoxically: patriarchal masculinity cripples men – thus men are formed and broken by their own power. But patriarchy does not only cripple men and masculinities in terms of their functioning in society on a human level. It also influences their relationships with God in many fundamental ways. In this regard the researcher asserted that patriarchal God-concepts lead to assumptions which influence men and their relationship to their community and to the divine.

Another central point that was made is that: power is everywhere and plays a role in all relationships and interactions and therefore power and masculinity are relational constructions. The equation of masculinity to sexual power, dominance and violence has inevitably led to the development of a powerful and aggressive male sexuality. Therefore, the hierarchical abuse of power often causes a loss of (humanly) dignified, respectful and healing sexual practices. The main problem seems to be that male sexuality is strongly driven in the direction of genital centrality: that we live in a culture that encourages men to think of themselves as their penises. The researcher finally contended that the culture of performance-driven masculinity is leaving a huge cleavage in the way men experience and facilitate real and life-giving intimacy.

**In summary:** In this chapter, conclusive references were made to all the power imbalances in various spheres of society and within many different relational connections. Furthermore, the whole cultural-hermeneutical analysis (continuing from chapters 2 and 3) aided the researcher to explicate *why men regularly seek compensation for their pain (the “intimacy-void”) and powerlessness by means of the hierarchical social system, whereby they attempt to prove their masculinity within dominant power practices, and even through violence (e.g. rapes, abuses, domestic violence etc.)*. The investigation also led to the discovery of the importance of men’s health and vitality, and now the researcher is interested in exploring ways how to use this constructive side of masculinity to deepen the experience of intimacy. In this case though: intimacy in terms of real empowerment and not just performance-driven.

In light of these above-mentioned arguments on embodiment and power (in different cultural regards), the researcher is convinced that *men’s power to change cannot come forth out of the patriarchal system, but out of a totally different resource*. The power to change must develop out of defiance against injustice and inhumanity/undignified actions and behaviour. *The main focus should be relationships of respect and human dignity with other people in order to create an alternative social reality*.

This power is therefore rather *spiritual power, not patriarchal power*. Such power can (amongst others) only be *cultivated through a feasible understanding of God’s power* – in other words implicitly by an applicable, *integrated spirituality (of vulnerable courage)*. Accordingly

attention will be given in chapters 5 and 6 to the way in which *a Christian spirituality (as well as the ethical concept of human dignity), can play an important role in the redefinition of masculinity out of a pastoral-theological (and specifically a re-creational and an eschatological) perspective.*

## CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS A PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND A MEANINGFUL THEOLOGY OF EMBODIMENT

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### 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER

It was explicated in the previous chapters that, whilst feminism and women's studies had perusal in the types of history that was researched and the ways in which that history was presented, men (and masculinity) was still greatly viewed as 'natural' and uniform. Generalised and stereotypical representations of men reigned supreme, and this is still the case in many instances today (as was indicated). It is therefore the aim of this latter part of the dissertation to deconstruct these stereotypical schemata of interpretation about men and masculinities, out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective. Eventually a re-interpretation of manhood will be envisioned, by describing men eschatologically, in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the inhabitation of His Holy Spirit (pneumatology).

In a manner of speech this study has therefore now arrived at the heart of the matter concerning the theme of the study, i.e. a pastoral assessment of images of men and masculinities within cultural contexts. Thus far the research was intentionally focused on a pastoral-hermeneutical analysis of the present (and diverse) cultural images of men and masculinity, primarily projected globally via the mass media. This analysis supported the basic presupposition in the researcher's hypothesis, namely: that these images influence men's gender construction and sexual identity (i.e. their self-perception in broad terms), as well as their experience and concepts of God (i.e. their spirituality).

The first-mentioned themes concerning men's gender construction and sexual identity have received sufficient attention in previous chapters, but not specifically out of a theological perspective. The latter aspect (men's spirituality) has not received attention and therefore this chapter (and the last chapter) aims at the contextual, theological deconstruction of these (above-mentioned) cultural representations and the establishment and furthering of meaningful



connections between male identity, human dignity (*created in the image of the Triune God*) and experiences of authentic, life-giving intimacy via a Christian spirituality.

More nuanced, the following questions will now be addressed: how should we think theologically about all that has been explored in the previous three chapters? If the dominant values suggested and promoted by the mass-media are not affirming respect for diversity, human dignity and life-giving intimacy, what is the alternative? Is there a normative-critical counter-image to be found in the image of the crucified and resurrected Christ, which can transcend the abuse of power, the focus on performance and the commodification of male embodiment? Can this counter-image enhance men's experience of God as intimate Life Partner and Vital Life Force/Friend?

**In essence:** men's souls<sup>274</sup>, i.e. their quality of being within relational networks in God's presence, need to be explored in order to further this pastoral assessment. Subsequently, a responsible theology of embodiment is quintessential to facilitate a positive affirmation of and holistic perspective on male (and human) sexuality and identity. It should affirm embodied-ness and erotica as an integral part of the human being's existence as created in the image of the Triune God. Such a theology of embodiment should thus reflect something of a celebration and wholeness – in other words an appreciation of something (aesthetically) vital, beautiful and unique in men and in creation as a whole. The researcher will indicate (in the last chapter) how a spirituality of vulnerable courage is essential in this quest, and specifically how a re-interpretation of God's power can facilitate this process.

The main goal of this chapter will thus be to explore the ways in which sexist and patriarchal<sup>275</sup> dualisms can be transcended and a theology of embodiment can lead to integration and establish or restore experiences of life-giving intimacy, vitality and human dignity in men. Furthermore,

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<sup>274</sup> With this remark regarding men's souls the researcher here implicitly supposes that it will be necessary to comprehend *a relational conceptualisation of men, as opposed to a mere substantial conceptualisation*. This relational assumption eventually accepts that: to be a human person is to be an embodied soul and a soulful body. 'Soul' thus refers to a collective identity within the corporate structures of life as a whole, (See heading 5.1 here under for more detail and a deeper explication of this issue).

<sup>275</sup> In the previous chapter clarification was given (under heading 3.1) with regards to which dualistic worldviews function subjacent to the patriarchal system and accompanying abuse of power, and subsequently, which harmful hierarchical worldview it perpetuated through the centuries. In this chapter these dualistic schemes of interpretation will be further clarified within Judeo-Christian belief systems of the past and present.

the implications of popular culture's depictions of masculinity/ies will be scrutinized through this pastoral-theological assessment, in order to ascertain what is unique to masculine Christian spirituality. Several other (Christian and non-Christian) attempts to integrate maleness and spirituality will be evaluated in the process. But before this can be done it is firstly essential to enlarge upon the basic presuppositions of a pastoral-anthropological perspective on men and masculinities.

## **2. RATIONALE BEHIND A PASTORAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL<sup>276</sup> PERSPECTIVE**

All secular anthropologies fail to take into account human creatureliness and therefore – theologically speaking - basically give a distorted view of humans. A theological anthropology cannot ignore the findings of cultural anthropology, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines, but it supposes that any view of the human being that fails to see him or her as centrally related to, totally dependent on, and primarily responsible to God falls short of the (whole) truth. The anthropology of the Bible indeed works with the central presupposition that the human is dependant on God and must be understood out of his/her relationship with God. On the other hand, all deterministic anthropologies in theology, which treat humans as if they were puppets or robots, perhaps with God pulling the strings or pushing the buttons, fail to do justice to human personhood, and therefore give an equally distorted view of human beings.

A well-defined theological anthropology is of main importance for a pastoral-anthropological perspective on men and masculinities, but a complete and detailed description thereof exceeds the limit of this dissertation. It is however important to note that the starting point of the theological anthropology in this research effort definitely wants to look broader than the traditional views on human beings within Christian reformed circles.

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<sup>276</sup> The term pastoral-anthropological is used in this dissertation as implying a theological anthropology, and therefore these two terms are used interchangeably, denoting essentially the same intent and content. The fact that this study is done within the field of pastoral care and the domain of practical theology, has influenced the researcher's choice of terminology. A theological anthropology speaks about the human being and the nature of his/her relationship to God. In a pastoral context it can conversely be specifically linked to therapy: the understanding of the human person in terms of her/his healing, meaning making, and the quality of the new human life before God (maturity in faith).

Within these traditional reformed circles the *kerugmatic model* focuses on the human as sinner – therefore it offers forgiveness with the aim of deliverance of sin and guilt (soteriology)<sup>277</sup>. According to Heitink (1977: 111, own translation out of Dutch) it causes “that the human person as created being disappears behind the human person as sinner... Out of this perspective all that is said about persons is determined by and restricted to the poles of sin and grace... This leads to a constricted anthropology...”. In contrast, the *phenomenological experiential model* focuses on the human as independent personality with psychological potential – hence the assertive self-realisation of the person by means of his/her inner growth potential is of utmost importance. But, a third alternative presents a more meaningful perspective: “...a *pneumatological perspective* views the human being as a new creation, in other words: a charismatic being with faith potential” (Louw 1999b: 151; own translation out of Afrikaans). This last-mentioned pneumatological perspective will be opted for in the following discussions.

***But why is it necessary to view men out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective in the first place?*** The researcher is convinced that it is impossible to get an integrated view on masculinities without asking the following simple theological question first: “*how does Christian notions about God influence the conceptualisation of manhood?*” In this regard the three main claims of the first chapter of John Calvin’s 1559 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, can be very helpful to understand this question. Firstly, Calvin (in McNeill 1960: 35-39) insisted that “without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God.” Secondly, “without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self”. Thirdly, this mutuality between knowing God and knowing ourselves occurs in the experience of facing “God’s majesty”. **Thus, in the light of these theological assumptions it can be argued that: a meaningful understanding of men and masculinities is impossible without a significant understanding of God, from a Christian perspective.**

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<sup>277</sup> Heitink (1977: 113) asserts that the Biblical anthropology definitely connotes more than soteriology, and hence he pleads for broader polarity: “die van schepping en herschepping” (creation and re-creation). He elaborates further on this so that it becomes a trinitarian approach in anthropology. It entails: in relation to God the human is creature; in relation to Jesus the human is a new person; in relation to the Holy Spirit human dignity and being human as such is important.

From the perspective of the Reformation personal identity is first and foremost defined by Christian identity. According to Calvin knowing our *selves* is beyond our pale. Our core identity is a mystery that must be revealed. Encountering God we concurrently encounter ourselves. Furthermore, the inquiry, *Who am I?* is interconnected with the question, *Who are we?* Personal identity has a composite character, which comprises many identities, including for instance being a man or an Afrikaner. (Theron 2006: 114)

But, “Personal identity is extremely precious and at the same time exceedingly precarious. The attempt to secure my *I amness* can be dangerous and idolatrous. In the development of the *sense of self* in the Western World, the *cogito* of Descartes, in which the self was placed at the very centre of the universe, played an important and influential role. Although it was not Decartes’ intention, his choice was basically atheistic in character. The autonomous Cartesian *I am*, whose advent was announced during the Renaissance but was temporarily delayed by the Reformation, would in due course displace the *I AM* of Exodus 3:14. In the process man replaced God, historical progress divine providence, and human reason biblical revelation.” (Theron 2006: 115)

Therefore, ***it becomes absolutely crucial to view masculine identity, not only philosophically or phenomenologically<sup>278</sup>, but out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective.*** However, this perspective also needs to be ***qualified responsibly and holistically.*** According to Shults (2003) the Christian tradition has not always attended to the social, cultural, and physical dimensions of humanity in its formulations of anthropological doctrine. It has rather often focused on the abstract nature of the individual and the intellectual and volitional powers of one’s soul. In contrast, “Today in our late modern culture we find a growing dissatisfaction with the denigration of human embodiment and sociality that characterized so much ancient and early modern anthropology.” (Shults 2003: 2)

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<sup>278</sup> Phenomenologically in this sense implies sociologically, anthropologically, psychologically or biologically as was explicated at the start of chapter two.

Shults (2003: 2-9) contends that these above-mentioned concerns have arisen in connection with what he terms the philosophical “turn to relationality”<sup>279</sup>. He is convinced that *this turn to relationality offers theology a new opportunity for presenting a Christian understanding of humanity* in a way that upholds some key biblical intuitions that have sometimes been obscured or lost. Shults therefore traces the challenges (2003: 39-92) raised in late modern culture after the turn (to relationality) in philosophy and science. For him “human existence is characterized by a trembling fascination, a passionate longing for a secure relation with the other. *Theological anthropology must account for this existential reality.*” (own italics) (Shults 2003: 6)<sup>280</sup>

This assertion leads to the question: in which way/s can a contemporary pastoral (i.e. theological) anthropology account for this existential reality? One of the central role players (according to Shults 2003: 35) in the twentieth century’s theological turn to relationality, is Karl Barth – in his emphasis on *analogia relationis* and his insistence that the doctrine of the Trinity be brought back to the beginning of the presentation of church dogmatics<sup>281</sup>. For many non-Western Christians, the claim that relationality is central for theological anthropology is nothing new. For instance, in many African cultures, “being” is interpreted not in terms of essence and substance, but in terms of communal relations (*UBUNTU*) and thus the “becoming of the human being<sup>282</sup> within a network of constitutive relations”.

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<sup>279</sup> The philosophical turn to relationality has shaped not only the way we think about knowing and being, but also our understanding of human acting. In the early modern period human (free) agency had been dualistically separated from (mechanistically determined) nature, and this split registered its effect on anthropological theories. In contemporary psychology and in the anthropological sciences in general, humans and communities are more often described in ways that recognize that their *relations* are constructive. For some contemporary proposals in theological anthropology that have tried to account for these phenomena, see Grenz (2001).

<sup>280</sup> Shults (2003) furthermore outlines the factors that have led many theologians to formulate the doctrine of human nature (and human knowing) by using the terminology of substance dualism and faculty psychology. He also traces the influence of Plato and Aristotle on Christian anthropology from the patristic period through the Reformation. Later he indicates how the turn to relationality created challenges to these traditional formulations, and at the same time provided opportunities for reforming anthropology in dialogue with contemporary culture. This reformation involves *retrieving a more holistic, community-oriented understanding of humanity*.

<sup>281</sup> The researcher deems it necessary to take up this insistence of Barth and others (for the re-introduction of the doctrine of the Trinity in our understanding of human beings) in order to present a holistic and responsible pastoral-anthropological view on maleness (and femaleness). Henceforth, the following sections will suffice to explicate its implications.

<sup>282</sup> The researcher uses the word “being” here as a gerund so that it will help the reader remember that human being is not a static substance, but a becoming – a dynamic, historically configured movement in search of a secure reality. Like human knowing and acting, human “being” is also experienced as both gift and call.

*Acknowledging this mutuality of relational thought forms* - that extend over the webs of our theological discourse - *may open us up to creative new ways of knowing, acting, and being men and women in relation to the biblical God.* This in turn will facilitate the reformation of pastoral-theological anthropology in dialogue with scientific anthropology after the philosophical turn to relationality (as supposed by Shults, 2003).

**In short:** by starting to qualify it holistically and relationally, the non-negotiable need *to view masculine identity* not only philosophically or phenomenologically, but *out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective*, becomes clear. In such a pastoral anthropology the researcher – in accordance with Louw (2007) - opts for an inclusive anthropology which operates with both the mutuality of relationships (*relatio*) as well as the identity of being qualities (*substantia*), rather than merely with the predominance of *substantia*. The outcome of this argument is an inclusive and normative anthropology. “Anthropology determines healing due to the fact that the questions ‘How do I see myself?’, ‘Who is the other?’, ‘How do you understand and perceive God?’, determine one’s approach to life.” (Louw 2007: 50)

### 3. BASIC DOGMATIC TENETS OF A PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY

#### 3.1 Created in God’s image (*Imago Dei*)

One of the most distinctive features of the biblical understanding of humans is the teaching that we have been created in the image of God. This concept will be explored cursorically in the following paragraphs. An elaborate examination of all the biblical teachings on the image of God, as found in the Old and New Testament, is unfortunately not possible<sup>283</sup>. Important to note

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<sup>283</sup> The researcher is aware of the fact that the concept *imago Dei* is the subject matter of much debate within theological frames of reference, e.g.: according to some interpreters, human beings in their upright stature have a physical resemblance to God; perhaps the dominant Western interpretation has been that it resides in the rational nature of human beings; a related but different interpretation focuses on the reference of the Genesis text to humanity’s being given dominion over the earth; still other interpreters have emphasized human freedom as the meaning of the image of God. In agreement with numerous contemporary theologians (some also mentioned here), Migliore (2004:140-141) contends that the concept *imago Dei* describes human life in relationship with God and with the other creatures. For a more elaborate exploration see e.g. Migliore, 2004: 139-162 (on: “Humanity as creature, sinner and new being in Christ”) and Wentsel, 1987: 588-622 (on: “Human beings as God’s image and partner in the covenant”). The above-mentioned investigation on this concept is not exhaustive, but presents a brief

is that the **dignity**, worth, equality<sup>284</sup> and responsibility with which the biblical narrative of creation invests the human creature comes to its sharpest focus, for most systematic theologians, in this concept of **the image of God** [the *imago Dei*]<sup>285</sup>.

A very crucial qualification is necessary when one uses the image of God concept to describe humanity. According to Kevin Vanhoozer (2001: 176-178) we should take cognisance of the fact that *relatedness, interdependence and communicative activity are the core elements of the imago Dei understanding*<sup>286</sup>; and that rationality is not the dominant characteristic of this notion as modernistic thinking contends. This central presupposition will be enlarged upon in the following sections.

According to Jewett (1996: 29) it is the gift of the image that grounds the I-thou relationship we have with God and with one another. For Karl Barth as well, the image of God is the fellowship of I and Thou: “*God exists in relationship and fellowship*. As the Father of the Son and the Son of the Father He is Himself I and Thou, confronting Himself and yet always one and the same in the Holy Ghost. God created man in his own image, in correspondence with His own being and essence...*God is in relationship, and so too is the man*<sup>287</sup> *created by Him*<sup>288</sup>. This is his divine likeness” (Barth III/2, 324) (own italics and bold).

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discussion of this complex issue in order to clarify some of the vagueness surrounding it (in order that the rest of the chapter can be understood in the light of this relevant perspective).

<sup>284</sup> According to Fiddes (2001: 102): “To be made in the image of God does not mean to be a copy of an individual divine person, but to be called into a relationship with God which is like that between a son (or daughter) and a father (or mother). All, regardless of gender, whether sons or daughters, can equally participate in that relational movement, in the openness of the Spirit.”

<sup>285</sup> According to Hoekema (1986: 65), quoting Herman Bavinck: “Man does not simply *bear* or *have* the image of God; he *is* the image of God. From the doctrine that man has been created in the image of God flows the clear implication that that image extends to man in his entirety. Nothing in man is excluded from the image of God. All creatures reveal traces of God, but only man (i.e. the human being) is the image of God. And he is that image totally, in soul and body, in all faculties and powers, in all conditions and relationships.”

<sup>286</sup> For a growing number of theologians, e.g. like Stanley Grenz (2005) this relatedness, interdependence and communicative activity - as the core elements of the *imago Dei* understanding - are specifically meaningfully grounded in a trinitarian theology. This will be explored in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>287</sup> In the researcher’s understanding and presentation of Barth’s quotation here, the reference to “man” implicitly refers to human beings (i.e. including men and women) generically. The use of the quote is to be understood within this frame of reference and not as sexist or exclusive.

<sup>288</sup> Anthony Hoekema (1986:75) writes, “God has placed man into a threefold relationship: between man and God, between man and his fellow man, and between man and nature.” In a similar frame of reference Gunton (1993:116-117) states that *imago Dei primarily describes our relationship with God*: “To be in the image of God is to be created through the Son, who is the archetypal bearer of the image. To be in the image of God therefore means to be conformed to the person of Christ. The agent of this conformity is God the Holy Spirit, the creator of community. The image of God is then that being which takes shape by virtue of the creating and redeeming agency of the triune God.” Furthermore, *imago Dei also gives an indication of our relationship with other human beings and the rest of*

In accordance with his Christocentric method, Barth emphasizes that our knowledge of the fact that the *imago Dei* is this constitutive relationality cannot be read off the “phenomenon of the human”. It is revealed only in Jesus Christ, who alone is directly the image of God. If, therefore, we wish to know what the image of God in a human being is really like, ***we must first look at Christ***. In looking at Jesus Christ, we see the perfect image of God. We witness the proper functioning of God’s image to include relating intimately with God, relating deeply with one another, and relating meaningfully with the cosmos<sup>289</sup>.

Therefore, when one views human beings from the perspective as created in the image of God, it is important to note that a Christology has some significant effects on such a theological anthropology, namely:

*Jesus Christ, as the (perfect) image of (the invisible) God* (Colossians 1: 15-17; Hebrews 1:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:4), *lays the connection* between the human being as created in the image of God, and God self. Hence, ***Christology has a relational effect on anthropology***. It does not mean that the human in Genesis 1: 26-28 is already created according to the image of the incarnated Son of God. But in Jesus Christ our human destiny is to be conformed to the image of God. In Christ, in other words, we see clearly what is hidden in Genesis 1: namely, what human beings as the image of God should be like. Hence the form of human life that we meet in Jesus the Christ will surely be the decisive factor in any Christian statement of what it means to be genuinely human. For Christian faith and theology, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus will always constitute the decisive norm of both true divinity and true humanity.

The Son, as image of the Father, lays a connection between God and creature via the creation events. The human is consequently, ontologically speaking (in his/her created existence), orientated towards God and dependant on Him. Therefore, ***Christology also owns a***

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*the created (non-human) world*: “The human person is one who is created to find his or her being in relation, first with other like persons but second, as a function of the first, with the rest of creation. This means, first, that we are in the image of God when, like God but in dependence on his giving, we find our reality in what we give to and receive from others in human community.” (1993:117)

<sup>289</sup> In speaking of “Christ as the true image of God” Hoekema (1986: 73-74) outlines a threefold set of relationships. Christ as wholly directed toward God; Christ as wholly directed to the neighbor and Christ who rules over nature.



*transformative effect* seeing that it constitutes the human to a new (human) being or a new creation (2 Corinthians 5: 17). Therefore the new person is transformed constantly to be conformed to the image of God (2 Corinthians 3: 18). The Christology thus restores the human in his/her original intended purpose, so that he/she can glorify God on the grounds of the soteriology (the eradication of sin and guilt). Scripture speaks to the human race, firstly, not on the grounds of sin and guilt, but on the grounds of his/her creaturely orientation towards God and grace: the fact of the new being in Christ.

Thus, *Christology has significant implications for a theological anthropology rooted in the Imago Dei. These implications are made reality through the work of the Holy Spirit in human lives.* It unmask the human finally in his/her guilt and eventually the human person gets to know himself/herself as God's property. ***This leads to a new self-acceptance:*** "I am accepted by God; God has said unconditionally 'yes!' for me. It is therefore argued that ***Christology further recovers the human in his/her intended purpose before God, and provides meaning in life (via love, hope and faith).***

This means, among other things, that what is **central in the image of God** is not such matters as reason or intelligence but rather love, since what stands out more than anything else in the life of Christ is his amazing love. Our new humanity in Christ grants us a new freedom from the bondage of sin and for partnerships with (*and participation in*) God (*through the Holy Spirit*) and others. This opens us up for **love**, as well as **faith** and **hope**<sup>290</sup>, i.e. ways of living into the image of God realized for us and promised to us in Christ. "They are gifts and practices of a new human relationship with God, a new way of being human in solidarity with others, a new expectation of God's coming reign, grounded and nurtured in 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor 13: 13)." (Migliore 2004: 162)

**If love, faith and hope** are ways of living into the image of God (realized for us and promised to us in Christ), the researcher is convinced that one should opt for an ***eschatological interpretation***

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290 According to Migliore (2004:160-162) *faith* is the simple trust and confidence in the benevolence of God extended to us by Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit; *love* is the new way to be human with and for others supremely embodied in Jesus Christ and empowered in us by the Holy Spirit; and *hope* is the new freedom toward God's future in which we live in the expectation of the fulfillment of the gracious promise of God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*of the imago Dei concept (and its anthropological implications).* One of the best known contemporary components of an eschatological interpretation of human beings as image of God, is Jürgen Moltmann. He argues in his book *God in Creation* (1985: 225, 227) that “the true likeness to God is to be found, not at the beginning of God’s history with mankind, but at its end”, and that this likeness appears as a “historical process with an eschatological termination; it is not a static condition.”

For Moltmann, all human beings are designated as *imago Dei*, but believers are those who respond to the messianic calling and become *imitation Christi*; yet they still look forward to the eschatological consummation<sup>291</sup> in which as glorified human beings they will become *Gloria Dei*, the glory of God (Moltmann 1985: 228). Although this glory is future for us, we already share in it by grace (i.e. love, faith and hope) as *we are drawn into union with and participation in*<sup>292</sup> *God through the Holy Spirit in Christ (pneumatological perspective).*

Therefore, what is most true about human nature is not its primordial past but its eschatological future, an arriving determination that addresses us and calls us to an embodied spiritual union with God in Christ. Therefore, being created as *imago Dei* is “not a state or condition but a movement with a goal: human beings are restless for a fulfillment of life not yet realized”. (Migliore 2004:147). Instead of looking to the past for the proper relation between God and humanity, the Christian may look to a future fellowship with God, a *koinonia* in and through the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ whose *parousia* is already bringing the kingdom of divine peace nearer to us than we are to ourselves. *We are looking to a future fellowship with and participation in the Triune God who graciously transforms all of our knowing, acting, and being.*

With the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the *eschatos Adam* (1 Corinthians 15:45), the future reality of human being in its proper relation to God is revealed. The believer’s relation to the image of God is future: “we will also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians

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<sup>291</sup> According to Sherlock (1996: 227), “When Christ returns, we shall know in fullness what it means to be made in the image of God, and we shall know as we are known, not only as individuals but as part of a recreated humanity, delighting in the new heavens and new earth.” Therefore, we know that it is good to be made in the image of God as embodied persons; but what it means to be truly whole we know only in part, even though we look for it with hope, through faith, in love.

<sup>292</sup> This notion of participation in God will be more fully qualified in the following sections (where it will be related to an anthropology based in a trinitarian understanding of God).

15:49); and Christ “will transform” our humble body so “that it may be conformed to the body of his glory.” (Phillipians 3:21). However, we *already* experience this arriving future now as we are “conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). The new self is being “created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). This being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ is *mediated by the active presence of the Holy Spirit*, who dwells in and among believers and in whom they also dwell.

**The above-mentioned assertions elicits the conclusion that:** within a hermeneutical paradigm, a (pastoral-) theological anthropology should take serious cognisance of a creational (the human is created in the image of the triune God), and a Christological (the human is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ) perspective. But, although a creational and Christological perspective directly implies that *the human being stands in an intimate relation to God and is existentially dependant on God*, and although such a statement does have anthropological implications (as was indicated), *it must primarily be understood and interpreted out of a pneumatological and eschatological perspective.*

### 3.2 The essential role of pneumatology in our eschatological re-creation

It was stated unequivocally here above: *Christ’s cross and resurrection* naturally contains implications for being human. But, these implications *can only fully be understood and translated in anthropological terms via* the inhabitation of God in humans, in other words out of *a pneumatological perspective*. The new person is indeed in his/her core existence a pneumatological being. Thus, our relationship to God must primarily be understood in terms of the poured out Holy Spirit and not directly and exclusively in terms of Christology. It is indeed the pneumatology which concretises the Christology within the daily existential orientation and social context of the human person’s life. *The person thus becomes truly human, and realises a new sense of self-acceptance and discovers his/her identity through the work of the Holy Spirit*<sup>293</sup>.

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<sup>293</sup> Rebel’s (1981) study “Pastoraat in pneumatologies perspektief” is of distinctive importance in this regard. He mentioned that the undervalued appreciation (in the Reformed theological tradition) of the total person before God, and the insufficient attention with regards to the relation between *pneuma* and *humanum*, has given the field of psychology the opportunity to dominate the domain of the pastoral theology.

It is henceforth very important in a theological anthropology to maintain the reciprocity between Christology (incarnatio verbi = incarnation of God with people) and pneumatology (inhabitatio Spiritus = inhabitation of God in people). This further entails that the human potential can no longer be understood psycho-physically in terms of own potential (which can lead to egoism), but should be understood in terms of *charisma*.

Furthermore, if creation does not present a complete framework or normative determination for a theological anthropology - otherwise God's grace in Jesus Christ is just a reaction to a broken creation and his work as Redeemer will be played down - the *conclusion* can be drawn that: *a pastoral anthropology should, methodologically speaking, think out of the re-creation towards the creation*. The re-creation is actually a normative determinant for creation – and out of that God's intent for all aspects of being human is deduced.

***The quality of our being human (which is an indication of our human dignity) is given out of the re-creation (in Christ through the Holy Spirit)<sup>294</sup>. Such a paradigm has implications for all dimensions of being human – also for the meaning and value of pastoral care to men. Therefore, the theological foundation of pastoral anthropology is that a Christology gives the human person a new quality of being human (human dignity) through a pneumatology.<sup>295</sup>***

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<sup>294</sup> It is important to note that this quality of our being human (as indication of our human dignity) is an embodied quality and touches the heart of human identity: sexuality. In this regard Vorster (2005) compares the sex ethic of Scripture with the anthropological values that underlie modern sexual morality and gives guidelines for a responsible sex ethics that can safeguard human dignity. As point of departure he – in accordance with the researcher's assumptions - states that the biblical view of sexuality must be understood from the perspective of creation and re-creation and not the fall. Vorster (2005: 893) contends that a positive view of sexuality is maintained throughout biblical history, even though the fall has perverted sexuality, as is the case in all spheres of life.

<sup>295</sup> According to Hodnett (2003: 300-301), in order to properly understand the outpoured Holy Spirit, we must look at the (trinitarian) background of the Spirit in the being of God and in his activity in the world. Firstly, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (bringing together of the Father and Son), and the triune being of God is to be understood in this fully trinitarian manner. In this sense the Spirit is the principle of immanence immanent in God. Secondly, the Spirit is in a sense the whole – God is Spirit. As the actualisation of power and meaning the Spirit is the entire Trinity, the unity of power and meaning. As such the Spirit is the *telos* of the being of God and symbolises God as living and fulfilled in himself. Thirdly, the consummating immanence of God in all creation needs to be understood. Only then will it be possible to overcome the dualism between God and the world that has plagued Christianity through the ages. Thus the essential relation between the human spirit and the divine Spirit is mutual immanence. But, in the fourth place, the consummating immanence of the Spirit and the outpoured Holy Spirit must be distinguished from one another. The *inhabitatio Spiritus Sancti* is motivated by sin and therefore must be distinguished from the creation immanence of the Spirit (Van Ruler 1973:16).

It has now clearly been presented that there is a vital point of identity between pneumatology and Christology: every manifestation of the Spirit stands under the criterion of the revelation given in Christ. The Spirit is the power of the Word and the Word is the form of the Spirit. ***But, in order to fully understand this relationship between Christology and pneumatology<sup>296</sup> we need an eschatological perspective***, because the work of the Spirit is to express God's eschatological intentions in us.

***The work of the Spirit must be understood from an eschatological point of view, on the basis of the once-for-all work performed by Jesus as the Christ.*** The outpoured Spirit is not something alien to creation that is added to life, a divine seed, substance or "matter" that is transmitted by a priest in the performance of the sacraments. Then there would be a true dualism between creation and salvation. The presence of the Spirit "rather involves an ecstatic, ***participation in the Christ who 'is the Spirit,'*** whereby one lives ***in the sphere of this Spiritual power<sup>297</sup>***" (Tillich 1963:117). (own italics and bold)

In the light of the above-mentioned then, salvation is added to existence, not as a "thing", but as the reconciliation of guilt in Christ. And this reconciliation (obtained in Christ) is expressed in existence as salvation, and the Spirit spreads it to all existence. What is the content of this salvation? From an eschatological point of view we must say that ***the Spirit expresses this salvation*** as the image, or kingdom, of God in existence. ***This is his work of re-creation.***

Thus, this understanding - of pneumatology from an eschatological perspective - allows us to see that it is not only the case that individuals are "saved", but that God is setting up his kingdom in this world. As the Christ, Jesus is himself the kingdom, and in his work the kingdom has gained

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<sup>296</sup> Pneumatology can also be described as the link between Christology and eschatology, but it must simultaneously be related to and distinguished from both (Christology and eschatology). According to Hodnett (2003: 299-301) this relationship with God is a matter of the struggle of the Spirit with the flesh, without perfectionism.

<sup>297</sup> At the end of chapter four the researcher concluded that men's power to change cannot come forth out of the patriarchal system (i.e. from unilateral patriarchal power), but out of a totally different resource. It should rather be a spiritual power which can (amongst others) only be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit. This understanding of God's power will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

a firm foothold on earth. *This work of reconciliation (i.e. re-creation) that has been performed by Christ is put into effect by the Holy Spirit*<sup>298</sup>. (Hodnett 2003: 303)

*The full implications of these above-mentioned assertions (on the basic dogmatic tenets of a pastoral anthropology) for understanding men and masculinities will only be made clear later in this and in the next chapter.* But first, some key remarks on the influence of Trinitarian interpretation schemes on human (gender) identity will be made.

#### **4. THE TRINITY AND HUMAN (GENDER) IDENTITY – POSSIBLE INTERPLAY**

In light of the fact that themes concerning men's (gender) identity construction have received attention in previous chapters, but not specifically out of a theological angle of incidence, these next few paragraphs will address these issues theologically. This discussion is of critical importance and needs to be explored in order to further this dissertation's aim of making a pastoral-anthropological assessment of male identity and embodiment (via a Christian spirituality). In what follows the researcher will mainly engage critically with some contemporary systematic theologians' core assumptions to deepen the insight into the complex issue of human (gender) identity from a (trinitarian) theological perspective.

##### **4.1 Contemporary insights on the relationship: Trinity and anthropology**

Thus far in this study it was implicated and suggested – but not yet explicitly stated - that *a (theological) anthropology of autonomy and power lies at the centre of many of the patriarchal traditions that caused the dehumanization of both men and women*. Patriarchy is therefore actually a (theological-)anthropological problem. The nature and consequences of patriarchy

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<sup>298</sup> It is important to note that everything Christ does, he does in the Spirit, and therefore the Spirit cannot be separated from Christ, who is the source and criterion of all salvation. However, the Spirit is not identical to the glorified Christ, and his work is different to that performed by Christ. The complete work of reconciliation was performed by Christ on the cross, but this reconciliation needs to be mediated to us and we need to appropriate it. This mediation and appropriation cannot be understood Christologically. It is we who believe – faith is the gift and work of the Holy Spirit. “In the present we experience salvation in the mode of the Spirit. Since the ascension the only access to Christ is through the Spirit. This access must thus be understood pneumatologically and not Christologically.” (Hodnett 2003: 302)

(and its concomitant sexism) was clearly outlined in several ways,<sup>299</sup> and this explication will be continued in these last two chapters. But first, the vital question must be asked: *how does one overcome or substitute such a destructive anthropological stance?*

Nico Koopman (2004) makes some very meaningful suggestions to answer this question. He indicates that such an anthropology of power and autonomy was/is supported by various religious and nonreligious traditions, amongst others the Western branch of Christianity that mainly consists of Roman Catholics and various forms of Protestants in various parts of the world. Koopman follows Hendrikus Berkhof's argument that Christian anthropology is strongly influenced by Greek philosophical thought. "The Christian understanding of God in western churches was for centuries determined by this Greek influence. God was understood as absolutely free, autonomous, self-sufficient, rational, powerful, impassionate and distant<sup>300</sup>. This view of God strengthened the dominant anthropology of rationality, autonomy and power." (Koopman 2004: 194)

In line with Berkhof – and over against the modernistic anthropology of power, autonomy and independence - Koopman (2004: 190-200), therefore outlines *an anthropology characterized by vulnerability, relationality and dependence<sup>301</sup>, as a pathway towards building gender relations*

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299 In chapter two it was indicated that within patriarchal societies and contexts masculine values often became the ideological structure of the society as a whole. It was later indicated (in chapter four) that patriarchy does not only cripple men in terms of their functioning in society on a human level; it also influences their relationship with God in many fundamental ways. Implicitly, the effects of patriarchal power upon the development of an authentic spirituality for men (and women) are profound. Patriarchal God-concepts lead to assumptions which influence men and their relationship to their community and to the divine. Furthermore, the researcher explicated that the issues concerning embodiment and power (especially the abuse of patriarchal power), are primary contributing factors in terms of the confusion, conflict and stress in male identity. The core framework within which embodiment and power was viewed in chapter four was patriarchy - as the masculine dominance of the interpretation of reality, and simultaneously as the normative paradigm of socio-political operation in the Western world today. It was subsequently pre-supposed that religion and Christian theology, in other words the way in which there is talked and thought about God, exerts an important influence on the institutionalisation of patriarchal values and power, and e.g. on the subsequent oppression of women, violence etc.

<sup>300</sup> This assertion is strongly affirmed by William Placher (1999:192) who states: "Perhaps the strangest event in the intellectual history of the West was the identification of the biblical God with Aristotle's unmoved mover or some other picture, derived from Greek philosophy, of God as impassible and unchanging...much of the Christian tradition does seem to have portrayed God as unaffected and unaffectedable."

<sup>301</sup> Berkhof (1985) specifically emphasizes this notion of vulnerability and brokenness (suggested by dependency) as constituent elements of human beings. He depicts God's power as "weerlose overmacht" (vulnerable power). See also chapter six's discussion on this contention of Berkhof. His implication is that God is not the impassive, static and impassionate God of Greek philosophical thought. In the face of the immense suffering of human beings and the rest of creation, God shows vulnerability – unambiguously evident in the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

*that are characterized by harmony and joy*<sup>302</sup> instead of estrangement. Lasting joyous relationships between men and women will thus be built where the recognition of dependence prevails amongst both males and females. Through reconsidering what our humanity entails, he suggests, we are able to embark on the way of re-humanization (i.e. live in mutual gender relations of human dignity).

Koopman envisions that this anthropology and the consequent joyous gender relations are actualized in Christian communities that “do not live with practical atheism but that take the triune God seriously”. He admits that endeavoring to determine the significance of this anthropology for male – female relations is not an uncomplicated task. He therefore addresses three arguments that can be raised against such an anthropology. (cf. Koopman 2004: 198-199)

The researcher takes cognisance of the fact that certain objections might be raised against the proposed anthropology, but nevertheless deems Koopman’s assessment highly valuable and relevant for this dissertation’s pastoral-anthropological view on men and masculinities (especially in the light of the afore-mentioned conclusion that relationality is a central value for an inclusive theological anthropology). It is applicable to note that currently, various other leading theologians (in the same vein as Koopman) also base this type of anthropology (of dependence, vulnerability and relationality) in the revelation of the triune God. The (very energetic) resurgence of trinitarian thought in the twentieth century<sup>303</sup> is now well known and paved the way for a rethinking of anthropology from a trinitarian perspective. This is a positive development, but it also entails some possible pitfalls that have to be taken into consideration.

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As those who are created in the image of God we also share in this vulnerability. Being the image of God does not only imply that we share in God’s freedom, creativity and rationality, but that we also take part in His quest for and even dependence upon relationship with others, as well as in His vulnerability.

302 Koopman’s choice for “joyous relationships” is grounded on the Reformed philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff’s description of a true human life as one where relationships are defined by *shalom* that entails justice, peace and joy.

303 According to Karen Kilby (2000a: 432), over the last three decades there has been a great resurgence of writings from both Catholic and Protestant theologians on the doctrine of the Trinity, almost all of which, ironically, have lamented the neglect of the doctrine, suggesting that it has not been given adequate treatment (despite its crucial importance to Christianity and Christian theology). See also Kilby 2000b. Del Colle (2001: 134-137) highlights Karl Barth from Reformed evangelical and Karl Rahner from Roman Catholic perspectives as some of the main proponents who revalued trinitarian thinking in the twentieth century. Many other theologians have also followed in this trend in the recent past, one of the most famous probably being Moltmann. See also Gunton (1993:1) and Robert Vosloo (2002: 94 and 2004: 72-82) for a list of names of theologians out of different traditions and discussions on some of their contributions.



A so-called relational understanding of the triune God seemingly warrants to help us imagine or re-imagine God in such a way that we may view ourselves, others and creation differently. But, acknowledging this, the task still remains – also for the researcher - to make apparent *what* such a relational understanding of the triune God entails, and furthermore to reflect on *how* we relate such a more relational doctrine of the Trinity to the lives of men and women (and their gender relations). Suggestions on how this can possibly be done will cursorically be made in the next few sections.

But firstly, in assessing the value of these developments it is important to distinguish that some theologians base their petition for a theological anthropology from *immanent trinitarian thinking* and others from *economic trinitarian thinking*<sup>304</sup>. The fact that Koopman's proposed anthropology is based in the doctrine of the *economic*<sup>305</sup> *Trinity*<sup>306</sup> therefore also reveals some unique challenges which initially need to be addressed. Consequently the researcher will highlight his anthropological stance's relevant value *and* its (as well as other, similar anthropological views based on the doctrine of the Trinity's) potential limitations for the rest of this discussion on the possible interplay between the Trinity and human identity.

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<sup>304</sup> For instance, Berkhof's construction of a relational anthropology (on which Koopman's contentions are grounded) seems to be based on the level of economic trinitarian thinking, i.e. a trinitarian anthropology in terms of the revelation of the triune God.

<sup>305</sup> The economic Trinity (also typed eg. by Barth as "modes of God's being." as occurring within the context of God's revelation) infers the threefold self-manifestation of God as creator Father, redeemer Son, and sustainer Holy Spirit, relative to human beings. Moltmann (1981b:151) concurs with the revelatory quality of the economic Trinity by stating it is also called the "revelatory Trinity"; the triune God is revealed through his dispensation of salvation. Thus, in short: **The economic Trinity** is grounded in our experience of God's revelatory triune actions on behalf of our salvation – in other words referring to: God as Father, Son and Spirit at work outside the divine life in the world. Seeing that it is based on God's activities in relation to our experiences, it is more easily understood. More difficult to understand is the immanent Trinity, which by definition excludes our experience. **The immanent Trinity**, also known as the essential or ontological Trinity, refers to the three-in-one nature of God in eternity without reference to creation – in other words referring to: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they are within God's own inner life. During this time before creation, God is God in himself, essential in being, without definition provided by creation. Colin Gunton (1993) captures this manifold nature of the ontological Trinity, describing God as a "being-in-relation" before creation took place. Moltmann (1981b:151) echoes, it is difficult to imagine an immanent Trinity in which God is by himself without love, and not in relationship. Therefore, by definition, the immanent Trinity (in existence) precedes the economic Trinity. While this understanding is philosophically pure, in experience – paradoxically - we gain our information about the immanent Trinity through the economic Trinity. For more information on this complex relationship, see e.g. Vosloo (2004:79-82).

<sup>306</sup> These "unique challenges" are not because of the fact of Koopman's grounding of his anthropology in the economic - in contradistinction to the immanent - Trinity as such, but rather because of the fact that he uses a trinitarian paradigm as basis for his anthropology in general.

***Its main relevant value:*** *an anthropology of vulnerability, relationality and dependence – based in the doctrine of the Trinity - teaches us men that our human dignity, worth and power do not reside in how much we can do and achieve, but in how much we give and receive.* According to Koopman (2004: 198): “This anthropology teaches us that it is not only activity which determines our value but also our being, more pertinently our being together. My value as a person is not only determined by the notion of ‘I perform’, but also by the notions of ‘I am’ or even better ‘We are’, ‘I belong’, ‘I am being cared for’, ‘I give and receive’”<sup>307</sup>. The vulnerability and dependence of myself and other males and females are not to be viewed as expressions of weakness, but as constituent elements of our humanity that serve as beacons to a full human life of dignity, wholeness and joy.

Furthermore, in the light of this being a study done in (South) Africa, the retrieval of an anthropology of dependence and vulnerability can encourage us to re-discover the liberating implications of *ubuntu*<sup>308</sup> for the women, and for the men, of Africa. This can be the case since this anthropology pertinently asks that women be full partners in this revaluation process – which was not the case previously.

#### **4.1.1 The potency and peril of a trinitarian understanding of human relations via perichoresis**

It is not the purpose or scope of this part of the dissertation to critically evaluate all the weaknesses of recent doctrines of the Trinity (with specific focus on the so-called social understanding of the Trinity), but the researcher takes cognisance that attempts to construct such doctrines should be done with caution. Care should thus also be taken to developing

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<sup>307</sup> With this Koopman refers to various recent trinitarian studies which recapture the medieval metaphor of the “divine dance” to describe the *circumincessio* (the movement amongst the persons, the permeation of one Person by the other, the co-inherence without confusion) in the Trinity.

<sup>308</sup> According to another article by Koopman (2003:199-203), the African definition of life and of humanity in terms of *ubuntu* coincides with the trinitarian understanding of human beings as (inter)dependent, vulnerable and caring creatures, and here he makes a few very meaningful suggestions on how this notion can contribute to the realisation of a human rights culture (locally in South Africa, as well as in a global context). He contends that the notion of *ubuntu*, as a prevalent human view and way of life amongst many people in Africa, “serves as a *vehicle* for enhancing the embodiment of the relationality and quality of life that is suggested by a trinitarian anthropology.” (Koopman 2003: 200)

anthropologies in terms of such trinitarian doctrines<sup>309</sup> (regardless of whether it is based on immanent or economic thinking). Therefore, some key remarks will be made in this regard, so that the researchers position within some of this wide range of possibilities can become clear.

Ralph Del Colle (2001) explicates that much of contemporary trinitarian thinking is under the influence of the Greek church fathers (amongst others Gregory of Nyssa<sup>310</sup> en Gregory of Nazianzus), who emphasised the mutual co-inherence or interdependence (*perichoresis*) of the three Persons in the Trinity. This Greek word *perichoresis*<sup>311</sup> makes it possible to conceive of a community without uniformity and a personhood without individualism. It is the theological term for the kind of relational (and spiritual) unity that - according to its proponents - goes far beyond any permutational or dialectical concept that attempts to describe the Trinity's interpenetration, as well as human beings' inter-relatedness and their relatedness to God.

**A central assumption of the doctrine of *perichoresis* is that in the Trinity, personhood and relation-to-other are not separated as they are in us<sup>312</sup>.** The divine persons and the divine relations are mutually constitutive. *Perichoresis* can help us to visualize what it is to be a person-

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<sup>309</sup> In this regard, Miroslav Volf (1998) notes importantly that there is a discrepancy between the vast amount of reflection devoted to the possibility of positive correspondence between the triune God and human community and the virtual absence of reflection on the inherent limits of all such correspondences. "That the road to general proposals about social arrangements, let alone to concrete social programs, is fraught with danger can be illustrated by the fact that people who take it end up walking in opposite directions." (Volf 1998:419) The researcher's argument here will also not be directed against social analogies to the Trinity as such: in themselves these analogies are perhaps no less meaningful than any others. The way in which they are very often used, however, and the claims which are made for and from them can however be problematic in some ways, and needs to be evaluated carefully.

<sup>310</sup> The Greek church fathers described the relationship between the three persons in terms of origin. Gregory of Nyssa described the Father as the Unbegotten, the Son as the Begotten and the Spirit as the Proceeding. Though they emphasise this diversity within the Trinity they also hold on to the unity. This they achieve by describing the relationship of the three Persons in terms of *perichoresis*. For a detailed description of Gregory of Nyssa's terminology for trinitarian *perichoresis*, see Stramara (jr.) (1998).

<sup>311</sup> The semantic history of the term has been well investigated. It derives from *chorein*, 'to make room for another', and from *peri*, 'round about'. It can be defined as 'the dynamic process of making room for another around oneself'. The noun means vortex or rotation; the verb means a movement from one to another, to reach round and go round, embrace, encompass. In the New Testament it occurs only twice (Matthew 3:5 and 14:35), and in both instances it means only 'the world around'. "In Christology, perichoresis describes the mutual interpenetration of two different natures, the divine and the human, in Christ, the God-human being...In the doctrine of the Trinity, perichoresis means the mutual indwelling of the homogeneous divine Persons, Father, Son and Spirit..." (Moltmann 2000a: 316)

<sup>312</sup> Catherine LaCugna (1992: 270) gives an insightful description of this concept by stating that the Three persons "mutually inhere in one another, draw life from one another, 'are' what they are by relation to one another". By avoiding any hint of dividing God into three and yet maintaining the personal distinctions within God, the appeal to *perichoresis* (supposedly) preserved both the unity of the one God and the individuality of the trinitarian persons.

in-relation on the basis of the communion of the Persons within the Trinity<sup>313</sup>. Thus, in resemblance of the eternal life of God in communion - a triune 'society of love' that is open to the world - humanity in its coexistence with others is intended to be a creaturely reflection of the living, triune God made known to us in Jesus Christ and at work among us by the Holy Spirit<sup>314</sup>. It is clear that these notions of resemblance and reflection denotes a certain ethic of *imitation* (of God by humans).

Therefore, Moltmann (2000a: 303-333) – one of the strong proponents of the use of the *perichoresis* concept - contends that the *Trinity is our "social programme."*<sup>315</sup> He argues that we are called to a *koinonia* with God, a union that is so deeply perichoretic<sup>316</sup> that our anxiety about losing our personhood through relation with the other is dissolved as we rest in the One whose personhood is constituted by self-giving love. Subsequently, he argues, "We need a *perichoretic concept of person*. This goes even beyond the communitarian concept of person – *persona in communione* – because it has to be moulded by the reciprocal indwelling. By virtue of their selfless love, the trinitarian Persons come in one another to themselves." (Moltmann 2000a: 319)

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<sup>313</sup> Paul Fiddes (2001: 71) writes: "We need to become aware of the way that we are actually engaging in the triune life of God, sharing in the currents of the personal relationships of God. Language of Trinity...is not that of observation, but of participation. Perhaps no concept better expresses this than that of *perichoresis*."

<sup>314</sup> As Grenz (2001: 16) argues, "the retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity has paved the way for a fully theological anthropology." The triune God is therefore not an isolated monad but lives in communion. God's triune life is the source and power of all life in relationship. Created in the image of God, we are called to be persons in communion with God and others (Gunton 1991: 47-61). We are called to participate in, and in some small way reflect, God's own life of relationship and communion.

<sup>315</sup> The aim of Moltmann's work here (2000a:333) is to show the public relevance of the trinitarian concept of God "for the liberation of individualized men and women, and the relevance of the trinitarian experience of community for the development of a new sociality." In another place Moltmann (2000b) describes the church of the triune God as living in the 'community of the Spirit'. "When this Spirit is 'poured out on all flesh,' the community of the Spirit encompasses the whole creation-community, and the church in its catholicity becomes an ecological church...To live in the Trinity and to lead a trinitarian life brings us into the creation-community and gives us hope for a 'new earth and a new heaven.'" (Moltmann 2000b: 125)

<sup>316</sup> Two important and recent examples - from two very different viewpoints - of critique against Moltmann's use of *perichoresis* is (1) **Randall Otto (2001)**, and (2) **David Crump (2006)**. (1) **Otto** is critical of the philosophical(-ontological) basis on which Moltmann's grounds his use of the term. He (Otto 2001:372) asserts poignantly that Moltmann stands as the "vanguard of theologians" who have engaged in the misuse of the term, "invoking perichoresis while denying its basis in the one divine nature." This use of the term is typed by Otto as "vacuous" (2001:377) and "devoid of an ontological basis" (2001: 381). He therefore concludes by stating: "While Moltmann's use of the term as a model for social relations has proven helpful as an analogy of the community of generic nature that humanity is and should recognize itself to be, his use of perichoresis is based on an *analogia relationis* devoid of the requisite *analogia entis*...Perichoresis is here emasculated of its essential basis and is wrongly employed. Moltmann's social interests may be maintained through the classical use of perichoresis in an ontology of present being." (Otto 2001: 384). **See next footnote for (2) Crump...**

These contentions of Moltmann are very meaningful, but it should also be engaged critically<sup>317</sup>. Miroslav Volf (1998) does exactly this. He (Volf 1998:407) recognises the great (above-mentioned) value of this perichoretic concept of person, but makes another very important point by stating that: although we do have to recognize the resemblance (i.e. continuity) between divine and human identities, we also should acknowledge the broken, imperfect nature of the correspondences (i.e. discontinuity) between creatures and the Creator<sup>318</sup>. He therefore rather speaks of a social vision and not a social program that we can infer from trinitarian thinking (Volf 1998:404-406)<sup>319</sup>. The researcher views this as a particularly important distinction to maintain (i.e. to rather speak of a social vision than a social program).

Furthermore, the insights of Robert Vosloo (2002 and 2004) strengthens this explication. In his assessment of the relation between the triune life and the Christian life, Vosloo (2002) highlights this same problem – i.e. to limit the Christian moral life to an ethic of imitation - by stating meaningfully that an ethic of imitation fails to take the *discontinuity* between God's identity and our identities seriously. What is meant by 'person' or 'relation' within the triune life cannot be paralleled uncritically with what we understand about human personhood or relationality. "Such a discontinuity points to the importance of a hermeneutical task that is marked by struggle, interpretation, ambiguity and embodiment...With regard to trinitarian theology there is a real

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<sup>317</sup> (2) Crump (2006) views Moltmann's use of the term as problematical, from an (New Testament) exegetical perspective. His (Crump 2006:396) core assumption is that Moltmann's discussions of perichoresis typically fuse the gospel of John's references to Father, Son and Spirit together with John's account of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. Crump's main aim is therefore to address the habit (of Moltmann and others) of anachronistic exegesis with respect to John's presentation of the relationships between the Father, Son and Spirit. He (Crump 2006: 397-412) well-foundedly attempts to demonstrate that it is impossible to read a perichoretic trinitarianism out of the fourth Gospel. In fact, he asserts, "John has more to say about the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and disciple than he does the Father, Son and Spirit." (2006:398). The Johannine description of mutual indwelling is therefore that— according to Crump: "...the Father and the Son perichoretically compose a divine bi-unity which perichoretically incorporates disciples within the Son through the Spirit...To apprehend, or to be apprehended by, this new reality is to enjoy fullness of life (John 10:10)" (2006:410, 412). The researcher is acutely aware of these (and other) valid arguments and critique against Moltmann's use of the term *perichoresis*. A further exploration thereof unfortunately exceeds the limits of this dissertation. It will suffice to state that despite these objections, the researcher deems that the use of the doctrine of the Trinity and the trinitarian concept of personhood (via the concept perichoresis), can still be regarded as a meaningful social analogy to view human identity (and henceforth, gender relations). How and why this is possible, is cursorically motivated here below.

<sup>318</sup> Volf's argument is as follows: "First, since ontically human beings are manifestly not divine and since noetically human notions of the triune God do not correspond exactly to who the triune God is, trinitarian concepts such as 'person', 'relation' or '*perichoresis*' can be applied to human community only in an analogous rather than a univocal sense...Second, since the lives of human beings are inescapably marred by sin and saddled with transitoriness, in history human beings cannot be made into the perfect creaturely images of the triune God which they are eschatologically destined to become. (Volf 1998:405)

<sup>319</sup> Volf finds a strict identity between the economic and the immanent Trinity untenable and presupposes both the unity and the distinction between them, although the immanent Trinity serves as the "ultimate horizon" for his views.

temptation to speculate about analogies between God's inner trinitarian life and our vision for personhood, the church and society. ***While such attempts are rhetorically powerful, they are nevertheless theologically suspect***<sup>320</sup>.” (Vosloo 2002: 94-95) (own bold and italics)

Henceforth, a very valuable alternative possibility (of interpreting trinitarian theology for anthropological relations) is eventually elicited by Vosloo (2002), and deserves further mentioning and engagement. He suggests that the notion of *participation* is more adequate for our quest to understand the link between the triune life and the Christian moral life. Vosloo (2002: 96-103) contends convincingly that the triune life is indeed not merely a model or inspiration, but also the source that enables a Christian moral life. “This does not deny the importance of imagination, but it does qualify the faithful Christian imagination as being a *participatory imagination* or, put differently, an *imaginative participation*.” (2002: 96).

Important to note here is that this notion of (imaginative) participation is not simply a participation in God in some esoteric way, “but that due to a certain understanding of Christ, it is therefore a participation in reality – it is a participation in life, it is being drawn into life.” (2002: 101). More fully (i.e. pneumatologically) qualified: ***our participation in God is a participation in Christ and through the Spirit***<sup>321</sup>.

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320 The researcher is acutely aware of the fact that this is precisely the peril of attempting to ascertain what the exact nature of the relationship between the triune life and human (Christian) life might be: one always risks the danger of speculation and projecting certain human characteristics onto God. Karen Kilby (2000a: 437) warns against this dilemma by stating frankly: “Social theorists speak of intense empathy, of verve and zest. Where exactly, one might wonder, did they acquire such a vivid feeling for the inner life of the deity?” In short, Kilby (2000:441) is suggesting that this projection takes place in a three stage process. “First, a concept, perichoresis, is used to name what is not understood, to name whatever it is that makes the three Persons one. Secondly, the concept is filled out rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experience of relationships and relatedness. And then, finally, it is presented as an exciting resource Christian theology has to offer the wider world in its reflections upon relationships and relatedness...Projection, then, is particularly problematic in at least some social theories of the Trinity because what is projected onto God is immediately reflected back onto the world, and this reverse projection is said to be what is in fact important about the doctrine.” The researcher regards Kilby's argument here as valid, but judges that she unfortunately does not give enough detail in her article to build a convincing argument and moreover, she does not provide any substantially meaningful alternatives of interpretation. Her proposal is rather drastic: that one should renounce the very idea that the point of the doctrine (of the Trinity) is to give insight into God.

<sup>321</sup> These assertions are affirmed by the argument of Grenz (2005: 98) who contends that human personhood is bound up with relationality, and the completeness of relationality lies ultimately in relationship with the Triune God. “*Creating this relational fullness is the work of the Spirit, who places humans ‘in Christ’ and thereby effects human participation in the dynamic of the divine life. Moreover, being ‘in Christ’ entails participating in the narrative of Jesus, with its focus on the cross and the resurrection* (cf. Rom.6.1-14).” (own italics)

Closing his argument in this instance, Vosloo (2002) earnestly and responsibly challenges the increasing supremacy of the view of the self as an isolated individual, and its concomitant social apathy and moral problems (specifically recognisable in South Africa). He suggests finally that a re-imagining of God in which we see God not as isolated individuals<sup>322</sup> or as a lonely monarch can inspire our imaginations to view ourselves, others and creation differently. “This does not serve merely as a model or a vision, but *in Christ and through the Spirit we are enabled to participate in the self-giving and other-receiving love of the triune God. This serves as a source for us to live lives of generosity, hospitality, responsibility and joy.*” (Vosloo 2002: 103) (own italics and bold)

In a later (and related) article titled *Identity, otherness and the triune God* (2004), Vosloo indicates how a Christian ethic of hospitality challenges the notion of an *enclosed identity* in which the aim is to protect my/our identity by insulating me or us from what is different and other. His argument here is that: “a Trinitarian identification of God helps us to *relocate pluralism* within God and thus *find our inspiration and empowerment to be open towards the other and otherness from our participation in Christ and through the Spirit in this Triune life.*” (Vosloo 2004: 77-78, own italics and bold).

The crucial point to grasp in Vosloo’s contentions is that: although he stresses the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity can be (mis)used as a “heavy super-structure”<sup>323</sup>, he nevertheless states that “this does not mean that we must not, for instance, use the doctrine of the Trinity when thinking about ethical matters, but that we must use it in a ‘soft’ manner – more like a guiding light than as something cast in stone.” (Vosloo 2004: 79). The main point he thus makes is that: *the*

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<sup>322</sup> It is important to note here that Vosloo (2002: 98) – in line with the argument of David Cunningham (1998) – values *perichoresis* as a meaningful attempt to prevent the separation and isolation of “the Three”, but does not give this concept such high prominence because his starting point is primarily a less individualistic portrait of the Three. His determining assertion is that we as humans are called to live lives of mutual participation, in line with the trinitarian virtue of participation (the Three dwelling in the other so completely that we cannot divide them).

<sup>323</sup> Vosloo (2004: 78) states: “...not all Trinitarian roads are worth travelling. For instance, the doctrine of the Trinity can be used as a heavy super-structure that opens the door for a speculative ‘top-down’ approach to theology in which the doctrine of the Trinity serves in an oversimplified manner as a mere model for our views on personhood, the church and society...This opens the door to a speculative and abstract theology that seems to be defenceless against charges of idealising and ideologising.” Conversely he eventually argues that notions from trinitarian discourse, like *perichoresis*, are second-order symbols. It can however be viewed as “creative attempts to depict something of the richness of the images, metaphors and narratives of Scripture that portray the God of Israel and Jesus as a hospitable God.” (2004:89)

*doctrine of the Trinity is a second-order symbol* and we should be careful to use the symbol to serve as an ethical ideal or divine model for human society.

Despite his relevant warnings against these dangers of idealising, Vosloo (2004: 85-87) continues by citing noteworthy trinitarian theologians (e.g. Fiddes, Moltmann, LaCugna, Gunton etc.), in order to **indicate convincingly that the doctrine of *perichoresis* can still be fruitfully viewed as a creative image for portraying both relational identity and otherness**. He aptly argues that the notion of *perichoresis* distinctly transmits something of a hospitable participation between the divine “persons”<sup>324</sup>. “It calls up the image of the triune identity as not a self-enclosed identity but as a self-giving and other-receiving identity. If we believe that humans are created in the image of this triune God, these perichoretic relationships serve as a powerful model and source for lives that challenge the notions of the isolated individual, enclosed identity and cosy homogeneity.” (Vosloo 2004:87)

**In summary:** Vosloo (2004: 88-89) argues that the notion of *perichoresis* ultimately suggests that “God is not an eternal solitude, but a timeful communion”, and that although it can certainly be misemployed it nevertheless helps us to ground an ethic of hospitality in the character or identity of God and essentially outlines the triune God as a hospitable and welcoming communion of love. The triune God is indeed “the self-giving and other-receiving Host. Through the sacrificial giving in Christ, a gift of hospitality *par excellence*, humans (and the rest of creation) are invited and enabled to participate in the triune feast of love. In Christ and through the Spirit, it becomes possible to embody what can be called perichoretic hospitality.” (2004: 89)

These last-mentioned arguments affirm and augment the researcher’s earlier conclusions - of an anthropology of vulnerability, relationality and dependence that teaches men that their dignity, worth and power do not reside in how much they can do and achieve, but in how much they give and receive. *What and to whom can we give and receive?* The researcher contends that ***from our participation in Christ and through the Spirit (in the triune life), we can give all people human***

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<sup>324</sup> In other words, the notion of *perichoresis* lifts up the idea of a complex relationality at the centre of God rather than an omnipotent, all powerful, but basically independent supreme being.



*dignity through our loving hospitality, and we can receive harmony and joy from participating vulnerably dependent within all human relations.*

Therefore *we can and should also oppose* a theological anthropology of autonomy and power (which lies at the centre of many of the patriarchal traditions) that cause the dehumanization of both men and women. *We can and should resist* - within our patriarchal societies and contexts - practices that allow masculine values to become the ideological structure of the society as a whole and concomitantly leads to the oppression of women, violence etc.

Men's power to change and to be empowered authentically cannot come forth out of the patriarchal system (i.e. from unilateral patriarchal power), but it should rather be a spiritual power which can (amongst others) only be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit (as was concluded earlier). This understanding of God's power will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but it can be stated here in advance that in essence: *this power of God is the power to love sacrificially*<sup>325</sup>.

This *love* was also asserted earlier as the *central notion of being created in the image of the triune God*. Our new humanity in Christ grants us a new freedom from the bondage of sin and for hospitable partnerships with (*and participation in*) God (*through the Holy Spirit*) and others. This opens us up for **love**, as well as **faith** and **hope**, i.e. ways of living into the image of God realized for us and promised to us in Christ. Love, faith and hope are not only the gifts and practices of a new human relationship with God, but also a new way of being human in hospitable solidarity with others.

**In conclusion:** It does seem indeed the case that *trinitarian discourse can offer rich possibilities – such as the notion of perichoresis - for a creative rethinking of human identity and relations*. The researcher however deems the notion of *participation* as the most meaningful alternative in stead of the option of using the doctrine of the Trinity as fixed super-structure or social model for anthropological relations. This notion is especially relevant in the light of the researcher's afore-

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<sup>325</sup> See the heading in the next chapter “An alternative understanding of God's power” for more detail on this topic.

mentioned assertions. Nevertheless, the researcher needs to exclaim emphatically that *such a process - of asserting and re-asserting satisfactory notions to epitomize the loving, welcoming God - is a continual process, and we are all journeying toward deeper insight*<sup>326</sup>.

The researcher henceforth continues to endeavour on this journey by investigating specifically what the above-mentioned notions and assertions might imply for a responsible understanding of gender relationships (i.e. the interplay between the doctrine of the Trinity and gender relations).

#### **4.2 Possible re-interpretations of gender relations from a (trinitarian) theological perspective**

In light of the fact that themes concerning men's gender construction (and gender relations) as well as sexual identity have received attention in previous chapters, but not specifically out of a theological angle of incidence, these next few paragraphs will address these issues theologically. In what follows the researcher will mainly engage critically with the Miroslav Volf's core assumptions (in this regard) to deepen the insight into the complex issue of gender identity and relations from a theological perspective. But first, a brief introduction will be given to this topic.

An attentive and responsible reading of scripture indicates that God has built a lot more flexibility into what we call gender than what is normally presumed (which is why the researcher has previously **opted to refer to gender relations rather than using the more static term gender roles**). Stewart van Leeuwen (2005: 125) explains that if we compare Genesis 1: 20-22 with Genesis 1:26-28, we see that sexual reproduction is something that we share with the animals: both they and we are told to 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill [the seas, the earth].' What differs remarkably, however is that the primal man *and* woman are given an additional mandate: to *subdue* (i.e. to care responsibly for) the earth.

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<sup>326</sup> At the very start of this dissertation (chapter one, heading one: "Introduction of the researcher") the researcher mentioned that "This is the arduous, but meaningful journey I believe we are on as partners in this research endeavour: the journey of finding a usable gendered future in our conflicted past." This is a continual process...

According to her, Reformed theologians have taken this to mean that “human beings—whether or not they acknowledge the divine source of this mandate—are called to unfold the potential of creation in ways that flexibly express the image of God yet stay within the limits of God’s creation norms. What Christians have too often done instead, under the influence of Pagan and Greek thought earlier and the doctrine of gendered separate spheres later, is to assign subduing the earth to men, while telling women to be fruitful and multiply.” Henceforth, a central assumption of this study is affirmed with her contention that gender is part of the so-called ‘cultural mandate’ – “something to be responsibly structured and re-negotiated throughout the successive acts of the biblical drama”— not a mystical, rigid, archetypal given, nor ever a completely social construction. “At the very least it must cooperate with physical and reproductive differences between the sexes as these interact with the settings in which people carry out the cultural mandate.” (Stewart van Leeuwen 2005: 125).

According to Moltmann (2000) another problem in the relationship between women and men is the balance between their likeness as human beings and their particular character as women and men. If the essential likeness is disregarded, inhumane relationships of domination and dependence are the result; if the difference between women and men is ignored, the result is a uniformity which does justice neither to her nor to him. God’s image is expressed in creation in male and female forms. Is then the image of God only fully expressed in male and female together or is it fully expressed in a single person? The paradox – according to Moltmann - is that the image of God is simultaneously and fully expressed in both males and females alone (single) and together (in marriage). But we cannot discover what masculinity and femininity means in isolation from one another, *we must insist on a relational understanding of what it means to be masculine and feminine*<sup>327</sup>.

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<sup>327</sup> Nelson (1988: 96-100) argues that through body-experience males become full males and females full females (beyond *androgyny*), as God intended. If men fully explore themselves as men, they will not find the “internal” masculine and feminine, but rather uncover much of what has been hidden both by cultural and theological stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, and discover what it means to experience the world as fully male, as whole masculine body-selves. So self-understanding happens through body-experience within other-centred relationships, not in self-isolation. Thus the psycho-social understanding and self-identification of masculinity is an experience of male body-self awareness within the relational context of God, women, men and the world in general.

By a close reading of Genesis 1:26-27<sup>328</sup> and noting the strange shift between singular and plural: ‘*Let us* make human beings, *an image* after our likeness...And God created *the human being* in his own image...male and female he created *them*.’, Moltmann (2000: 284-286) contends: “What ‘corresponds’ to the creative God as his image on earth is solely a human community in which women and men arrive at their different, feminine or masculine identities, and by way of these identities are there with one another and for one another, and together constitute the resonance of the living God in his earthly creation.” If women and men in their bodily and spiritual wholeness are together God’s image, then they are his image in their sexual difference and their community with each other too.

#### **4.2.1 The problem of (gendered) God-language**

When Miroslav Volf (1996) investigates the topic of God and gender he firstly inquires into what significance the gender of God language may have for the topic. Volf explains that feminist theologians have made it abundantly clear how the gendered God language bears on the question of the equality of men and women. He quotes the infamous statement of Mary Daly (Volf 1996: 170) “‘If God is male, then male is God,’ wrote Mary Daly bluntly, but correctly”. Correspondingly, if the highest reality could be spoken of only in masculine metaphors, men would be more like God and therefore superior to women and vice versa.

Volf takes it for granted that men and women are equal in all respects, but is more interested gender identity and difference. He asks the important question whether gendered God language, which says much about whether men and women are inferior, superior, or equal to one another, says anything about what it means to be male or female<sup>329</sup>? Volf argues that we use masculine or feminine metaphors for God not because God is male or/and female, but because God is ‘personal’. If God is completely beyond sexual distinctions (as most theologians would agree<sup>330</sup>) but our language of God is necessarily gendered, then all specifically masculine or feminine

<sup>328</sup> See De Gruchy (2004: 60-67) for an illuminating exposition by Dietrich Bonhoeffer of Genesis 1:26-27 and the image of God on earth.

<sup>329</sup> For a more detailed discussion on God-language in terms of gender, see also the next chapter’s section on “Men and God-images in terms of gender.”

<sup>330</sup> Cf. Frame (2002: 378): “No one argues that God is literally male or female, since Christians generally agree that God is incorporeal (as the Bible teaches)”. See also (Frame 2002: 583-585).

content of the language about God stems exclusively from the creaturely realm (given that there is no other way to speak of persons except in a gendered way).

Henceforth: all employment of God language for the construction of gender identity is illegitimate and ought to be resisted. Whether we use masculine or feminine metaphors for God, God “models” our common humanity, not our gender specificity or gender identity. Nothing in God is specifically feminine; nothing in God is specifically masculine. Men and women share maleness and femaleness not with God but with animals, they image God in their common humanity. (Volf 1996: 170-174)

Volf furthermore affirms that the content of gender identity has no transcendental base or divine blueprint. Rather, men’s and women’s gender identities are rooted in the specificity of their distinct sexed bodies and negotiated in the social exchange between men and women within a given cultural context (note specifically that he speaks of the sexed body as the root rather than the content of gender identity). Therefore: “Applied to gender this means that men and women continue to exist in a duality as male and female through all the changes of their gender identity precisely because of the stability of their sexed bodies. It is because of the sexed bodies that we can speak of two genders at all and reflect on their changing identities.” (Volf 1996: 174)

**Thus far, Volf’s meaningful and persuasive argument implies:** *first*, we should not seek to glean the content of gender identity by mirroring God, because any femininity or masculinity we may find in God was projected onto God; *second*, the content of gender identity is rooted in the sexed body (“nature”) and fashioned by the history of social interaction between persons with such sexed bodies (“culture”).

Given this biological and cultural grounding of gender identity, Volf however attempts a further contribution by presenting a reflection on God’s trinitarian identity, in order to aid the discussions about humans’ gender identity. He “enters” the world of the Trinity and then look into what such trinitarian explorations may mean for the construction of gender and for the relations between engendered persons. *Volf suggests that the nature and content of the*

*relations between the trinitarian persons* – based on mutual relations and the eternal embrace of self-giving (*perichoresis*) - *serve as a model for how the content of “masculinity” and “femininity” ought to be negotiated in the social process.* (Volf 1996: 176)

It follows then from his above-mentioned argumentation that *Volf views normativity for the content of gender identities as located in the formal features of identity and the character of relations of divine persons.* “What is normative is not some “essence” of femininity and masculinity, but the procedures, modelled on the life of the triune God, through which women and men in specific cultural settings should negotiate their mutual relations and their constructions of femininity and masculinity.” (Volf 1996: 182)

*In short, Volf’s (1996: 170-182) trinitarian perspective on gender is the following:* Gender identities are essentially related and therefore the specific wholeness of each can be achieved only through the relation to the other, a relation that neither neutralizes nor synthesizes the two, but negotiates the identity of each by readjusting it to the identity of the other. At the heart of the Christian tradition – in the doctrine of the Trinity and the cross – there are resources for thinking about gender identity that offer a radical alternative to misogyny. All of this - the affirmation of the equal dignity of genders, the symmetry in construction of gender identities, and the presence of the other in the self – *all of this is kept in motion by self-giving love.* A self-giving love found essentially in the eternal embrace of divine persons and Christ’s embrace of sinful humanity on the cross.

**In conclusion:** The researcher deems Volf’s arguments very compelling, but takes a critical view – in light of the qualified arguments earlier - with regards to his speculative approach: in terms of using the character of the relations of the divine persons as normative for the content of gender identities. However, the value of many of his insightful assertions closely relates and expands the researcher’s view on gender relations, and this have been illuminated. The researcher has opted for an anthropology characterized by vulnerability, relationality and dependence, as a pathway towards building human relations that are characterized by harmony and joy, instead of estrangement. It was contended earlier that from our participation in Christ and through the Spirit (in the triune life), we can give all people human dignity through our hospitality, and we

can receive harmony and joy from participating vulnerably dependent *within all human relations*. This contention therefore also specifically includes our gender relations.

Thus, in close partnership with Volf (1996: 182), the researcher contends in broad terms:

***Masculinity and femininity within a Christian-theological description (as such), cannot be precisely described and profiled. Biblical ‘womanhood’ and ‘manhood’<sup>331</sup> – if there are such things at all, given the diversity of male and female characters and roles that we encounter in the Bible – are not divinely sanctioned models<sup>332</sup> but culturally situated examples; they are versions of the triumphs and defeats of men and women to live out the appeals of God (i.e. love, hospitality etc.) in their lives, within specific settings.***

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<sup>331</sup> In another context, Samuel Terrien (1985: 221-222) contends in a similar vein as Volf, “A biblical theology of manhood and womanhood is neither a modern, systematic theology expressed in terms of the cultural environment of the twentieth century A.D., nor is it a manual of sexual ethics for our time. Rather, a biblical theology of manhood and womanhood attempts to expound, with scrupulous respect for the historical growth in all its ups and downs over twelve centuries of Near Eastern and classical antiquity, the double movement in the interaction of theology with anthropology and, conversely, of anthropology with theology.”

<sup>332</sup> In the late 1980’s two evangelical organizations were formed with quite different agendas captured in quite different names, namely: “The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood”(CBMW) and “Christians for Biblical Equality” (CBE). Each issued a statement about gender relations that it claimed was based on a high view and a close reading of the Bible, but the two groups came to very different conclusions. Here we have two very different stances on relations between men and women (in church and home) by two groups both of whom believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. A main feature of their differing views is the debate concerning male headship. Stewart Van Leeuwen (2004: 13-16) asserts that the result, in the debate about male headship, is a tendency to play what might be called “proof text poker.” Traditionalists and egalitarians confront one another with their favourite handful of biblical texts [e.g., Genesis 3:16, Ephesians 5:22, 1 Corinthians 11:3-10, and Titus 2:5 for traditionalists; Genesis 1:26-28, Job 42:15, Acts 2:17-18, and Galatians 3:28 for egalitarians]. “The assumption is that the one with the fullest hand of texts wins the argument.” The researcher deems this debate as very important to take note of, but can unfortunately not go into any in-depth discussions on exegetical issues like these in this study. It should however be quite clear that he positions himself more on the side of the CBE in this debate (in the light of the above-mentioned conclusion on ‘Biblical manhood and womanhood’). For more detail see Grudem (2002) and Blankenhorn, Browning and Stewart Van Leeuwen (2004); as well as addendum I for more information on these two organizations.

## 5. CORE PRINCIPLES OF A THEOLOGY OF EMBODIMENT<sup>333</sup>

It has been amplified that it is virtually impossible to speak of men's relations to God without speaking at the same time of their own body perceptions, and vice versa. Men's gods are inseparable from their interpretations of their bodies, and men's bodies give shape to and potentially transform their perceptions of the ultimate. This is an ongoing conversation: between body experiences and meanings, on the one hand, and religious perceptions, on the other. To view body experiences as legitimate and important sources of theological data, and operating sources of meanings and world views, is a relatively new practice.

But embodiment and sexuality is indeed basic to the divine-human connection and one of the great arenas for celebrating the source of life itself. As Ackermann (2003: 66) states aptly: "We failed to see the body as a source of knowledge... We now understand that our bodies are both the private and the political terrain on which the oppressions of race, gender and class are played out. Our bodies are not prenatal or ahistorical!"

Subsequently the last part of this dissertation endeavours to construct *a theology of embodiment which is essentially dialogical and relational*. As Nelson (1992) has pointed out this is by no means a simple task. Men struggle with ways to conceptualize these things because our body perceptions live so deeply within us that they are difficult to reflect upon. Indeed, "We rarely measure the measuring stick itself." (Nelson 1996: 312). Furthermore, one of the costs of the patriarchal practice of taking the male experience as normative for human experience is that: men have become "invisible" to themselves.

But our embodied existence should never be an obstacle to fellowship with God, and it is'nt! On the contrary, in its affirmation of the goodness of embodied life as created by God, in its teaching

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<sup>333</sup> "Embodiment" is an indication thereof that human persons (in their daily life orientation) give expression to their motives and goals via their bodily existence, and thereby makes themselves known within relationships. It is subsequently a broad term which refers to people's experience of their core existence in terms of their bodily existence. In the Bible (specifically in Paul's theology) the body indicates the concrete way of being of the human person/self (Romans 12:1). In many instances body is a synonym for the human person self (1 Corinthians 6:15), and it therefore has a very extensive meaning.



that the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ, and in its hope in the resurrection of the body, Christian faith shows itself to be “the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions.” (Temple 1956: 478).

Through the centuries however, most Jewish and Christian writings about body and sexuality have unfortunately been mainly one-directional. Those writings and religious observations, largely shaped by male theologians, began with religious perceptions (scriptures, ecclesiastical pronouncements, or theological doctrines) and then moved to bodily applications. They typically assumed that theology was fundamentally a matter of spirit and mind, not body<sup>334</sup>. In Christianity, under the influence of the ancient classical world’s body-denigrating dualism - as will be indicated in more detail here below - this was particularly pronounced. Yet, it was somewhat true even in a Jewish tradition relatively free from the body-spirit split. “Theologically, the net result has been a more deductive than inductive approach.” (Nelson 1996: 312).

Thus far in this study much attention has been given to a critical assessment of many destructive aspects of men’s lives, e.g. power abuse, identity confusion, lack of intimacy experience etc. The researcher contends that *a theology of embodiment is necessary in order to also appreciate and enhance more constructive sides of masculinity. A meaningful and constructive theology of embodiment primarily includes the perspective of inhabitation, and not just incarnation*<sup>335</sup>. God lives in human beings through His Spirit; therefore the fruit of the Holy Spirit can help humans to live a quality of life which enhances *vitality, human dignity and meaning*. Through the perspective of the resurrection the powerful reality of the transfiguration of Christ gives new meaning to and promotes healthy (embodied) masculinity. This implies a holistic perspective on manhood, which will subsequently be explored.

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<sup>334</sup> According to Roy Porter (1991: 213) – writing about the “History of the body” – mind and body have traditionally been assigned distinct attributes and connotations. “Mind is canonically superior to matter. Ontologically therefore, the mind, will, consciousness or self have been designated as the guardians and governors of the body, and the body should be their servant...In major respects, this hierarchical subordination of body to mind systematically degrades the body; its appetites and desires are seen as blind, wilful, anarchic or (within Christianity) radically sinful; it may be regarded as the prison of the soul.”

<sup>335</sup> A main part of this argument is that theology as a source of healing and change cannot ignore the importance of the interconnectedness between ensoulment and embodiment. For the healing dimension of theology, spiritual healing, the researcher argues in this chapter that pastoral care as a theological endeavour should shift from an incarnational paradigm to an inhabitational paradigm to apply a hermeneutics of human embodiment.

## 5.1 A holistic perspective on being a sexual (hu)man

According to Shults (2003: 185), “After the turn to relationality in philosophy and science, theology has a new opportunity to retrieve the holistic anthropology of the biblical tradition.” In light of the above-mentioned assertions the researcher contends that a *holistic perspective of the human being*, which places central value on the development of the entire person, should serve as another *core presupposition in this dissertation’s pastoral-anthropological view of men (and women)*. The dualistic notion of body versus spirit/soul<sup>336</sup> continues in some circles today (as will be indicated later in this chapter), but in the last two centuries specifically, most biblical scholars have increasingly moved toward a consensus that both the Old and the New Testament provide a holistic model of the human person - as a unified relationship of different dimensions of existence<sup>337</sup>.

Overall, then, Scripture depicts the human person as a dynamic unity, which it considers from various perspectives using terms such as “soul,” “heart” “body,” “flesh,” “spirit” and “mind.” Further, the Bible does not use exact scientific language. It uses the above-mentioned terms more or less interchangeably. This is because the parts of the body are thought of, not primarily from the point of view of their difference from, and interrelation with, other parts, but as signifying or stressing different aspects of the whole human in relation to God. (Hoekema 1986: 203). Distinguishing these dimensions of human relationality is important, but the Bible is concerned with the salvation of the whole person in community in relation to God. The literature in this field has been well summarized in various research materials elsewhere, and for the purposes of this dissertation some brief explications in the following paragraphs will suffice.

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<sup>336</sup> The dichotomistic model, as in Greek and some Hindu thought, is unacceptable. It must be noted that this is however not a simplistic opposition between Hebrew “monism” and Greek “dualism”, but a recognition that there is in fact a difference. See for instance, Green (1998) and Gunton (1991).

<sup>337</sup> Berkouwer’s (1957) “biblical view of man” or theological anthropology is, for example, one of wholeness, never a dualistic, or pluralistic being. It is also called a “unitary view” or Hebraic as opposed to Greek understanding of the human person. With regards to male sexuality and identity, this implies that God made humans as relational, embodied males and females, and it was “very good” (Genesis 1:27). This, in the researcher’s opinion, signifies that sexuality is whole and aesthetically valuable, dynamically integrated into the whole person.

In the creation narrative the human is described as *néfesh* (Genesis 2:7). *Néfesh* does not only refer to the soul (as some entity apart from the body), but to the whole human self as an animated being who receives the principle of life from God. The Bible does not describe human beings scientifically in terms of an ‘anthropology’ that would or could be in competition with a scientific investigation of humans in the various aspects of their existence, or with philosophical anthropology. (cf. Berkouwer 1957: 211; Anderson 1982: 213).

Groenewald (2006) expounds the fact that the Old Testament quite frankly acknowledges sexuality as an important aspect of humanity<sup>338</sup>. He contends that it unapologetically depicts men and women as physical and sexual creatures – not only as spiritual, rational and moral beings. For the contemporary reader the Old Testament view of human personhood should therefore not be anything aberrant. In a surprising way the modern view of humans as psychosomatic units is largely in agreement with the Old Testament anthropology.

It is however important to note that *body* and *soul* are two concepts that was understood in a whole other light by Israelite people (Hebrews) than is the case today. The concepts did not feature dualistically as distinguished parts, but rather in the sense of a unitary paradigm, as part of a psychosomatic unit<sup>339</sup>. As the human person is (a) “*soul*”, he or she is simultaneously (a) “*body*”. Therefore it is not at all strange that humans are interchangeably presented as “*soul*” or as “*body*” (“*flesh*”)<sup>340</sup> (see Psalm 44:26; Song of Songs 3:1vv; Genesis 2:24). Thus, the dichotomy (one can even speak of a trichotomy) between “*body*” and “*soul*” (and “*spirit*”) was something alien in the Hebrew paradigm or for the anthropology of the Hebrew person.

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<sup>338</sup> Human (2007: 19) affirms this statement by asserting: “Like eating and drinking sexuality and the erotic was part of life in the Ancient Near East.” (own translation out of Afrikaans).

<sup>339</sup> The likeness to God enjoyed by human beings embraces their *wholeness, body and soul*, as woman or man, and must therefore not be restricted to their sexless souls or their bodiless spiritual natures, as has been the standard practice in the tradition of the Western church ever since Augustine.

<sup>340</sup> According to Jewett (1996: 30-31) “*body*” (*soma*) describes our nature on its material side; it is the physical organism viewed as the sum total of its related members. “*Flesh*” (*sarx*) describes the matter or material of which the *soma* [body] is made. As such it carries overtones of the finitude and transitory nature of human existence. In a theological anthropology, therefore, they do not warrant separate treatment. The use of the term “*flesh*” in the New Testament to describe human nature in its sinful opposition to the Spirit of God (“the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit,” Galatians 5:17) is a matter of soteriology, not anthropology. The same is true of passages like 1 Peter 2:11, which admonishes: “abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.”

The basic holistic anthropology in the Old Testament is re-affirmed in the New Testament<sup>341</sup> in the *doctrine of resurrection*. Paul reacted against the anti-materialist Gnostic teaching that describes humans' bodily existence as inherently evil (and forbade people to marry and have sexual relations), by stating in 1 Corinthians 6-7 that Christ came to salvage man in the whole of his embodied existence. Not only the soul will be salvaged, but the body will also be resurrected. God's commitment to renew man's whole being becomes clear in the work of the Holy Spirit. ***The human body is the dwelling place or temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).***

Although the Biblical witness to the essential unity and wholeness of the personal self is antithetical to a dualism that posits an evil body and a good soul, this is however not to deny that there is a distinction between the outer and the inner, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual, aspects of our humanity. While the two-substance doctrine is inadequate, nonetheless, those who would frame a Christian and Biblical anthropology must speak of the human subject not only in terms of a unity of the personal self but also in terms of a distinction between soul and body. The personal self is not apart from the body (*idealism*), yet it cannot be equated with the body (*materialism*). Hence Jesus' admonition that we should not fear those who may kill the body but cannot kill the soul (Matthew 10:28).

How can these above-mentioned Old and New Testament perspectives be "translated" into an understanding of soul that is applicable to the issue of male identity within the field of pastoral care? The researcher is convinced that it can and must be concluded that: ***to be a human person is to be an embodied soul and a soulful body***. Henceforth sexuality is intrinsically connected to the ensoulment of the body and the embodiment of the soul. One does not have a soul, one is one's soul in terms of mind, will, emotion and body. The religious dynamics in the embodiment and ensoulment is spirituality as expressed in our directedness towards transcendence (the divine and the ultimate). *Soulfulness is thus not fully definable because it is a state of being.*

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<sup>341</sup> Steyn (2006) provides a broad overview of sexuality in the New Testament, picturing the early Christians as sexual beings with a new identity in Christ. Sexuality is a given in the New Testament, but due to their new identity, Christians' sexuality displays particular features: it expresses its freedom responsibly; is driven by divine love; surrenders sacrificially to the other as Christ did; treats its partner as an equal and not as an object of self satisfaction; respects the identity of the other and despises all kinds of sexual malpractices; believes in forgiveness; and finds its climax ultimately and always in the presence of God, etc.

Soul is not a thing, but a quality or a dimension of experiencing life and ourselves within relational networks. Louw (2005: 13) defines it aptly by stating that **‘soul’ refers to a collective identity within the corporate structures of life as a whole**, i.e. marriage, family, clan and society (i.e. a hermeneutical and systemic understanding of soul.) “Soul reflects a network of social systems and spiritual forces, and designates a qualitative stance in life.”

Therefore (Louw 2007: 53-54) concludes: one does not have a soul but one is in every fabric of our being human, soul. “A human being does not possess immortality as in the case of Hellenism. The Bible views a human being in terms of realism, i.e. we are vulnerable and part of creation. A human being is a mortal creature: immortality is a quality given to us due to an act of God’s faithfulness - God’s grace (1 Corinthians 15:53).”

## 5.2 An ethos of bodily integration that promotes justice and human dignity

Earlier reference was made to (amongst others) sexual dualisms which still hold a strong grip on people’s personal lives, communal ethos and institutional structures. This influence of the dualisms was however strongly challenged in the past couple of years, since people long for the integration of sexuality and spirituality.

“We long for the time when human sexuality, in spite of all its ambiguities, will be more integrated with our experience of the sacred and with the vision of God’s Shalom...in society at large and in the pews of our churches there is a genuine hunger for the reunion of sexuality and spirituality, a hunger still being insufficiently addressed by most theologies that continue to be rooted in sexual dualisms.” (Nelson 1992: 17)

There is henceforth a strong need for a *theology of embodiment* which engages hermeneutically and dialogically with questions pertaining to our experiences as embodied sexual beings, as well as our experiences of the Christian tradition and the Bible’s assertions on how this should find expression<sup>342</sup> Such a theology is always focused on *much* more than just genital expression,

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342 In this regard theologians like James Nelson (1992) and Adrian Thatcher (1993) have made huge contributions to establish a sexual theology, which – in differentiation from a theology of/about sexuality – does not argue in a typically one-way fashion, e.g.: “What does Scripture and the tradition say about our sexuality and how must it find

seeing that sexuality indeed expresses the mystery of our createdness as people who need to reach out for the physical and spiritual embrace of others. It was indicated that God's intention is that we find our authentic humanness not in isolation but in relationship. A theology of embodiment augments who we are as body-selves, experiencing the emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual need for intimate communion with the created world, with God and with others.

Such a theology will understand our sexuality as intrinsic to the God-human connectedness, as one of the big arenas for the celebration of the Source of Life. Subsequently sexuality and embodiment will directly and consciously be admitted into our understanding of every main Christian dogma – God, human nature, sin, salvation, history and eschatology. For example, more attention will be given to the different ways in which our sexual interpretation-schemes animate our perceptions/concepts of God (through gendered “lenses” – as previously indicated); as well as to the various ways in which the God-human relationship is drenched with sexual elements, both in our sin and in our salvation<sup>343</sup>.

Furthermore such a theology will understand our embodied sexuality as that it is capable of expressing our God-intended destiny of *shalom*, i.e. vitality, freedom, creativity, fragility, joy, healing and integration. By means of such a theological perspective we can regain a vision of God's own intimate relatedness, and consequently also of our own need for life-giving community and intimacy, as well as our hunger for relationships of justice which make such fulfilment and humanly dignified encounters possible<sup>344</sup>

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expression?” According to them, this is definitely an important question, but it is not enough. There should be an extended hermeneutical and dialogical question: “What does our experiences as human sexual beings tells us about how we read the Bible, interpret the tradition and try to embody and live out the meaning of the Gospel?” The movement should therefore be in both directions, and not only in one direction. The researcher's choice for a theology of embodiment stands in line with the last mentioned alternative, owing credit to Nelson and Thatcher for their leading insights.

<sup>343</sup> See the section below on “*Dualisms, sexual salvation and the significance of the body in experiencing God*”

<sup>344</sup> In the light of the above-mentioned ethos of bodily integration, which promotes justice and human dignity, the last chapter will give more elaborate attention to a re-interpretation of God's power, for the purpose of a more integrated experience of intimacy (via their spirituality) by men.

### 5.3 Dualisms, sexual salvation and the significance of the body in experiencing God

An essential link, about which not much is ever said but which is inevitably in line with the above-mentioned argument, is the *sexual salvation of people*. Nelson, in his book *Embodiment*, mentions this explicitly. According to him (Nelson 1978: 70), “Salvation is sexual. This does *not* mean that we are saved by our sexuality. We are saved by the grace of God – God’s unearned, healing, life-giving love. But ‘sexual salvation’ *does* mean that we are given new life not in spite of the fact that we are sexual body-selves but precisely in and through this entire selfhood which we are.” Salvation should therefore be viewed as the complete transformation of individuals in their personal and social lives (as mentioned above); this implies the *salvation of human beings as body-selves*<sup>345</sup>.

Historically, the Bible has been used to drive a wedge between the spirit/soul and the body. In the (so-called) Christian West theology has therefore all too often been a disembodied franchise. It has often irrevocably been understood as a convincingly rational discipline, an issue of the intellect (as if the intellect exists outside of the body). The Christian culture is unfortunately not the only culture which experienced problems with sexual/bodily estrangement and dualisms. It would be an unfair oversimplification to assume that only the Christian West was affected by this whilst the so-called primitive cultures and Eastern societies was absconded from it. Nevertheless, the focus falls here on the Christian West.

The *spiritual dualism*<sup>346</sup> *between body and soul* has its roots in the reigning Greek philosophy and culture<sup>347</sup>, which was affirmed at the start of the Christian era (therefore the term *Hellenistic dualism* is also relevant for this dichotomy). This dualism still causes postmodernist human

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<sup>345</sup> With the term body-self the unity of personhood (as individual) is presupposed. Nelson affirm this in the following way in *Embodiment* 1978: 20): “If I do not realise the profound sense in which I *am* a body, if in a false spiritualization of my selfhood I deny my embodiedness, I will also tend to minimize the personal significance of activities which I carry on through my body.”

<sup>346</sup> A dualism, like a dichotomy, is the experience of two different elements which can co-exist in an uncomfortable field of tension, but which is frequently in conflict. It was this dualism which influenced the Christian understanding of the self very directly, in spite of the holistic view of body-spirit/soul unity and the individual’s psycho-somatic integration, typical of the Hebrew framework of thought.

<sup>347</sup> Plato, amongst others, gave momentum to the pessimism and scepticism about embodiment at the end of the classical Greek Era.

beings – especially men - to experience an existential estrangement between self and body, although it might sound contrasting and weird in a contemporary culture which is drenched in the focus on the perfect body, and drips of sex-obsession.

Nelson contends (1978: 38) that *this estrangement of the body: “produces a mind detached from the depth of feeling*. It becomes narrow and controlling, machine-like in observation and calculation...this is more prevalent among males...It is common to regard thinking as opposed to feeling. We contrast the thoughtful, rational individual with the impulsive one. What we forget, or are unable to experience deeply, is the emotional basis of thought...Dichotomized thinking also seems to emerge from mind-body dissociation. Our conceptual worlds become populated with dichotomies - ...male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, healthy/ill, good/bad, right/wrong.” Herein the *binary logic*<sup>348</sup> of Cixous (in Tripp 2000: 6) - which was referred to in chapter 2 - resonates clearly.

Subsequently, if the cognition/reason/mind is estranged from the body, the body is also estranged from the cognition/reason/mind. The de-personalisation of one’s sexuality ensues automatically in some or other form. The body becomes a physical object which is owned and used by the self. “Lacking is the sense of unity with the spontaneous rhythms of the body. Lacking is the sense of full participation in the body’s stresses and pains, its joys and delights. More characteristic is the sense of body as machine.” (Nelson 1978: 40)

Within sociological relations the above-mentioned experiences are affirmed in different places, for instance in the introduction of the book *Feminist theory and the body: a reader*, of Price and Shildrick eds. (1999: 1): “The status of the body within the dominant Western intellectual tradition has largely been one of absence or dismissal. Despite the necessary ubiquity of the body, and its apparent position as the secure grounding of all thought, the processes of theorising and theory itself have proceeded as though the body itself is of no account, and that the thinking subject is in effect disembodied, able to operate in terms of pure mind alone.”

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<sup>348</sup> Binary logic is a core aspect of Western patriarchal thought which structures reality in a series of “or/or” oppositions. *Consequently it often generates and maintains power relationships.*



It is however not just the spiritual dualism of body and soul which has come to the fore in the history (of theology). A further *dualism which incites/incited sexual estrangement* is/was **patriarchal dualism** (also known as sexist dualism, which has been explicated in an earlier chapter of this dissertation). It was present in Israel of the Old Testament as well as in the early Christian Church<sup>349</sup>. It oppressed women, and was systematically present in the institutions, interpersonal relationships, thought forms and the religious life of patriarchal cultures.

The estrangement of spirit/soul from body, of reason from emotions, and of “higher life” from “fleshly life” found both impetus and expression in the oppression of women. Men regarded themselves higher in reason and spirit and believed that they were destined to lead religious and civil communities. In opposition thereto, women were identified with the traits of emotion, body and sensuality.

Rosemary Radford Ruether (1975) characterise both the persisting manifestations of sexist dualism and the closely related partnership thereof with the spiritual dualism as follows:

“The psychic organization of consciousness, the dualistic view of the self and the world, the hierarchical concept of society, the relation of humanity and nature, and of God and creation – all these relationships have been modelled on sexual dualism...The male ideology of the ‘feminine’ that we have inherited in the West seems to be rooted in a self-alienated experience of the body and the world, projecting upon the sexual other the lower half of these dualisms...it is always women who is the ‘other’, the antithesis over against which one defines ‘authentic (male) selfhood.’” (Radford Reuther 1975: 63)

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<sup>349</sup> The history of the social practice of Christianity has always been one in which male religious institutions, patriarchal authority, and masculine images of God have been dominant. Krondorfer (1996: 3) asserts that the central Christian doctrines, rituals, and world views were formulated by men for men, and “although not all men have enjoyed equal status within the Christian moral and political community, most were assured a privileged position within that universe or, at least, were rewarded if they were willing to conform.” The categories class, religious, ethnic or sexual differences among men - that have led to numerous forms of repression and persecution of men in Christian history – cannot be ignored. Yet the fact remains that the dominant traditions within Christianity have always favoured men.

*These above-mentioned dualisms are important challenges to be overcome by an integrated anthropology and it necessitates the Christian faith, and therefore also a responsible pastoral anthropology, to take embodiment seriously, because the Word has indeed: “become flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1: 14, NAV). According to Nelson (1978: 8): “The embodiment of God in Jesus Christ is, in faith’s perception, God’s decisive and crucial self-disclosure. But for those who believe in God’s continuing manifestation and presence, the incarnation is not simply past event. The Word *still* becomes flesh. *We as body-selves – as sexual body-selves – are affirmed because of that.*” (own cursory writing).*

The Christian faith is thus an incarnated faith, a faith in the repeatable and continuing incarnation of God ***through His Holy Spirit (inhabitational perspective)***. God is revealed to us in unique ways through human presence, and human presence is always embodied presence. Henceforth bodily language is inevitably part of the material of the Christian theology, and per implication of our pastoral anthropology. ***Bodies are always sexual bodies, and our sexuality forms a core part of our capacity to know and experience God (spirituality)***.

According to Louw (1999b: 201) the body is “a form of expression for the human “I” and, because of the Holy Spirit’s work, it obtains a new moral determination. The human being as bodily being, is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6: 19), and is subject (as bodily being) to God’s reign. There exists a harmony and a unity between body and ‘I.’” (own translation out of Afrikaans).

Subsequently, the human person does not only/actually *have* a body, but he/she *is* that body (as was mentioned earlier). *The experience of erotic feelings and sexual desires is part of embodiment.* The concept sexuality is then an indication of the gender-based emotional desire and longing for contact with the person of someone else, with the goal of belonging, affirmation, appreciation and intimate relatedness in mind. ***A pastoral anthropology within a theology of embodiment therefore indeed affirms embodied-ness, sexuality and erotica as an integral part of the human being’s existence before God***<sup>350</sup>, and: “In terms of Scripture’s positive affirmation and appreciation of human beings’ embodiment and sexuality, it can be concluded that it’s (the

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<sup>350</sup> This affirmation will be explained in more detail here below.

Scripture's) view of the human (**a theological anthropology**) is **fundamentally a God-centred humanism with space for the erotic.**" (Louw 1999b: 203) (own translation out of Afrikaans and bolded part)

#### 5.4 The transformation of men's bodies (and men's gods) in the quest for intimacy

In light of the (above-mentioned) fact that men's sexuality and embodiment are fundamental dynamics to their (our) lives, they can, in life-giving and healthy ways, be transformed in order to facilitate their longing for intimacy and our destiny to communion. Nelson (1996: 313) asserts strikingly: "Men's bodies are not fated to be controlling, violent, radically individuated, preoccupied with phallic values, armored, mechanistic, or disconnected from close male friendship. Men's bodies can, indeed, become more fulfilling and life-giving to themselves, to others, and to the planet. Not only can they be transformed, but also they must."<sup>351</sup>

In particular we know that the schemata of interpretation - i.e. basically the beliefs and attitudes - that a man has about masculinity and his understanding of what it means to be a man, can change and influence his perception of the world, his intentions, his behaviour, his interaction in relationships and the way he expresses his emotions. ***Men can indeed change these schemata of interpretation and men need to change.*** In this change emotional communication, and the expression of love and vulnerability<sup>352</sup>, will be important. "Men don't need to become 'like woman' but can develop a new form of masculinity which places a greater value on love, family and personal relationships and less on power, possessions and achievements" (Gauntlett 2002:7)

So, to be thoroughly and intimately male is to love all people holistically as male sexual beings. We must become aware of our sexuality being present in a positively creative and non-violent manner in all the dimensions of human interaction, so that we can learn to touch, affirm, be

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<sup>351</sup> This ability to be transform is affirmed by Stoltenberg (1989), quoted in Du Toit (2003: 36) "Male sexual identity is entirely a political and ethical construction...and masculinity has personal meaning only because certain acts, choices and policies create it – with devastating consequences for human society. **But precisely because that personal and social identity is constructed we can refuse it, we can act against it – we can change.**" (own bold)

<sup>352</sup> In this regard Conradie (2003: 149) notes: "...all men have a responsibility to help foster inter-personal relationships based on mutual respect, solidarity and love. Here men (especially) need to learn how to cope with the vulnerability that any love relationship entails. Social constructions of masculinity all too often deny such vulnerability."

affectionate and free from the “genital-focus”, and restore gentle but firm integrity to our loving. This is how we learn to “listen to God in our sexuality,” (Nelson 1988: 92-96) as we interact with other human beings. As we explore our sexuality both in its painful alienation and in its mysterious creative energies, we begin to touch others in our relationships in a sexually redemptive way.

*Becoming “fully male” then also means dealing with our homophobia by developing meaningful male friendships.* Homophobia is not an issue for men who are in touch with their sexuality. Rather, significant male friendships help to develop masculinity, heal our sexually confused identities, especially in regard so sexual alienation, genital-obsession and violence (Nelson 1988: 47-56). The biblical David and Jonathan relationship might serve as a model of male friendship which is much needed today<sup>353</sup>.

Nelson (1996: 314) contends that these above-mentioned necessary changes - in order to become fully and intimately male - should be directed toward the major theological issue: *an erotic transformation of men’s bodies*<sup>354</sup>. According to him men have not been well-conditioned to embrace *eros*, seeing that embracing it is, of course, significantly different from prizing the virility and (isolated) genital sex that typically mark traditional masculinity<sup>355</sup>. “‘Real men’ prize sex, but find *eros* foreign... Instead, we learn self-sufficiency and the rational control of all things bodily, qualities deemed much more appropriate to Western masculine spirituality. *Eros* makes men anxious about their deepest bodily feelings.” (Nelson 1996: 315)

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<sup>353</sup> The researcher is aware of the fact that such a suggestion needs a sound exegetical foundation –which exceeds the limits of this dissertation - to ground it meaningfully. Nevertheless, he proposes that this (Biblical David-Jonathan) friendship might serve as a meaningful model of male friendship today. For some noteworthy discussions on the theme of friendship (between human beings among each other and between God and human beings), see Lapsley (2004), Tull (2004) and O’Day (2004). Jacqueline Lapsley (2004: 117-129) explores the idea that the friendship shared by Moses and God offers a more appropriate model of faithfulness than Israel’s prescribed obedience. According to her the intimacy of their relationship offers an alternative model for the church’s relationship to God – a countercultural “covenantal friendship”. Patricia Tull (2004: 130-143) illuminates the fact that the story of Jonathan and David stands out as the Bible’s lengthiest and most complex narrative reflection on friendship, and contends that it invites readers to ponder the human freedom to accept, reject, exploit or reciprocate the gift of a friend’s loyalty. Gail O’Day (2004: 144-157) asserts that Jesus (non-sentimentally) gave his life in love for others and always spoke and acted boldly – marks of friendship in the cultural world of the New Testament.

<sup>354</sup> See also the undermentioned heading titled: “Reconnecting sexuality and spirituality by making space for the erotic”.

<sup>355</sup> For more detail on this pattern, refer back to chapter 4’s heading: “Male sexuality in a globalising, media-saturated culture”.

Furthermore, this reality has significant implications for men's relationship with God. Our primal experience of identity through separation has supported the religious belief in God's absoluteness and otherness. In such a view, divine perfection means completeness: God is never needy. Nelson (1996: 315) continues: "Through the centuries patriarchal theology largely imaged God as unilateral, non-relational power, glorified by the weakness and dependency of humanity, deficient in the erotic power of mutuality. That tendency, in turn, is directly related to the phallic focus of masculine identity and hence masculine spirituality. The phallus, the prized male erection, is taken as the quintessential symbol of manliness, and the *idealized phallus is big, hard, and up*<sup>356</sup>. So we have accented those values in the divine. *God, too, must be big, hard, and up: sovereign in power, righteous in judgment, the transcendent Other. We have lost the body revelation of the sacred that might come through our genital softness and vulnerability, experiences as male as the phallic.*" (own italics)

However such deity is difficult and ominous to live with, and so masculinized theology's attribution of a one-sided (and unilateral) agapaic love to that sovereign power functions to reassure us. "Divine love, the model for proper human love, became sheer agape – sacrificial self-giving. So, our theologies cheapened, devalued, even vilified the erotic and relegated it to the pornographic. Eros was characterized as egocentrism, selfish, narcissistic, and regrettably self-loving. Hunger, desire, passion, and yearning for fulfillment were banished as inappropriate to spirituality." (Nelson 1996: 315)

But, the big problem with *such 'phallic spirituality'*<sup>357</sup> is not only that it *disconnects us from our own bodies*, it also disconnects us *from our fellow human beings and from passion for justice*. Henceforth, the dualistic split between spirit and body has become the split between agape and eros, and hence the split between person and society. In all of this, Nelson (1996) contends that a *complementarity gender theory*<sup>358</sup> – i.e. a core expression of sexual essentialism - has played

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<sup>356</sup> For more detail on this pattern, refer back to chapter 4's heading: "The creed of 'big, hard and up' remains intact".

<sup>357</sup> This term *phallic spirituality* will be explicated more fully in the upcoming sections concerning spirituality and power (see section 2 in chapter six).

<sup>358</sup> This theory is propagated by the theological presuppositions of most theologians in CBMW. Its leading proponent Wayne Grudem asserts the theory's core tenets by stating that although men and women are equally created in value and dignity, they have (distinct and traditional) different roles in marriage as part of the created order. This order, according to Grudem, gives preference to male headship, and strongly affirms the man's responsibility to provide for and protect, and the woman's responsibility to care for the home and to nurture children.

a dominant role. In both Jewish and Christian traditions, such gender complementarity most often has been viewed as divinely ordained, given in the very nature of creation. “And when the complementarity assumption is combined with patriarchy, it inevitably devalues both women and all persons of homosexual orientation, establishing both sexism and heterosexism as normative. In consequence, it has the effect of eroticizing sexual control, domination, and violence by men. Emotional and often physical violence results when control and power over the other are felt more pleasurable than mutuality and sharing.” (1996: 316)

Thus, the researcher affirms that the issue of erotic transformation is critical for men’s bodies and men’s gods. Social constructionists know that our bodies are not fated. What is constructed can be reconstructed and transformed. *We need erotic transformations both in our bodies and in our notions of the sacred – these two realities are inseparable.* The above-mentioned connections are important for that process.

#### **5.4.1 Body wisdom (listening to our bodies) and care (nurturing our bodies)**

*Particularity requires that men’s diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations must be taken into account when **moving toward a renewed understanding of male identity, sexuality and spirituality.*** Furthermore, life-enhancing theological, spiritual, and ritual pathways for men must take their bodies seriously. For example, in his critique of phallogocentric theology, James Nelson admonishes men not to project the “values of phallos...unto our experienced worlds,” but to make the “fully physical, sweating, lubricating, ejaculating, urinating, defecating bodies...the central vehicles of God’s embodiment in our experience” (Nelson 1992: 94, 31).

In light of the above-mentioned the best starting point for men is *to become more aware of the vulnerability of their bodies.* Rather than exclusively aiming to try building up a muscular, athletic, erect, protective, competitive, iron body, we could try to stay closer to real bodies:

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See Grudem (2002:19-68), and Ware (2002: 71-92). See also Piper and Grudem (eds.) (1991:469-472) for more information, as well as addendum I for background.

itching, aging, flowing, hurting, loving, dying, smelling, praying, fathering, nurturing, growing fat, getting sick, etc. (Krondorfer 1996: 16).

Further along this path of becoming more aware of the vulnerability of our bodies, Boyd (1995: 126), quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, suggests that we should realize that God, in Christ, cuts across all our aspects at self-justification. ***We don't have to continually produce something to be okay, to be acceptable.*** “We don't have to uphold any hierarchical, alienating order to be valuable; we don't have to continue to pour all our energies into external projects, monuments, or self-flagellation for our sexism, heterosexism, racism, anti-Semitism, or classism. We have been fearfully and wonderfully made, and Christ came to reconcile us to God, to ourselves, and to others. ***To become a man and a Christian, we must abandon our anxious striving - our works righteousness.***” (own italics and bold)

This implies that we as men must realize that many of us suffer from this anxious striving because our bodies are systematically cut off from meaningful, life giving, empowering contact with other people, and the earth and its creatures. We must become aware that in some ways we experience not only touch but also sensory deprivation. “In turn, we tend to think of our bodies, to the extent that we think about them at all, as separate from our essential selves. The consequences of this ***alienation from our bodies*** are a forgetfulness, or ***ignorance, of the body's wisdom and neglect for the care of our embodied selves.***” (Boyd 1995: 154) (own italics and bold).

According to Boyd the reasons for this body forgetfulness and neglect are legion. He lists four main reasons (1995: 156-157) which the researcher summarizes here:

(1) First this sort of disassociation from the body is almost required by the oppressive roles many men are expected to play as protector and provider. Most men's work lives often reinforce the objectification of their bodies, i.e. the transformation of their bodies from sensual, vulnerable, sensitive, intimately connected organisms into machines.

(2) In addition, a physical and psychic conditioning often takes place in the workplace - a conditioning that for some men leads to a physical dependency on overwork.

(3) The shape of men's sexuality is another culprit. One of the stereotypes believed by others and most men themselves is that they are sexually compulsive. The consequences of this kind of sexuality are genitalization and touch deprivation, because men's desire to touch and be touched is transmitted into their genitals. Most men are not - at least not inherently - sexually compulsive.

(4) Finally, men's body alienation derives also from the role of violence in their lives. Another stereotypical belief about men, by others and by themselves, is that men are violent. They are not - at least not inherently so.

In the end, as a result of all these reasons supplied, a great deal of pain, fear, and shame is stored in our bodies as men. To counteract our body forgetfulness and neglect, Boyd suggests we need to learn how to listen to our bodies and to care for them.

***(a) Body wisdom: listening to our bodies***

The researcher is convinced that the practice of body wisdom, thus listening to our bodies, cannot fruitfully be applied if we do not first accept and love our embodied selves authentically, i.e. unconditionally. It was explicated earlier<sup>359</sup> that men regularly experience restrained levels of intimacy and are often estranged from their body-selves. The researcher assumes strongly that the problem originates (amongst others) with a lack of constructive self-acceptance. This is one of the primary reasons why men often do not experience, and hence nurture their body-selves as integrated whole.

The researcher is furthermore convinced that because of the aggressive masculine conditioning we experience, many of these masculine ways of thinking, feeling and acting are held together by fear. And specifically *the fear to "come up short", i.e. not to be "man enough" or good/rich/successful enough*. If we are to recover from the distortions that fear produces in us, it must be cast out of our body-selves (including our hearts and minds). In short: the whole, or

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<sup>359</sup> See chapter 4 under the heading "The emotional mechanics of masculine intimacy: suppressing tenderness and self-acceptance"



complete, love of God – as described in 1 John 4 – can cast out the fear that leads us to try to dominate others and aspects of ourselves. This complete love of God can establish constructive self-acceptance.

According to (Louw 2007: 260) such a *constructive self-acceptance* implies the virtue of care for the body. It implies regular exercise, adequate sleep, effective stress management and appropriate nutrition. It *understands the link between soulfulness and a sense of physical well-being*. In other words, in order to love God and our neighbour as ourselves, we must also *attend lovingly to and care for ourselves as embodied beings*, and not fall into the void of existential self-estrangement that is so pervasive in today's globalising world.

According to Boyd (1995: 158-163) the following three commitments are crucial in our attempt to move toward that loving attention and care:

- (1) Commitment 1: *“Instead of ignoring the messages my body is sending me, I will listen attentively to learn what this part of my self is trying to teach me”*
- (2) Commitment 2: *“I will embrace my limitations, including my mortality.”* This is in some ways an extension of the first commitment.
- (3) Commitment 3: *“I am going to feel, and I am going to find places to express those feelings!”*

**(b) Body care: nurturing our bodies**

Boyd (1995: 168-174) continues by stating that to give our body-selves the kind of nurturing attention they deserve and to care more intentionally for them, men should consider the following commitments that involve stopping certain kinds of behaviour and fostering other kinds:

1. *Commitment 1: “I will stop numbing my body with \_\_\_\_\_.”*

These include alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and food; work, compulsive exercise, and objectified sex.

2. *Commitment 2: “I will nurture and care for myself as a body-self”*

The ultimate authority in the care of our bodies is the body and its wisdom. Consequently, it is important for us to take responsibility to know as much as we can about our own bodies and to call on those who have learned the various traditions of wisdom in care of the body.

3. *Commitment 3: "I will replenish my senses"*

Because of the lack of sensory input (i.e. touch, taste, smell, sound and sight), we find ourselves at times depressed, enervated, and compulsive about genital sexuality. We need to take steps to reconnect our body-selves with other bodyselves and with other aspects of the earth.

4. *Commitment 4: "I will attend to care for the earth and its creatures"*

The quality of our lives is directly dependent on the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we grow.

## 6. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN MALE SEXUALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

### 6.1 Getting to grips with spirituality as phenomenon

Given the afore-mentioned assertions at the start of this chapter<sup>360</sup> it can be concluded that *human identity, in real terms, is built on spirituality, from a Christian perspective. Thus the crisis in masculinity is indeed at core a spiritual crisis.* To discover a more authentic experience of maleness / masculine identity, we need to deepen our spirituality, i.e. we need to journey deeper into what is of ultimate value, that which gives meaning and vocation. But what is of ultimate value? How does one break one's dependence on self interest and "other gods"? These questions need to be addressed first, and this is the goal of the following paragraphs. Therefore, the researcher deems it necessary to first give a summarized view on certain definition/s of spirituality, before this concept is related to more authentic experiences of maleness.

*The question 'What is spirituality?' is the core question of live spirituality itself.* According to Bregman (2004) the term "spirituality" is currently being used in contexts where its exact meaning is left deliberately open-ended, hard-to-pin-down, and obscure. "Yet, whenever it is

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<sup>360</sup> See the section on the "*Rationale behind a pastoral-anthropological perspective*" where it was primarily argued that: a meaningful understanding of men and masculinities is impossible without a significant understanding of God, from a Christian perspective.

used, eyes light up, people respond with positive remarks about its importance, and we all feel better.” Spirituality has become a “buzz-word” with some connection to religion, and to pastoral care. Countless attempts are made by researchers, clinicians, therapists, and health professionals, not to mention chaplains, pastors, and “experts” in spirituality, to define the concept once and for all.

As definitions of “spirituality” proliferate, its meanings keep slipping and it can be relied on to fill gaps vacated by older terms, while at the same time pulling in other meanings from other contexts. In fact, in many circles there is widespread confusion and its use has become ‘fluid’<sup>361</sup>. Therefore, Bregman (2004: 155) argues that “the quest for the true essential meaning of spirituality is a fool’s errand. What practitioners such as chaplains and pastoral counsellors need to attend to is the much more interesting and useful task of mapping its current applications, and pondering why they have succeeded even as the term itself continues to be fuzzy, confusing, and yet widely appealing.”

The persistent interest in the phenomenon of spirituality is all the more remarkable given this fact that there is no clear, unequivocal definition of the concept that is acceptable to all interested in the field. Furthermore the term spirituality is difficult to define, not just given the ambivalent meanings attributed to it, but also the tendency to equate this phenomenon with ‘piety’ or ‘otherwordliness’.

According to Kourie (2006: 19) such an approach is far too restricted, and does not take into account that spirituality needs to be viewed in a much wider context. Spirituality designates the justification of one’s existence, the meaning and values to which one ascribes. “Thus everyone embodies a spirituality, be it nihilistic, materialistic, humanistic or religious. There are diverse

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<sup>361</sup> The difference between the kind of spirituality prevalent in mainstream culture and this dissertation’s perspectives on the phenomenon is that the researcher is trying to recover a respect for the life of the Holy Spirit that is revealed in Jesus and the Bible, and stands in contrast to a life that is defined by consumption and achievement, competition and psychological profiling. Indirectly, he is trying to develop an imagination that is immersed in the operations of the Trinity so that people will not be constantly seduced into thinking that spirituality is a way of managing their own lives and the lives of others – thus, their lives with them in charge with an occasional assistance from the Spirit. In other words the aim is to practice a way of language that is personal, particular and relational, a language of narrative and metaphor, a language that welcomes mystery and counters the bullying, clichéd and abstracted use of language that dominates our schools, our workplaces, our media, and, sadly, our churches.

spiritualities, each one culture-specific, expressing its own historical, sociological, theological, linguistic and philosophical orientation.” It is therefore not necessarily linked to religion and it is possible to practice a deep spirituality without necessarily being religious in the accepted understanding of the word. In fact, certain adherents of spirituality consider religion as antagonistic to spirituality and consider the two to be mutually exclusive. (Kourie 2006: 24)<sup>362</sup>

Although a precise definition of the concept spirituality remains murky it can be asserted that broadly all forms of Christian spirituality seem to point to a relational process between God and man. As Waaijman (2006: 13) contends: “The accent falls one moment on the divine pole (the Awesome, the Holy, the Merciful, the Infinite One), the next on the human pole (application, dedication, awakening)...” Most generally then, *spirituality* can be defined as ***the human quest for and experience of God, meaning, and the other***. Spirituality is an expression of a yearning for connections that we unconsciously recognize will clarify the meaning of our existence and secure our identity and its fulfilment. (Benner 1998: 87)

Perhaps the simplest way of characterizing the ***relationship between theology and Christian spirituality*** is to suggest that the former is about theory, and the latter the practice, the Christian life. In its basic sense, spirituality then designates the Christian life – not specifically its ideas, but the way in which those ideas make themselves visible in the life of Christian individuals and communities. Chittister (1998: 19) states it brilliantly: “Spirituality is the magnet within us that draws us to God. It immerses us in a consciousness of the God who is with us and the God who is beyond us. Spirituality is a composite of those practices, attitudes and values designed to bring us to the height of spiritual development, to the depths of goodness, to authentic conjunction with the will of God in the here and now. ***Spirituality is theology walking. It makes theology real.***” (Chittister 1998: 19)

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<sup>362</sup> Kourie (2006) contends that, contemporary spirituality with a post-patriarchal and telluric (i.e. earthly/corporeal) nature affects all areas of society, including the business world, education, health care, the arts, ecology, politics, religion and particularly the academy, where new programmes in spirituality are attracting large numbers of students. The new surge of interest in spirituality is a force for personal and social transformation.

In line with the above mentioned arguments De Villiers (2006: 108) contends (in accordance with Schneiders, 1990) that only theology that is oriented toward praxis (i.e. *contextual theology*) will be meaningful in the Church of the future. This contextual theology can be described as spirituality – but spirituality is no longer (only) identified with an individualistic, ascetic focus only on the “interior life” of prayer and spiritual exercises. Rather, it connotes the whole of the life of faith and even the life of the person as a whole, including its bodily, psychological, social and political dimensions.

Spirituality can therefore not be viewed as world-negating, non-historical, non-political, and hence as something private, subjective and pacifying – as if it is involved with an important segment, but only a segment of life, unrelated to the rest. Indeed *all authentic spirituality should dialogue with culture*. “We become what belief demands and what the culture evokes” (Chittister 1998: 20). A restrictive, reductionist, and dualist view of spirituality must therefore be rejected (especially within a framework of contextual Christian theology), and it should be seen as an integral part of the struggle for a humane society. Furthermore, “it in fact generates the struggle for the liberation of society from oppressive structures.” (De Villiers 2006: 109)

The researcher chooses in this dissertation to *view Christian spirituality out of a Reformational perspective*. It has now been made clear that spirituality represents the interface between ideas and life, between Christian theology and human existence. For the Reformers, spirituality concerned the personal and corporate response of believers to the gracious and personal activity of God, embracing virtually every aspect of life. (McGrath 1994: 31-32)<sup>363</sup> Therefore, any notion of spirituality as a quest for heightened experience as an end in itself is totally alien to the outlook of the Reformation. Equally, any idea that it is possible to have a detached or disinterested knowledge of God is excluded<sup>364</sup>. According to Louw (2005: 132), “Spirituality in terms of the

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<sup>363</sup> McGrath (1994: 42-55) identifies *four basic themes as underlying the spirituality of the Reformation*. **Firstly**, it is grounded and nourished in the study of Scripture. The sola scriptura principle, so central to the theological method of the Reformers, is equally evident in their spirituality. **Secondly**, reformation spirituality insists that the quest for human identity, authenticity, and fulfilment cannot be undertaken in isolation from God – to find out who we are, and why we are, is to find out who God is and what he is like. **In the third place**, it explicitly recognizes the priesthood and vocation of all Christian believers. **Lastly**, reformation spirituality is grounded in and oriented toward life in the everyday world, enabling Christians to involve themselves firmly and fully in the life of the secular order, while at the same time lending it new meaning and depth.

<sup>364</sup> It was pointed out right at the start of this chapter that (according to Calvin): it is only in knowing God that we come to know ourselves, although as Calvin pointed out with equal vigour, it is only by knowing ourselves fully that

Reformed tradition implies *praxis pietatis*, faith acted out within the practices of life events. ***Spirituality is essentially linked to maturity, intimacy and human dignity.*** It describes our *human quest for meaning (soulfulness)* and the attempt to link the ultimate with daily life experiences.” (own italics and bold)

Spirituality thus designates the art of soulfulness and signifies meaning in life as a life-long learning and growing process. ***Therefore spirituality is not about success, but about significance.*** As an expression of soulfulness, it describes the human soul in action. “Wherever a soul starts to live in the light of zeal, hope, purposefulness and meaning, it casts a shadow that brings about peace, reconciliation and healing. ***Spirituality links with integrity and wholeness; it reveals the ability to suffer.***” (Louw 2005: 133) (own italics and bold)

In connection to *néfesh*, spirituality describes an inward reality which represents commitment (*eusebia*) to God and the worshipping of God. This ‘inward’ realm is not isolated from life events. Commitment (*eusebia*) is an indication of grace expressed in different actions of faith and worship. This ‘spiritual workout’ takes place within the reality of relationships. Louw (2005: 132) summarized it concisely: “Spirituality takes into account the sacred within the secular, of the sacramental dimension within daily occurrences. Spirituality designates the creativity of the soul (the ability to transcend reality) as well as the beauty of the soul (the ability to anticipate creatively the new, despite nothingness) (spiritual aesthetics).”

Some attempts have now been made to give a meaningful definition/s of spirituality, but the question remains: how can this concept of spirituality be related to more authentic experiences of maleness. What is already happening in the contemporary world, in order to further this

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we come to know God fully. In other words: knowledge of ourselves and knowledge of God are given together – or they are not given at all. To know God is to be changed by God and to experience the power of God. Knowledge of God is thus like a vital force, capable of changing those who possess it and are possessed by it. These vigorous assertions have important consequences. In the first place, it further consolidates the centrality of Scripture for Reformation spirituality. Secondly, however, it points to the importance of Christology. In Jesus Christ, we are presented with the holding together of divinity and humanity - God and man, in a single and indivisible unity. Christ forms ‘the mathematical point of Scripture’ (Luther); Christ, through whom we have been restored to favor with God, is set before us as a model (Calvin). (McGrath, 1994)

relationship or interconnectedness between maleness and spirituality? The following sections will highlight this interplay.

## **6.2 Contemporary attempts to integrate maleness and spirituality**

### **6.2.1 Non-Christian attempts**

It has been made very clear thus far in this study that many leading researchers worldwide assume and realize that the western male is in a state of alienation. It seems as if most men are seemingly alienated from themselves, their relationships, their environment, and ultimately (their) God. According to Krondorfer (1996) the privatization of religion might explain why contemporary men feel spiritually impoverished despite the power and privileges they still enjoy. *Today, a privatized religion has left present-day men of faith without a medium to talk about their bodies religiously.* In a postmodern world it seems as if pornographic language and medical terminology, rather than religious imagery, dominate the discourse on the male body. “Perhaps, the dominant ideal of masculinity in Christian cultures has shifted from denying the penis to ‘oversexing’ it, albeit never challenging the power and the presence of the phallus”. (Krondorfer 1996: 11).

In light of this heritage, it is not surprising that many men in the Western world (and specifically contemporary American society) feel estranged from (organised) religion<sup>365</sup>. Modern world views have tried to separate religion and science, the feminine from the masculine. Women have rightly become mistrustful of technology and power; men have unfortunately become mistrustful of religion and spirituality (James 1996: 2 – 3). But in the 1980’s, informal groups and gatherings of American men in search for new forms of masculine spirituality (not necessarily Christian-based) gained public visibility. Today, they are known as the mythopoetic men’s movement (Clatterbaugh 1990: 85-103). Attention has already been given to a more detailed analysis of the movement’s sociological and psychological content and intent (at the end of

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<sup>365</sup> Krondorfer (1996: 12) asserts that “Neither Christianity’s severe scrutiny of male desires nor modernity’s privatization of religion appeals to men in a competitive, consumption-oriented, and pleasure-seeking culture.”

chapter 2), but here the purpose is to evaluate it in light of and as opposed to a specifically Christian spirituality.

The mythopoetic men's movement articulated the above-mentioned sense of spiritual alienation and consequently advocates the recovery of something contemporary men sorely lack: a distinctly masculine spirituality. They also offered a cure for this lacking: revitalize the old sources! These sources include depth psychology, mythopoetic literature, Greek mythologies, the biblical traditions, anthropology, pre-Christian and pagan religions, the masculine wisdom of fairy tales, and the generative power of male archetypes<sup>366</sup>. Despite the fact that the movement has aspired to find new forms of male religiosity, it has come under serious (mostly feminist) critique for its representation of gender, although the movement is, of course, not monolithic. "What binds these writings together is their political and religious sentimentalism. By uncritically reappropriating androcentric myths and traditions, they play into the hands of a conservative gender ideology and policy." (Kronendorfer 1996: 12-14)

For these masculinists, however, *authentic masculine spirituality* is the "**deep masculine**" (Bly 1991: 6-8) – a vaguely defined, fuzzy domain immersed within individual men's psyches and beneath Western industrial society – that is seen to hold the key to contemporary men's spiritual renewal. For the movement, the existence of this realm is a primary article of faith, and making contact with it is of crucial importance. Bly, who personifies the deep masculine in the mythic figure of the "**wildman**," asserts that getting in touch with the wildman means religious life for a man in the broadest sense of the phrase. The religion of the wildman is presented as bringing to

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<sup>366</sup> Therefore, the focus on archetypes in the recent literature on male spirituality creates considerable problems. According to Kronendorfer (1996: 14) "Archetypes easily escape a critical analysis of the economic and political status of men in contemporary society. Archetypes express a nostalgic desire for an untroubled past and are enlisted in the task of envisioning the future of male spirituality – unfortunately, the future does not look so different from the patriarchal past." The male figures of Wildmen, Iron Johns, kings, warriors, lovers or magicians may have therapeutic value for a limited group of men, but, more often than not, such archetypal configurations misname the problems, misplace the blame, and over-simplify the complexity of men's contemporary existence. For actual men are not timeless symbolic constructs, they are biologically, historically, and experientially embodied beings (as was indicated convincingly earlier in this study). Archetypes on the other hand, are disembodied, a-historical figures (for a contesting view, see Beebe, 2003). "They have more in common with symbolizations of phallic presence – constant, eternal, erect – than the mutable and multiple forms of male bodies – flaccid, aging, excreting." (Kronendorfer 1996: 14)



men a primal vitality clearly lacking in both contemporary institutionalized religion and secular society: an earthiness and, of course, a wildness.

The main problem with this approach (according to Mirsky 1996: 35) is that “potentially valid critiques of religion and society are being made in the name of a reactionary fiction – namely, deep (in other words: *essential*) masculinity. Once again, gender is assimilated to sex, and men are theorized as both properly and necessarily masculine.” This objection to the validity of the men’s movement approach, as well as the others presented at the end of chapter 2, also *represents the researcher’s reluctance to subscribe to or incorporate such perspectives on so-called male/masculine spirituality.*

### **6.2.2 Some less meaningful (evangelical) Christian attempts**

In similar ways as presented by the (secular) men’s movement - which was highlighted here above - there have been many attempts within Christian circles to delineate a specifically masculine spirituality. Although the researcher deems this a very essential endeavour - seeing that our gender inevitably influences our spirituality in profound and powerful ways<sup>367</sup> – he is not convinced about the wholesomeness of all efforts<sup>368</sup>. Indeed, some of these have been more meaningful than others. For example, in the resurgence of the search for meaning and accountability the evangelical Christian men’s movement, the *Promise Keepers (PK)*, and similar men’s spirituality movements offer helpful first-stage evangelization in a secular and deconstructed culture. Since the 1990's the PK have become increasingly influential among evangelical Christian men who believe that most of society’s ills stem from the failure of men to

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<sup>367</sup> This assertion is confirmed by many researchers, such as Castellini et al. (2005), who launched a thorough empirical study which findings indicate a deepening realization that human relationship to others, self, and God are strongly affected by gender. It was explicated through this investigation that the men’s movement, on a search for the male soul, is seeking to rediscover their distinctive and unique voice as it articulates its unique experiences of manhood, of life itself, and of God.

<sup>368</sup> With regards to this contention the researcher has to build in a personal disclaimer: my evaluations and conclusions are based on primary and secondary literature only. I have not done empirical research on these movements, nor have I been a participant them. This however – I am convinced - does not invalidate the qualified theoretical critique which I will assert (on the basis of the literature reviewed in this regard).

accept their God-given responsibilities as provider, protector, and spiritual head of the nuclear family<sup>369</sup>.

However, the researcher also has some **serious objections in connection with the underlying gender and power frameworks of these initiatives** (specifically in the light of the explication earlier in this chapter on Christian/theological views on gender relations, moreover the well-reasoned exposition of gender within sociological and other fields, in chapter 2). These objections can unfortunately not all be discussed here in detail, but the following concise critical evaluations (specifically concerning the PK movement) is indeed necessary to mention:

*(a) Promise Keepers men's movement*

1. Poling & Kirkley (2000) argue that (amongst others) the **PK** men's movement *suppose a masculinized theology* which they call '*phallic spirituality*'. They define 'phallic spirituality' as masculinized religion that functions in the everyday lives of people in a Christianocentric society, but which introduces certain paradoxes and ambiguities that reach crisis proportions in various historical periods. They believe that we are currently in the midst of a crisis which is calling out extraordinary efforts to re-fix relationships of gender, sexuality and structures of power, but which is also slipping under pressure from unconscious forces<sup>370</sup>.

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<sup>369</sup> What is the best and truest way of understanding gender relations in the Christian family? Is the husband the head of the family? Or should the headship model give way, either largely or entirely, to the so-called "equal regard" model? What male family role is most possible and desirable in light of the increasingly recognized societal need to reconnect fathers to families? Which, if any models of male headship are consistent with the requirements of justice and with the equal dignity of all persons? These are the type of questions asked (and attempted to answer) in the book *Does Christianity teach male headship? The equal-regard marriage and its critics*, by Blankenhorn, Browning, and Stewart van Leeuwen (eds.), 2004. The questions at stake here are both academic and practical. Is any form of male headship compatible with the Christian imperative to love one's neighbor (including one's spouse) as oneself? Or must male headship, even "soft patriarchy" which rejects servile roles for women, be discarded by Christian and supplanted by marriage based on "equal regard"? Is gender "complementarity", a third alternative to male headship and equal regard, the most compelling framework for successful marriage? The authors of the collection are diverse: men and women, conservative and progressive, Protestant and Catholic, specialists in theology and Scripture, social psychology, law, and public policy. Yet they agree that a key measure of success in marriage is overcoming the "male problematic", the pattern of men who do not maintain ongoing emotional and practical support for their children and their children's mothers. To counter the so-called "male problematic", it is asserted that men need to take responsibility. But male responsibility does not necessarily require male headship, it does however imply the crucial and central Biblical principle of neighbourly love and its implications for a love ethic of equal regard.

<sup>370</sup> See Poling & Kirkley (2000:14-24) for their analysis of phallic spirituality's characterization of those relationships and its theological implications for this crisis.

2. In an article by Becky Beal (1997) - about *the use of sport in the literature of the PK* - she explicates that, in the ideology of the PK, sport can be utilised for loyalty, leadership, character formation, courage and masculinity, just as in nineteenth century English schools. Sport is used as a demonstration of masculine traits, as a means to gather men on the basis of their masculinity with the exclusion of women, and as a metaphor to proclaim male superiority. Beal illustrates that although PK claim that male leadership is not dominant but serving, there is still simultaneously *clear mention of male privileges and higher status*<sup>371</sup>.

3. In another article, written by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (1997), she contends that although PK has been characterized as the largest and most important men's movement in the 1990's, at this point in its organizational development, PK is nothing if not *contradictory in the messages it sends forth about gender relations*. "The same equivocation between soft patriarchy<sup>372</sup> and gender equality can be seen in the writings of single authors, as when Gary Smalley tells men on one page of a New Man article to view their wives as the 'most important player' on a team where the husband is still assumed to be head coach..." (1997: 1)

Stewart Van Leeuwen's main argument is that PK has so far (that was in 1997) embraced a *rhetoric* of both servanthood and *soft patriarchy*, a position *ambiguous* enough to make Christian feminists of both sexes push them for greater clarity. The researcher realizes that PK is indeed speaking to an important need: for men to take responsibility. But one still wonders: What nerve are they touching? Is it men's hunger to be present in their relationships with their wives and children? Or is it the hunger to "be on top"?

4. According to Donovan (1998), who describes and analyzes the politics of masculinity in which the PK engage, they *are similar to Robert Bly's mythopoetic men's movement*, because they respond to a social context shaped, in part, by the women's movement. The outward styles of

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<sup>371</sup> For more detail, refer back to the researcher's assertions regarding "*Sport, muscles and Christianity*" at the end of chapter 4. It is self-evident that the above-mentioned initiative of the PK with regards to sport and religion stands in a clear conjointment with previous attempts in history to establish a muscular (masculine) Christianity.

<sup>372</sup> According to Browning (2004:8) "...the Promise Keepers, with their emphasis on male responsibility, have their finger on something important. But these groups are wrong in believing that male responsibility must necessarily be coupled with models of male headship. They seem to suggest that a little soft patriarchy is the price to be paid for male responsibility."

masculinity may appear to be more enlightened and egalitarian while the underlying basis of male privilege and power remains fundamentally unquestioned, reminding us that “softer” forms of masculinity are not inherently emancipatory for women and can, in fact, mask infringement upon women's rights.

Donovan states (1998: 826) that PK authors argue that a *Christ-like model of manhood* resolves the tension between the natural male role and contemporary cultural pressures. “The Promise Keeper literature<sup>373</sup> praises Christ as the quintessence of genuine manhood, a theme that emerges in all of the examined texts. Cole crystallizes this idea when asserting ‘*Manhood and Christlikeness are synonymous.*’”. He also he quotes Ed Cole, prominent PK spokesperson, who chastises the “Men that have shamefully forfeited spiritual leadership, abandoning it to the women”. (Donovan 1998: 819)

Conversely, hegemonic masculinity can persist under a facade of sensitivity. PK constructions of masculinity soften some central justifications for domestic male dominance and grant men uncredited permission to use force when a genuine need arises. They give men a range of strategies as they try to ground them in essential Biblical truths. Donovan (1998: 826-827) contends that PK practices “*loose essentialism*”<sup>374</sup> because they justify sex roles based on Biblical premises. He argues further that PK discourse attempts to alter masculinity such that men assert legitimate authority in the domestic sphere by attempting to change the basis of authority from economic to spiritual possibilities. They transform manhood into “a moral identity.” With this, men can take the lead in household decisions, including childrearing, prayer, and intimacy.

Therefore, Donovan concludes (1998: 839) that “the *Promise Keepers are deeply political* even if they do not put their weight behind any specific program, and even if they do not conceive of

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373 For a more detailed analysis of the PK and other Christian self-help literature, see Singleton (2004). He examines the ways in which men are represented and addressed in the pages of Christian men's self-help literature. Singleton argues that for the most part, the reader is positioned to see himself as a member of an oppressed group, suffering from problems – especially sexual addiction – which are beyond his doing or control. He then concludes by suggesting that this mediated classification - of men as oppressed - is privileged because it effectively resists competing social conversations about men's position in society, especially feminist critiques of male privilege.

<sup>374</sup> “Loose essentialism” leaves room for men to change and it also allows them to redefine feminine traits as being part of a masculine identity.

themselves as such. Their politics are immanent in their cultural production, in their strategies aimed to change the perceptions, motives, and practices of men in ways that potentially reproduce heterosexist privilege.” (own italics and bolded part)

5. The core of the above-mentioned critique is affirmed in an article by Ruard Ganzevoort (1998) on the evangelical movement and masculinity. According to him **PK** seem to enhance the awareness of men of being responsible, but unfortunately the movement *lacks a critical discussion of masculinities, seeks to restore male supremacy rather than confront it, and reads the Bible in an ideological way*. This leads to a *continuation of power and injustice* and hence Ganzevoort suggests that alternative readings of the Bible might be more liberating for men and women.

His argument is profoundly different and appropriately valid: the fact that God became incarnated in (a male person) Jesus Christ, was not just because no one would listen to a women, but rather that *God, in Jesus, clearly showed that the abdication of power is the way to/of salvation*. Ironically, women in the biblical world could not do this, because they possessed no power! Only as man could God exemplify this denial of power, because only men had power. Only as man could He break down male privilege and status from the inside out. “Alleen als man kon Hij laten zien wat het betekent zichzelf op te offeren voor anderen, omdat vrouwen al geacht werden dat te doen.” (Ganzevoort 1998: 18)

Ganzevoort argues convincingly why he critiques the core assumptions of the evangelical men’s movement (mainly PK): “De schepping maakt duidelijk dat man-zijn geen leiderschap impliceert. De zondeval maakt duidelijk dat het heersen eerder tot de wereld van het kwaad behoort. De verlossing maakt duidelijk dat het nieuwe leven bestaat in het radicaal afleggen van alle macht...de bijbelse onderbouwing van *de evangelische mannenbeweging denkt meer in categorieën van de zonde dan van de verlossing*.” (Ganzevoort 1998: 19) (own italics and bold)

Ganzevoort also explicates that the theme of *masculinity is made invisible in the PK* movement, as well as that *it is based on an outdated ideology of superiority*. He admits though, it might

have a superficial positive effect, i.e. by creating more caring, loving and responsible men's lives - which is of course crucial in a world where men have renounced care to women, and entrench themselves in a male role where emotions do not fit. Nevertheless, such an approach which only produces change at the surface does not seem to really redeem men. Power remains intact or is even restored, and the nurturance becomes patronizing approachability. These conclusions beg the question: Have we as men really renounced our power and male supremacy or are we using Christian cues as mainstay of our masculine position? Ganzevoort (1998: 20) concludes persuasively: ***“Een werkelijk evangelische mannenbeweging zou niet uit zijn op het herstellen van de macht, maar de weg van het kruis gaan, om op te staan in een nieuw leven.”*** (own italics and bold)

Obviously from the foregoing 5 analyses, the researcher is critical of this evangelical men's movement's expressions of phallic spirituality, perpetuation of male superiority etc. However, he believes that, albeit critical, his analysis is important for two reasons. ***First***, not being affiliated to being an evangelical Promise Keeper, the researcher is convinced it is valuable to stretch his own theological framework to understand this particular men's movement better. ***Secondly***, by critically evaluating this movement, he sought to validate it intellectually; it deserves to be taken seriously. ***Lastly***, it also helped the researcher - in this part of the study - to reflect on the following questions: Do some men's movements express phallic spirituality? In what ways are these movements life-giving for participants?

***(b) Two individual attempts***

1. In a much similar trend - in terms of its ***essentialistic and archetypical tenets*** - as the mythopoetic men's movement, but in a different frame of reference as the Promise Keepers, Richard Rohr (2005) attempts a broadened, Christian-based interpretation of male spirituality and the ***so-called wild man***. Here he contends in a murky and unconvincing way: “God is not nice, it seems; God is wild...John the Baptist...the archetypal wild man, is the perfect patron saint for many men today because of the way that he moved beyond mere nice religion and created his own initiation ritual...Much of my hope in *From wild man to wise man* is that we can lead men through some new stages of their journey, maybe even to understand their wildness in a way that

might be wisdom.” (Rohr 2005: 4)<sup>375</sup>. This approach is less valuable, for many reasons explicated in the previous assessments. Unfortunately, the space for another detailed critical investigation lacks in this dissertation<sup>376</sup>.

2. A last individual and seemingly desperate attempt at (in some sense) rescuing masculine spirituality and the male soul, is the book of evangelical writer John Eldredge (2001), *Wild at Heart*<sup>377</sup>. Eldredge – previously writer and speaker for *Focus on the Family*<sup>378</sup> - believes that men, as creatures made in God's image, have a God-given heart for adventure—usually starting with adventures in the outdoors, but working up to the adventure of loving a woman, and the ultimate adventure of trusting God on uncertain paths. To many in his growing audience—*Wild at Heart* has surpassed a million sold copies—Eldredge is “21st-century evangelicalism's heart surgeon” (LeBlanc 2004: 30).

But, in the researcher’s opinion this book is most significantly characterized by a very *dangerous theology* and it is filled to the brim with *far-fetched and deeply essentialistic statements* about manhood and men’s soul connection with God. The detail is too much to mention here, but for instance Eldredge (2001: 3) starts off by contending loosely and unconvincingly: “Man was born from the outback, from the untamed part of creation. Only afterward is he brought to Eden. And

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<sup>375</sup> Rohr is also the director of the M.A.L.Es (Men As Learners and Elders) program which envisions to “reclaim the spiritual initiation of men through experiential journeying into the True Self, creating a tradition for future generations”. Its message is grounded in the Christian Paschal Mystery while integrating the symbols and rituals from other religions and cultures. See <http://www.malespirituality.org> for more detail.

<sup>376</sup> In another similar individual attempt worth mentioning (but too elaborate to discuss in detail), Patrick Arnold (1992) takes a different track in his development of the “ideal man”. In addition to scriptural scholarship, Arnold is influenced by socio-biology and archetypal psychology, and suggests that masculine drives such as competitiveness, independence and autonomy, vulnerability and responsibility are rooted in psychological patterns not unique to men, but common to them. The direction of his work points to the danger of the “feminization” of men. He argues that men are created “by design” in the image of the “wildman”. A major portion of his attempts is dedicated to trying to embody his sense of authentic masculinity in the images of Old Testament patriarchs, prophets, warriors, magicians, kings and healers.

<sup>377</sup> The main reason why the researcher has chosen to mention this attempt as well is because this specific book has really hit the South African “Church market” by storm. In many different conversations with men from different denominational backgrounds over the past four years, the researcher has come across references to this popular book, and the supposed value it had for many readers. Hence, he deemed it necessary to mention it here, seeing that it has had a real impact on many men’s (spiritual) lives.

<sup>378</sup> John Eldredge is now director of Ransomed Heart Ministries, a teaching, counselling, and discipling fellowship devoted to helping people recover and live from their “deep heart”. For more details, see <http://www.ransomedheart.org>

ever since then boys have never been at home indoors, and men have had an insatiable longing to explore...The core of a man's heart is undomesticated *and that is good.*"

Furthermore, Eldredge constantly makes his unique and individual experience as (wild at heart) man the template for all men, universally! Thereby, in the researcher's opinion totally bypassing and *blatantly disregarding the reality of diverse masculinities* in a very narrow-minded fashion. One quote will suffice to explain this critique: "There are three desires I find written so deeply into my heart I know I cannot disregard them without losing my soul...and *I am convinced these desires are universal*, a clue into masculinity itself...in the heart of *every man* is a desperate desire for a battle to fight, and adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue." (Eldredge 2001: 9) (own italics)

Therefore, although there is a lot right with Eldredge's book (especially with his compelling style of writing), and although he offers many good insights, some other critics – ironically enough within his own evangelical circle – also identify in this book very significant problems which undermine the entire book. The researcher will mention two shortly here.

(i) Randy Stinson (2003) criticizes the book for two main reasons, i.e. its unbiblical view of God and of the believer. *Firstly then*, he asserts Eldredge appeals to a wrong view of God as his foundation for masculinity. According to Stinson the problem with Eldredge's main thesis - i.e. a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to fight for<sup>379</sup> - occurs when he tries to project these activities onto the life of God. In the words of the title for chapter two, God is "the wild one in whose image we are made", Eldredge's description of God and His "adventure" leave the reader with a confusing and unbiblical picture of God. For him, men are risk-takers and

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<sup>379</sup> For example, the book's core assumption is summarised on his website <http://www.ransomedheart.com> in the following way: "A Battle to fight. An Adventure to live. A Beauty to rescue. This is what a man longs for. This is what makes him come alive. Look at the films men love. For that matter, look at the dreams of little boys, the games they play. There is something fierce, passionate, and wild in the heart of every man. That is how he bears the image of God. And the reason that most men 'live lives of quiet desperation' (Thoreau) is because men have been told that the reason God put them on earth is to be a good boy. To be nice...God designed men to be dangerous. Simply look at the dreams and desires written in the heart of every boy: To be a hero, to be a warrior, to live a life of adventure and risk. Sadly, most men abandon those dreams and desires--aided by a Christianity that feels like nothing more than pressure to be a nice guy. It is no wonder that many men avoid church, and those who go are often passive and bored to death."



adventure-seekers at heart because God is a risk-taker and adventure-seeker. “While one can appreciate Eldredge’s desire to root his understanding of men in the character and nature of God, these statements do not portray God in the same way that the Bible portrays Him, which leaves Eldredge’s understanding of manhood fundamentally flawed.” (Stinson 2003)

The *second problem* is that Eldredge, in his effort to encourage men to follow their heart in these matters of masculinity, has given a false view of the condition of the heart of a believer. According to Stinson his descriptions of the life and heart of the believer drastically misconstrue or overstate the principles behind the doctrines of justification and sanctification. The distortion of these crucial categories has produced an unbiblical and confusing approach to the Christian life. The overtones of this book to follow your new and good heart only help to create the “false self” that Eldredge is so intent on destroying. What men need is a clear picture of who God is and the truth about their own sinful tendencies as they attempt to follow Him. Stinson (2003) concludes by stating: “Eldredge has some good things to say to men today, but coupling these good things with an unbiblical view of God and the believer in Christ, deals a blow to the entire book from which it cannot recover.”

(ii) Another very good critique of *Wild at Heart* is by Rut Etheridge, titled *God in Man’s Image*, which starts off by stating: “Though it contains some helpful insight and commentary, especially on the damage done to gender roles by cultural forces of political correctness, the key principles of this book are sorely lacking in biblical integrity. Eldredge’s desire to help hurting people is obvious and commendable, but his mishandling of Scripture and the consequent misguided advice he gives are too serious to ignore.” (Etheridge 2003:1). Etheridge explains that Eldredge’s explication of the book’s main thesis (mentioned here above) reveals his alarmingly unbiblical view of four fundamental aspects of Christianity: God’s sovereignty and authority; the person and work of Jesus Christ; the purpose and substance of the gospel; and the nature and content of God’s direct revelation to man.

Etheridge demonstrates convincingly in his critique that many of the views expressed in *Wild at Heart* are, beyond issues of denominational preference, irreconcilable with biblical Christianity. “Those seeking help from Eldredge’s words, if they accept his theology, will be damaged in their

understanding of God and thus actually be led away from the only One who can truly help them.”  
(Etheridge 2003:1)<sup>380</sup>

**In conclusion:** All the above-mentioned objections raised and critiques quoted by the researcher (against the PK and other Christian men’s movements), are also the reasons why *this dissertation does not subscribe to essentialistic or so-called “deep” masculine archetypes as models for a contemporary (Christian) spirituality for men.* The researcher contends that there should instead be reflected on the complex and often ambiguous religious forces that shape male bodies and identities. This is why the social, psychological, cultural, and historical dimensions of modern “manhood” was fully taken into consideration in this study thus far, and the focus will henceforth fall on the meaningful integration of Christian spirituality and masculine identity.

### **6.2.3 Some more meaningful Christian attempts**

**How should the notion of a meaningful and authentic Christian spirituality for men<sup>381</sup> be envisioned?** At this time when feminism has effectively challenged both earthly and cosmic gender orders, what men do *not* need is the re-sanctification of masculinity as a spiritual ideal, be it “deep” or otherwise. Men *seeking an integrated, embodied, earth-centred spirituality*<sup>382</sup> can find much of value in the developing theological explorations and ritual practice of contemporary feminist theologies and spiritualities (as has been indicated earlier in this study). Such a creative combination holds substantially more promise than a retreat into a masculinity from the past, that never really existed. It might also assist men in endeavouring to embrace change more intimately and open ourselves to new possibilities heretofore unimagined.

An authentic Christian spirituality (for men) is not concerned with living in a world without women, or living in a world where women are subordinate to men. Rather it wants men to exist

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<sup>380</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Etheridge (2003: 1-17).

<sup>381</sup> The researcher is not comfortable with the general use of the term masculine spirituality - as it is propagated by the most of the men’s movements’ (above-mentioned) diversifications - and therefore rather opts for the notion of “a meaningful and authentic Christian spirituality for men”.

<sup>382</sup> For one of the most recent and meaningful local (i.e. South African) systematic theological expositions of an earth-centred spirituality, see Ernst Conradie’s *Waar op dees aarde vind mens God?* (2006).

as co-creators with women in healthy relationships with the rest of creation. For spirituality to be authentic, it must be united to a relationship not only with “the Other” but also with “others.” The ability to be intimate touches the very essence of such a spirituality. Any short-circuiting of a man’s capacity for intimacy leads to a distortion of his relationship with God.

According to James (1996) there are a number of challenges necessary for men to address in their quest for wholeness and intimacy in terms of their spirituality. He categorizes these challenges as ‘The Father Wound’<sup>383</sup>, ‘Warped Sexuality,’ and ‘Hatred of the Feminine’. “Each plays a crucial role in developing an authentic spirituality for men. Unless men successfully engage each of these challenges to psychological development, they will be forever alienated to some degree from God and others.” (James 1996: 81)

The researcher acknowledges that these challenges are extremely important to address in the quest to find an authentic spirituality, but unfortunately it exceeds the limits of this dissertation to do so. However, *another meaningful attempt to integrate maleness and spirituality* is the book *The New Adam*, by Philip Culbertson (1992). Herein he identifies the “masculine” in “masculine spirituality” as: that which is appropriate to those males who have taken seriously the opportunity for their own liberation from gender stereotypes and have in the process begun to seek a new and more sensitive self-understanding in light of the feminist critique (1992: 110-111). Culbertson further suggests that *using mythic images such as “Iron John”* to typify a man’s development is *not helpful for the post-modern age*. “We already know from the proper feminist critique of our inheritance what damage macho self-centeredness, conformity and anti-intellectualism can produce. Instead of seeking the wild man within, sensitive men should seek to nurture and to facilitate.” (Culbertson 1992: 159)

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<sup>383</sup> It has been noted earlier in this study that one of the tragic realities of the late twentieth century is that there is probably no more disconnected relationship than that of the father and son. According to James (1996: 18-20) the “Father wound” or “Father Hunger” in many men is profound as they yearn for the masculine comfort, support and challenge that a father should provide. Its results are devastating: confusion about sexual identity, a distorted sense of self-esteem, repression of aggressive impulses, diminished ambition, learning problems, contempt of moral values or responsibility, and a greater propensity toward drug and alcohol abuse are the hallmarks of the abandoned son. There are several implications for men as it relates to the “Father Wound” and developing a masculine spirituality. “Since it appears that a father’s love is essential to healthy personality development, the first implication is that there are numbers of men walking about without a positive sense of personal identity. The image of the ‘macho man’ is an example of the definitive loss of a man’s center.”

Culbertson idealizes this “sensitive man” as the goal for masculine development. By way of definition, a “sensitive man” is one who is aware of the full range of his emotions, comfortable with his body, able to relate in ways that are both linear (masculine) and circular (feminine), not afraid of women, and one who is willing to work with them as equal partners. He posits that there is a serious deficit in the common masculine personality as evidenced by the male obsession with virility, violence, emotional distancing, and the abuse of power – as was indicated in previous chapters by the researcher. Culbertson’s thesis is very much in agreement with the thinking of most “post-feminist” theologians<sup>384</sup>. Core aspects of this model are the reclaiming of repressed and/or suppressed psychic material, and the development of a counter-cultural image of sensitive masculinity in concert with other like-minded men.

Culbertson furthermore declares *the necessity for men to develop images other than that of the “Father-God”*. He notes: “In short, the traditional literatures of theology and spirituality are so dominated by culturally conditioned male assumptions that they provide too narrow a range of options for men to explore either the fullness of human spiritual capacity or the richness of the godhead.” (Culbertson 1992: 115).

It has been indicated clearly (earlier in this dissertation) that a patriarchal view of God indeed sees only a permanent dualism between God and creation, thereby encouraging a similar separation of men from the rest of nature. God, dualistically separate from the world, is characterized as “apart” and hence “transcendent.” The challenges, therefore, that have (among others) been taken up thus far in this study, was to *firstly* recognize those places where destructive elements of patriarchy have taken hold in attitudes toward God and others; and *secondly* engage (with feminist scholars) in the struggle for justice in the area of gender relationships.

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<sup>384</sup> See also *The spirituality of men*, edited by Culbertson (2002), in which he suggests steps toward a new vision of how men in ministry can make a journey to profeminist masculinity. The book is a collection of essays concerned with the despair and minority of men in parish life and of the church, in particular about dying to old masculine gender roles and rising again into new ways of being men. To die to the old and rise to the new is to respond to the call of Christ.

The researcher henceforth contends that since *patriarchal ways of knowing have limited* the ability of men to develop a *meaningful and authentic spirituality*, serious attempts should be made to challenge and to be challenged by the male metaphors of God within the Biblical tradition<sup>385</sup>. Simultaneously it must be acknowledged that *masculine images of God* are a rich source of reflection for many men (and women), and to demolish them from the religious recognition would be as strong an act of gender-violence as any ever performed by patriarchy.

**In summary:** the researcher is convinced that *a meaningful and authentic Christian spirituality* – i.e. integrated, embodied and earth-centred, as was mentioned here above - can be facilitated and directed through an *appropriate theology of embodiment that promotes life-giving intimacy and vitality* (as was proposed and explained earlier in this chapter). This type of spirituality can challenge and possibly overcome the problematic nature of patriarchal ways of knowing and being. Subsequently, the interplay between sexuality (specifically its erotic dimension) and spirituality needs to be explored in order to further and conclude this contention. The researcher will thus henceforth affirm and appeal to the need for a broader and more inclusive view of spirituality which deliberately makes space for the erotic dimension of embodiment.

### 6.3 Reconnecting sexuality and spirituality by making space for the erotic

David Carr (2002), in his provocative book *The Erotic Word*, affirms the researcher's aforementioned assertions on the core principles of a theology of embodiment – see section 5 here above - and argues that *sexuality and spirituality are intricately interwoven*<sup>386</sup>. When one is impoverished, the other is twisted. We cannot ignore the significance of the spiritual dimension of sexuality, and vice versa<sup>387</sup>. As a result, the journey toward God and the life-long engagement

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<sup>385</sup> The next chapter cursorically takes up this challenge under the heading “Men and God-images in terms of gender”

<sup>386</sup> Unfortunately this intimate connection between sexuality and spirituality is in many ways disregarded in our contemporary culture, and especially in the Christian church environment. Van Niekerk (2007:321) affirms this lamentable reality by stating: “Spirituality and the erotic have become enemies to the detriment of both the Christian faith and sexual enactment.” In contradistinction he asserts (in line with Schibler: “When sexuality is once again connected to religion, men can escape the sexual performance-drive, power abuse and egoism. Women can be freed from suppression and shaming of their own sexuality and needs. The holy power of male and female sexuality can be integrated into life and love. Then love and sexuality becomes a communion with the lover, a communion with God.” (Van Niekerk 2007:327, own translation out of Afrikaans)

<sup>387</sup> According to Gordon Dalbey (2003: 66) this type of ignorance can be destructive in terms of interpersonal relationships: “The root of most problems in man-woman relationships today is our unwillingness to recognize the spiritual dimension of sexuality.”

with our own sexual embodiment are inseparable. According to Carr the Biblical view is that human beings, both male and female, were created in God's image (as indicated earlier), and *eros* - a fundamental longing for connection that finds ethereal good in the pleasure we derive from the stimulation of the senses - *is a central component* of that image. The Bible (especially the Old Testament), affirms erotic passion, both eros between humans and eros between God and humans. Therefore wholeness, reverence, relationship, meaning, safety, faith, transcendence, trust, love, communion, spontaneity, gratitude, connectedness etc. - all these words can be connected with both spirituality and sexuality.

Carr's (2002:10) premise is that both sexuality and spirituality require space in one's life to grow. Neither flourish amidst constant business and exhaustion. Both require an openness to being deeply affected by someone outside oneself, whether one's lover or God. Both involve the whole self. "Finally, at their most intense, both spirituality and sexuality involve an interplay between closeness and distance. Neither sexuality nor spirituality work if one is seeking a constant 'high'. Just as it is a mistake to expect everyone to feel a constant mystical connection to God, so also many people harm themselves and others through seeking consistently superlative sexual ecstasy."

Carr (2002: 37) contends that both Genesis 1 and 2 creation accounts describes sexuality as part of God's inhabitation within us (through the Holy Spirit): "male and female bodies made in the image of God, sexuality as a reflection of God's life-giving power, passion as part of God's life-giving breath within us, and erotic intimacy as the crown of creation." As a whole, this introduction to the Bible say a decisive yes to humans as lovers, enlivened by a single divine spark that direct and ignites all relationships. *It is imperative that human passion and erotic connection be embraced and nurtured, not denied; it should be cultivated, not abused.* Our God-given eros<sup>388</sup> of another should not be wounded intentionally.

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388 Erotic intimacy is the final answer to God's initial concern that "it is not good that the human be by himself" (Gen 2: 18). Although we must recognize the particular power (for good and evil) of the most intense forms of erotic sensuality, much of life is structured by a language of touch and bodily presence. This is not to suggest that we do or should sexualize all of our relationships, nor that all life should be seen through the lens of genital sexuality. "Instead, this text's words about human earthiness, the divine breath in us, and human intimacy, can encourage us to broaden our appreciation of the role of passion in human life as a whole. This text can help us recognize the myriad ways in which our relationships and longings in life are, to varying extents, already erotic." (Carr 2002: 34)

It was explored earlier how the connection between sexuality and spirituality in Christian thought has been almost completely severed by a pervasive (and unbiblical) body/soul dualism. The difficulties encountered in reintegrating sexuality and spirituality provide the key to understanding the extent of the lasting influence of dualistic thought on Christian theology generally. It was also stressed here above – in section 5 - that the holistic nature of humans is important because it liberates our bodily existence and sexuality and brings it to fullness. Sexuality is fundamentally connected to anthropological motif, personhood and human spirituality and therefore the holistic nature of human beings implies that sexuality can never be degraded to a mere biological activity<sup>389</sup>. Thus, pornography (*porneia*) is in essence dehumanising and self distorting, not only because it reduces sex to a biological exercise, but also because of its self-centred nature<sup>390</sup>. If the wholeness of the sexual partner is denied, the other person's uniqueness is also lost (Thielicke 1964: 25).

***The deep connection between sexuality and spirituality is a mystery yet to be fully explored***<sup>391</sup>: we need to further develop a theology of embodiment and embrace “sexual salvation” (not anti-sexual), understand the church as a “sexual community” (not a-sexual), and deal with sexuality

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<sup>389</sup> ***Sexuality and erotism*** should mediate life fulfilling experiences of love. As part of the creation reality sexuality affects a positive power of life. According to Dirk Human (2006) evidence from the ancient Near East, especially from Egypt, Canaan and Mesopotamia, confirms human's fascination for and participation in sexual behaviour. In the sexual experience the 'I' transcends the borders of the 'self'. “Whether the gods or humans are engaged in this act of heavenly ecstasy, it is evident that life's meaning is captured in this life enriching experience of power, vitality and joy.” (Human 2006: 1)

<sup>390</sup> According to (Louw 2007: 338-339) pornography refers very specifically to sexual exploitation and the dehumanization of sex so that human beings are treated as things, or commodities. It is therefore not nakedness *per se* or the viewing of genitals, but when this is placed within the framework of promiscuity. “Pornography points in the direction of the portrayal or the description of the unequal misuse of power, violent sexuality (physical and psychological violence against others and oneself) promoting promiscuity. In this regard pornography is the description or portrayal of obscenity with the effect to violate the dignity and rights of the human person through the exploitation and commercialization of sexuality and sex...***Pornography reduces sex to the level of animal copulation and tends to rob sex of intimacy and tenderness.***” (own bold and italics).

<sup>391</sup> In the deepest experience of our sexuality there is the desire for and the expression of community – of the self with other body-selves and with God. Louw (2007: 327) contends that sexuality touches the very fabric of human life because is part and parcel of our being human and functions as an expression of human intimacy. “It is intrinsically connected to the ensoulment of the body and the embodiment of the soul. Sexuality is actually a spiritual issue, because it expresses a person's innermost being.” The recognition and celebration of the sexual dimension in our relationship with God is therefore important if we want to overcome the subject-object split which surfaces so often in religious experience. The inability to overcome this feeling of a dualistic split between the body-self and God can let the cognitive-experience of godly immanence become vague, according to Nelson (1978: 34). Because of this existential estrangement God is no longer experienced as: “vital indwelling presence, permeating and giving life to the relationships and the basic stuff of everyday life. When God is only object over against subject, immanence recedes. And when immanence fades, even God's transcendence becomes less real.”

also as a personal and public issue as opposed to just a private matter. In trusted relationships with God, close friends and the community of faith, this becomes possible.

This need for deeper integration between sexuality and spirituality is identified by many researchers. Marvin Ellison is one such example, who in the article *Sexuality and Spirituality: an intimate – and intimidating – connection*, traces two contrasting connections between these two phenomena. The *intimidating connection is provided by an ‘other worldly spirituality’* (exemplified by Kierkegaard) which sets human love against divine love, and sometimes turns out to be in the grip of sexism, hetero-sexism and fear.

This *otherworldly Christian spirituality* has a noticeable fear of, as well as fixation with, the power of sex. The pervasive discomfort with the body and dis-ease about sex show the ongoing power of a spirit/body dualism and the related male/female dualism that are so characteristic of Western Christianity. The depth of body-alienation and, therefore, self-alienation in this culture is clearly evident. “I am convinced that a spirituality *without* erotic passion becomes lifeless and cold. God becomes an abstraction, an idea rather than a living presence in our lives. I am searching for a Christian spirituality that acknowledges that the human calling is to make passionate love in this world, in our beds and in our institutions. To love well means to share the gift of life with zeal and great generosity and to seek right relations with all others, relations of genuine equality and mutuality, of shared power and respect.” (Ellison 1996b: 222)

The *intimate connection is a ‘this-worldly’ spirituality* which is incarnational and therefore looks to the material, the commonplace, the corporeal as the primary locus for disclosing both human and divine power. Ellison encourages the practice of a this-worldly spirituality by, among other things, working for gender and sexual equality and the overcoming of patriarchy. This, he says, is a higher, more demanding sexual ethic<sup>392</sup>. He argues that unless we can experience and

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392 Ellison contends that resistance to feminism and gay liberation is best viewed as resistance to adopting a radical ethic of justice and mutuality in matters of sexual intimacy and social relations. Henceforth a liberating Christian spirituality embraces the movement toward equalizing both gender and all other social relations as a gift of new life. In that struggle is found hope and joy, and also allies. “Joining with others is especially important because spirituality concerns not what we do in solitude or isolation but rather in community...I suggest the church ponder the difference and unavoidable conflict between a patriarchal Christian spirituality, on the one hand, and an egalitarian,



speak of God's grace in and through our bodies, in and through our sensuous connectedness to all reality, we do not know God's presence and power. Salvation is necessarily concrete and of the flesh, therefore one should yearn for an embrace of the *enfleshment of Christian spirituality*.

*A this-worldly spirituality fully honours the unity of human personhood* as a spirit/body whole and also celebrates that the presence and power of divine love is – *through the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit* - mediated in and through our human relationships and flesh. “A this-worldly spirituality rejects the notion that salvation involves escape from the body or turning away from the embodied goodness around us.” Rather authentic faithfulness regards physical touch as a privileged mode for communicating deep caring and mutual pleasure in company with others. (Ellison 1996b: 220-221). In this way the body can become an ‘instrument’ to console and comfort others<sup>393</sup>.

In the light of the above-mentioned two options distinguishing between an *intimate (this worldly spirituality)* or *intimidating (other worldly spirituality)* connection, the researcher sees that there are also *two possible basic attitudes towards embodiment*. In accordance with Botha (2006: 129) this can be viewed as “*sarcophobic*” (referring to an attitude which is inherently suspicious or anxious about a human person's embodiment); and “*sarcophylic*” (referring to an attitude of affirmation and acceptance). The first approach contends “*I have a body*”, whilst the second exclaims “*I am a body*”. According to Botha (2006) in the ancient Greco-Roman world almost everybody accepted a sarcophobic attitude in the last instance. The question therefore remains: are we living as sarcophobic or sarcophylic people before God today?

The researcher concludes by asserting: *human beings (especially men) need to embrace the intimate connection of a this-worldly spirituality and adopt a sarcophylic attitude towards themselves as embodied souls, in order to experience erotic and life-giving intimacy with God – through the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit - as well as a liberated human sexuality (personhood)*.

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justice-centred Christian spirituality, on the other. This division marks the great divide in our church today.” (1996b: 226) (own italics and bold).

<sup>393</sup> See Le Roux (2006).

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter five formed part of the latter half of this study aimed at the theological deconstruction of the previously identified schemata of interpretation and cultural representations about men and masculinity. This contextual, theological deconstruction was done specifically out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective. Henceforth a re-interpretation of manhood was envisioned here, by describing men *eschatologically*, in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the inhabitation of His Holy Spirit (pneumatology). The broader goal of this re-interpretation was the *establishment and furthering of meaningful connections between male identity, human dignity (created in the image of the triune God) and experiences of authentic, life-giving intimacy via a Christian spirituality.*

At the start the researcher deemed it necessary to enlarge upon the basic presuppositions of a pastoral-anthropological perspective on men and masculinities. It was asserted that a meaningful understanding of men and masculinities is impossible without a significant understanding of God, from a Christian perspective. Therefore, *it was necessary to view masculine identity, not only philosophically or phenomenologically, but out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective (which was qualified holistically), and done within a trinitarian theological framework.*

It was also explicated that men's souls, i.e. their quality of being within relational networks in God's presence, needs to be explored in order to further this pastoral assessment. Subsequently, *a responsible theology of embodiment was identified as being quintessential to facilitate a positive affirmation of and holistic perspective on male (and human) sexuality and identity.* The researcher indicated that such an approach affirms embodied-ness and erotica as integrally part of the human being's existence as created in the image of the triune God. This theology of embodiment thus reflected something of a celebration and wholeness – in other words an appreciation of (aesthetically) vital, beautiful and unique aspects in men and in creation as a whole.

Subsequently this chapter endeavoured to construct *a theology of embodiment which is essentially dialogical and relational*. The researcher contended that such a theology is necessary *in order to also appreciate and enhance more constructive sides of masculinity*. A meaningful and constructive theology of embodiment primarily *includes the perspective of inhabitation, and not just incarnation*. God lives in human beings through His Spirit; therefore the fruit of the Holy Spirit can help humans to live a quality of life which enhances vitality, human dignity and meaning.

The implicit argument can therefore be put forward more directly here: that *theology as a source of healing and change cannot ignore the importance of the interconnectedness between ensoulment and embodiment*. For the healing dimension of theology, spiritual healing, the researcher argues here that pastoral care as a theological endeavour should *shift from an incarnational paradigm to an inhabitational paradigm to apply a hermeneutics of human embodiment* - i.e. a mature approach to interpreting male (and female) identity from a spiritual perspective. This chapter attempted to start this shift.

*Thus, the remaining two challenges for this dissertation seems to be:*

1. To immerse itself in the *exploration of images of God (“masculine” and “feminine”)* that will facilitate an *authentic, life-giving spirituality* and lead men toward the most intimate depths of their being, while imparting *meaning, vitality and wholeness*. This will also necessitate a *re-interpretation of God’s power*.
2. To anticipate (in light of the above-mentioned perspectives) that men should search for spirituality, i.e. life-giving encounters with God, in the unexpected: when men befriend other men, when they change their children’s diapers or care for people with HIV, or when they contemplate the symbolizations of the male flesh. In this regard, it is hypothesized that the *theological notions of vulnerability and courage can play a vital role* within a pastoral assessment of men which wants to reframe the ideology of power and re-interpret masculinity meaningfully. *A spirituality of vulnerable courage is thus crucial for this transformation in order to take place*.

*Henceforth, these two challenges will be taken up in the last chapter.*

## CHAPTER 6: RE-INTERPRETING MEN, POWER AND GOD ESCHATOLOGICALLY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THIS CHAPTER

An essential part of this dissertation's main hypothesis is that the researcher assumed: in a pastoral-hermeneutics, the interpretation of the power of God – and henceforth the language we (as men and women) use to describe God - influences male and female identity. The researcher has explicated that when we engage in language, it is never a neutral activity. Reference was made (in chapter 2) to the fact that meaning making, within socio-constructionist relations, is dependant on language – in other words that we, through language, give meaning to our experiences and constitute our lives and relationships. It is also (consciously and unconsciously) at the same time a part of our participation in the fields of power and knowledge, and we must be extremely aware of this within practical-theological, and specifically pastoral-therapeutical relations.

In order to move away from a merely cultural scheme of interpretation, a theological cultural-hermeneutical scheme of interpretation has been proposed in the last two chapters. The researcher asserts – in this final chapter – that this implies: by creating a theological field of language we can possibly deconstruct and make suggestions for re-interpreting masculinity in a very meaningful way. The process of deconstruction was started in the previous two chapters and will continue here in order to envisage some cues for a possible re-interpretation.

Such a deconstruction - from an eschatological perspective - can bring a theological reframing/redefinition of manhood in terms of the power of God, wherein pastoral care works with the shift from the notion of power as force (control) to power as love (vulnerability and woundedness). This is God's power as revealed in the suffering (i.e. vulnerability) and resurrection (i.e. power) of Christ (*Theologia Crucis* and *Theologia Resurrectionis*) – a source of power that fosters the experience of authentic intimacy and life-giving vitality (*shalom*).

It was indicated in earlier chapters that in contemporary society it is lucidly apparent that men's roles are changing, but many traditional and rigidly socialized stereotypes about masculinity persist. The adherence to traditional male gender roles has created a so-called 'crisis of masculinity' (in terms of masculine gender role identity). It was furthermore shown - *in chapter four* - that the issues of embodiment and power (especially power abuse), are primary contributing factors in terms of the confusion, conflict and stress in male identity, and elicits the "intimacy void" many men experience. These issues also hamper the process of spiritual growth and the fostering of spiritual health in men.

In this regard the researcher will demonstrate in this chapter that a *Theologia Crucis* and a *Theologia Resurrectionis* can play a fundamental role in possibly re-interpreting masculinity. Such regeneration has already been related to an eschatological and pneumatological interpretation of the dynamics between theological cultural-hermeneutical and mere cultural schemata of interpretation. The re-evaluation of God's power as well as the relation between God and manhood - out of the perspective of the *cross* and *resurrection of Christ* - can open up new possibilities within a pastoral-hermeneutical assessment of male identity. Subsequently, it will be argued that the image of the crucified and risen Christ might serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the dominating cultural images messages many men presently experience as confusing.

It has been indicated (*in chapter two*) that the concepts of masculinity and gender are mainly sociologically, biologically, anthropologically and psychologically described in terms of cultural contexts. In these descriptions - it was denoted - the notions of masculinity and gender have often (without prevarication) been conveyed into a theological anthropology. The fact that masculinity within a Christian-theological description (as such) cannot be precisely profiled (*see chapter five*), was not kept in mind. This necessitated pastoral anthropology to look at other descriptive possibilities. In this regard the relevant appliance of (Christian) spirituality and human dignity have played a significant role in re-describing/re-storying masculinity out of an eschatologically determined inhabitational (and re-creational) perspective. This was done after a cultural-hermeneutical analysis of the present images and representations of masculinity was

made (*in chapter three* - within the contemporary globalising world-context of mass media and *in chapter four* – within the challenging realms of power and embodiment).

In essence: the researcher has indicated (in part) that men's power to re-interpret their masculinity can only develop out of defiance against injustice and inhumanity/undignified actions and behaviour. The re-interpretation of masculine power must therefore be done in terms of real intimacy and the (Christian) spiritual identity of men. The main focus thus far was respectful and loving relationships with other people and creation as a whole, in order to create an alternative social reality. This power to change is therefore rather *spiritual* (i.e. relational) power, not patriarchal (i.e. unilateral) power, and should be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in other words implicitly by an applicable and *integrated spirituality of vulnerable courage*.

This type of spirituality can be facilitated only through an *appropriate theology of embodiment that promotes life-giving intimacy and vitality* (as was proposed in chapter five). It will now be indicated how it could become an important contributing factor to prevent the perceived crisis of masculinity of impeding on the growth of spiritual well-being (i.e. a mature faith) in men. A theological understanding of vulnerability and power can indeed help pastoral care to address the problem of power abuse within male identity, so that holistic spiritual health in men is stimulated.

## **2. (PHALLIC AND PENILE) POWER IN TERMS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

*What does Jesus Christ's maleness imply for a Christian spirituality?* Krondorfer (1996: 4) asserts that the gospels' proclamation of God becoming flesh through and in his son Jesus Christ is not gender-inclusive. "The incarnation occurs in a specifically male body (notwithstanding its claim to universal significance), even if this body is viewed as a-sexual. To possess male genitalia has validated men's status as sole representative of Christ in the past, and in some churches this remains true to this day."

Early Christian movements experimented with gender-variant behaviour and equality of the sexes by manipulating the body. Some groups, such as the Encratites, renounced sexuality. Other groups, such as the Gnostics, tried to undo the separation of body and matter, man and woman, by developing androgynous images. Despite the existence of such groups as the Encratites and the Gnostics, the patriarchal Christian household, which modelled itself after the Roman *pater familias*, became the norm. (Krondorfer 1996: 5-6)

Men's celibacy and women's virginity became models of spirituality that were no longer based on gender equality. This development coincided with the strengthening of a dualistic theology that equated maleness with soul and spirit, and femaleness with body and matter (Nelson 1978<sup>394</sup>). However, it is important to note that such a body-mind dualism does not ignore the male flesh. On the contrary: though it is true that matter, body, and women were perceived as obstacles to men's spiritual liberation from the darkness of sin, Christianity's dualism and misogyny did not render the male body insignificant.

Paradoxically, *the male body remained men's spiritual battleground*. Despite men's fantasies and the projections of male desires onto female bodies about women's seductive power – themes that run through much of Christian literature – men's spiritual struggles were fought within and against their own bodies. *A core conflict remained* between the experience of potency (i.e. phallus) and vulnerability (i.e. penis). Eugene Monick (Jungian analyst, theologian, writer and pioneer in his study of masculinity) uses the concept *phallos*<sup>395</sup>, as archetype of masculinity in its fullness (in his book titled: *Phallos, Sacred image of the masculine*, 1987).

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<sup>394</sup> This is called a *sexist (or patriarchal) dualism*, as was explicated in the previous chapter.

<sup>395</sup> See also Eilberg-Schwartz (1996: 36-47) who discusses the impact of a traditionally conceived male God on the lives of men in ancient Judaism. Eilberg-Schwartz advances the thesis that the father God of Judaism and Christianity paradoxically legitimated male authority and tended to destabilize the masculinity on which it was based ("But from where does the idea of a disembodied God come? What if, historically speaking, it is discomfort with the idea of God's penis that has generated the idea of an incorporeal God? What if the uneasiness flows from the contradictions inherent in men's relationship with a God who is explicitly male?", 1996:36). According to Eilberg-Schwartz the maleness of God, in other words, was problematic for men as well as for women. Therefore the men of ancient Judaism employed several strategies to reduce the homoerotic anxieties provoked by God's maleness. Kune Biezeveld (1998) evaluates this thesis - developed for the first time by Eilberg-Schwartz in 1994 - which challenges the tradition (which to date has been accepted as self-evident) of the bodiless God, and is presented as a key to unlock male monotheism. She concludes (1998: 200) by stating that "the concept of corporeality can be seen as a key to unlocking male monotheism and ultimately reaching an inclusive monotheism. Thus, monotheism can be seen as a source of metaphors of all kinds, of new femininities and new masculinities, and, so, as the tenor of the lives of women and men." Biezeveld also explicates the fundamental critical function of God-language. She tried (in

*Phallos*, which is used to indicate an erect penis, has two meanings which should both carry the same weight. The *first* is an *earthly or instinctive phallus*<sup>396</sup>. It represents the archetypal male energy, which should spontaneously well up out of the unconscious. It is not energy that can be overtaken in substitutive fashion. It must be experienced. In primitive tribes this energy was experienced during initiation-rituals by young men. Today it is much more difficult. The *second* facet of meaning of the word phallus is the *spiritual or intellectual phallus*. It is the spiritual phallus which enables the man to play a creative role in society, and thus to practice a profession and develop his potential. A spiritual element is obviously incorporated in this.

James Nelson, in his book *The Intimate Connection* (1988), analyses Monick's (1987) concept of the phallus as *the* holy symbol of manhood, and then explores the spiritual meaning of the male genitals further. He asserts that *men, generally speaking, suffer from an "erection mentality"*<sup>397</sup>. His contention links up with Monick's that men's phallic experiences are central to their spirituality, but he also elaborates on this understanding by stating: "Our phallic experience gives vital energy, both earthy and solar<sup>398</sup>. But we also need the affirmative experience of the *penis*<sup>399</sup>." (Nelson 1988: 94)

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her dissertation *Spreken over God als Vader: Hoe kan het anders?*, 1996) to combine the feminist critique of the legitimizing affect of masculine God-language with the critical function of metaphorical God-language. "Conceived from our daily life, metaphors, as soon as they are 'language,' have the effect of breaking in on our daily lives in a surprising, disturbing, and sometimes critical manner." (Biezeveld 1998: 197)

<sup>396</sup>According to Louw (2007:364) the *phallus* exemplifies that maleness is expressed in courage and dominionship. "The display of the phallus leads in our culture to the consumerism of male sexuality...the possession and display of a large penis has become a sign of masculinity in good working order. It leads to phallus mastery as the concentration on the male genitals in the state of erection." In religion the phallus symbol played an important role in the cult, seeing that the Greek gods Poseidon, Apollo, and Zeus were frequently sculptured in Greek art with their penises fully displayed. The divine phallus is also of concern in ancient Near Eastern mythology.

<sup>397</sup>This notion connects with the research of Leo (2001), Ellison (1996) (and others) – which was referred to in chapter 4 under the heading "male sexual identity and the question of power" - about phallo-centrism (centrality of erect genitals) and the achievement-ethos, as well as anxiety concerning impotence. The danger of Nelson's type of analysis is that it stays focused on (the centrality) of genitals. But indeed it forms part of an important attempt to ground masculine spirituality in another bodily awareness, and it is therefore justified, according to the researcher. The result is the awareness that it creates: **to have a penis is just as much about rest and silence, as about power and control.**

<sup>398</sup>According to Krondorfer (1996: 11) the Reformation freed Protestant men from the psychodynamic tension of having to achieve spiritual perfection through the denial of desire, but it did not challenge phallic power. "The Protestant spirit, if viewed as an early expression of modernity, managed to move phallic power from the ecclesia to secular institutions, such as the military, economic, and political elites."

<sup>399</sup>Penis, in this regard, refers specifically to the male genital organ in its flaccid state.



Nelson's argument is very concrete and practical. He contends that in spite of the fact that men quantitatively experience much more "penis-time" (in other words they are genitally soft for the biggest part of the day), they tend to devalue the penis and to highly esteem the phallus (hard and erect penis): "In 'a man's world', small, soft and down pale beside big, hard, and up." (Nelson 1988: 95). The eventual price that men pay is consequently the vacuity of an important type of masculinity, spiritual energy and power.

The well-grounded assumption that men's penile and phallic experiences are central to their spirituality, is also vividly reflected in history. The history of Western spirituality reveals two traditional ways to the experience of God's presence: the "*Via Positiva*" and the "*Via Negativa*", the positive way and the negative way. The former is a way of positive affirmation, thanksgiving and ecstasy. The *Via Negativa* is a way of emptying and emptiness ("God is not found in the soul by adding anything but by a process of subtraction" – Meister Eckhardt, 1260-1327).

According to Nelson the mode of the latter is an analogy to the man's experience of his penis, not his phallus: "Think of sinking and emptying. The penis is empty of the engorging blood that brings hard excitement to the phallus. Its flaccidity is a letting go of all the urgency. It has nowhere to go. It just is. It just hangs and sinks between the legs. Sinking, emptying is a way of spirituality<sup>400</sup>. **It means trusting God that we do not need to do, that our *being is enough***<sup>401</sup>...It means abandoning our own achievements and resting in the depths of meaning we do not create...Men often resist these things. (Nelson 1988: 96) (own italics and bolded part).

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<sup>400</sup> Nelson's (1988:100) suggestion in this regard is the full development of so-called *masculine energies*: "We are not talking only of phallic qualities. Penis is vulnerable, soft, receptive...(it) represents and invites the spirituality of the *Via Negativa*. But a penis is not 'feminine' – it is as authentically masculine as its phallus. It bears qualities rooted in the fullness of the male's sexual experience, in the fullness of his body affirmation. So we who are men are simply invited to develop the masculine more richly."

<sup>401</sup> The researcher is of the opinion that this type of "negative theology" can contribute substantially to an understanding of masculinity within an integrated and healing spirituality-framework, which re-appreciates something of the mystique of religion: "Negative theology means far more than that we find no adequate names for God. It means, on a practical-spiritual level, that there exists no fail-proof method for reaching God, and hence that my only hope lies in the humble awareness of my inadequacy" (Dupre 1981: 44)

This “being” function is of primary importance for the undergirding of this dissertation’s main theological argument and pastoral-anthropological stance<sup>402</sup>, and therefore needs to be translated into theological terms here, namely that:

**1. *A pastoral assessment of masculinity, which is grounded in pneumatology and eschatology, implies a re-definition thereof. The re-creation in Christ - through the Holy Spirit – eschatologically implies a new quality of being human and being man. It gives an indication of our human dignity through the Holy Spirit’s inhabitation in us, without our having to prove ourselves (achievement-ethic). Our “being function” is enough. God’s faithfulness and unconditional “Yes” (in Christ) for our human-ness (1 Corinthians 1:9) makes us ‘(hu)man enough’.***

**2. Within a pastoral-anthropological re-interpretation of masculinity the researcher’s contention is therefore that *there should be looked further than specific gender stereotypes (whether essentialist or androgynous<sup>403</sup>, or socio-constructionist), in order to transcend the traditional cultural images of masculinity and maleness.***

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<sup>402</sup> For more detail, refer back to chapter five’s explanation of these theological and pastoral-anthropological views.

<sup>403</sup> The word “androgynous” literally means the unification/ unity of the masculine (Andro) and the feminine (gyne) in one human person/ personality. Androgyny does not refer to hermaphroditis (a sexual abnormality with male and female genitals present in the same individual) or bisexuality (the psychological orientation of someone who, as a mature person, feels a strong attraction to persons of both genders). Androgynous persons characterise themselves as (both) strongly autonomous, assertive and independent and strongly understanding, affective and compassionate. Androgyny is an alluring alternative to the oppressive nature of gender-role stereotypes within essentialist interpretation-schemes. According to Martinson (1996: 113) androgyny usually has a double, but limited meaning in contemporary usage. It encourages both the so-called feminine and masculine traits and behaviours in individuals and society. But not all of these traits and behaviours are necessarily desirable and there is a more serious difficulty (see e.g. See Woodhill and Samuels (2004) who indicates aptly that this is indeed not always the case - in some instances a balance of negative feminine and negative masculine traits could also constitute a part of androgyny, creating the possibility of an undesirable or negative androgyny.) Considering the above-mentioned one can therefore even exceed a mere androgynous scheme of interpretation of masculinity and maleness. Androgynous interpretation-schemes’ ironic dilemma is that it indeed aggravates the problem that it tries to overcome; since it is based on the assumption that indeed two readily discernable and archetypical sets of personality traits (“masculine” and “feminine”) exist. It thus still places one constellation of qualities essentially and dominantly in men and the other one essentially and dominantly in women. *Both stereotypical views of men and women and androgynous visions of persons emphasize a dichotomous view of reality.* The first view splits both men and women and their characteristics; the second vision splits their characteristics and encourages persons to be autonomous. But “one can only have individual existence out of one’s relationships to others and the earth. One can only know relatedness through individuation and maturation, which creates the specificity from which to be an other. Existence is essentially connected and interdependent.” (Martinson 1996: 119). *Therefore - primarily - a new vision of gender and sexual relationships needs to be grounded in an interdependent view of reality.*

### 3. DECONSTRUCTING AND RE-INTERPRETING NOTIONS OF GOD'S POWER

#### 3.1 Men and God-images in terms of gender<sup>404</sup>

An essential component of the quest for an authentic and meaningful Christian spirituality for men - which goes beyond traditional cultural constructions - is an *examination of the way that men image God*. For some men their image/s of their own masculinity and their image/s of God form a synthesis or fusion; but for others it might be exactly the opposite reality, seeing that meaningful connections can also be formed for some men through the clashing contrast between their self-image/s and their God-image/s. Albeit, the primary question to meaningfully answer is, “*Is a masculine image of God<sup>405</sup> necessary for ‘masculine’ spirituality?*”

Much debate has been elicited by this question and it revolves around the use of gender images of God. Stephen Boyd (1995) – when he speaks about men’s conceptualisation of God - argues convincingly that the *notion of an utterly transcendent, absolute, perpetually active (i.e. omnipotent and omniscient) God legitimates the patterns of isolation and domination and the delusory attempts at invulnerability that produce is in us much of our performance anxiety that is killing us, others, and our earth*, “I believe one of the most debilitating effects of sexism in Western Christianity is the distortion it has caused in the ways we image and think about God.” (Boyd 1995: 115).

According to James (1996: 34-35) the following are some trends that inform further discussions on this complex subject matter. First, contemporary theological writers suggest that a particular image of God is as much an identification of ourselves as it is of the divine. Given that human

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<sup>404</sup> The researcher has already in the previous chapter - under the heading “Possible re-interpretations of gender relations from a (Trinitarian) theological perspective” – referred to the fact that whether we use masculine or feminine metaphors for God, God models our common humanity, not our gender specificity or gender identity. Therefore all employment of God language for construction of gender identity is illegitimate and ought to be resisted. The main question there was whether the gender of God language says anything about what it means to be male or female? Here the issue at stake is different. Although God is completely beyond sexual distinctions and all specifically masculine or feminine content of the language about God stems exclusively from the creaturely realm, the fact still remains: our language of God is necessarily gendered. And this fact makes the issue of God language complex, and necessary to engage with.

<sup>405</sup> Frame (2002) highlights a number of reasons to think that the overwhelming predominance of masculine imagery in the Bible has some theological importance. See Frame (2002: 383-386)

knowledge is conceptual and analogical, images of God will reflect the paradigms of those doing the imaging.

A second trend is that some theological writers (such as Mary Daly and Sallie McFague<sup>406</sup>) suggest that a re-imaging of God must occur in order to promote justice for those outside the dominant power class. This is necessary because there is an obvious and direct correlation between a god who is primarily imaged as masculine and injustice toward oppressed peoples. Furthermore a connection between masculine images of God and attitudes toward creation and stewardship has been established, and should be taken into account when speaking about this proposed re-imaging of God.

These realities can obviously influence women's (and men's) conceptualisation of God in unique ways. Frances Klopper (2002: 421) states that since God-images are cultural creations related to the time and place in which they were conceived, the male character of God - Yahweh, imaged as a father, king, judge, shepherd and more in the Old Testament- is a natural reflection of the patriarchal culture of the ancient Near East. According to Klopper, twenty-first century women have difficulty relating to the male God-image and patriarchal church language, both of which justify the subordinate position of women in church and society. She contends that investigation into Old Testament religion reveals that the way Israelite women dealt with the single male God opens the way for contemporary women to do likewise and create images of God with which they can identify.

People in different cultural contexts can also be touched differently by these above-mentioned complexities regarding gendered images of God. Taringa (2004), raises another kind of problem, i.e. that since most African Christian theologians tend to present African concepts of God in the framework of the exclusively male image of God typical of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the feminine image of God<sup>407</sup> in Africa in general, and among the Shona (ethnic group of Zimbabwe) in particular, is suppressed in patriarchal theology. Recognising this fundamentally ideological

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<sup>406</sup> See Daly (1973) and McFague (1993).

<sup>407</sup> Much recent theology has focused on the appropriateness of feminine language for God. The evangelical theologian Paul K. Jewett made this question central to his book *God, Creation, and Revelation* (1991).

nature of the male-dominant image of God, she seeks to demonstrate that the male image of God among the Shona is never the whole story. God is not always described as a male, there are cases where God is described as a female. This occurs in the metaphors that the Shona use for God.

**A key question** in relation to this (and other) feminist critique is whether the biblical and traditional language for God *naturally* and *inevitably* leads to the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, or whether these admittedly appalling effects result from the *abuse* of biblical and traditional God-language.

According to Mary Stewart van Leeuwen (1993) mainline Christian feminists usually say that the problem goes much deeper than a mere masculine overemphasis in our use of biblical and traditional God-language. Oppressive distortions are thought to be nearly inevitable, either because biblical and traditional God-language is irredeemable patriarchal, or because the modern situation is such that this language will inevitably be abused. Stewart Van Leeuwen (1993:153) summarizes feminist alternatives of imaging God broadly into four groups: [1] proposals calling for a female deity, [2] proposals calling for inclusion of feminine imagery with masculine imagery for God, [3] proposals calling for non-gender-related imagery, and [4] proposals calling for a great variety of imagery, both gendered and non-gendered. “The general direction of all four proposals, however, is toward a view of God that emphasizes God’s immanence, mysteriousness, relationality, liberating power, and nurturing capacity more than most previous theologising has.”

Stewart Van Leeuwen gives a well-founded *Reformed response* to the use of God-language, and states that Reformed faith, along with feminism, condemns the abuse of God-language in the service of women’s oppression and the exploitation of nature. “Calvinism at its best keeps God’s transcendence and God’s immanence in a balanced tension.” Therefore Calvinism can also present a very positive contribution and legitimately support the mainline and evangelical feminist proposals to *make God-language*<sup>408</sup>, *more inclusive, whether by using imagery that is*

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<sup>408</sup> The primary metaphors in the Christian tradition are hierarchical, imperialistic, and dualistic, stressing the distance between God and the world and the total reliance of the world on God. Thus, the metaphors of God as king, ruler, lord, master, and governor, and the concepts that accompany them of God as absolute, complete, transcendent,

*overtly feminine or by diversifying imagery for God.* “Insofar as Calvin does favor masculine language for God as ‘Father,’ his central concern is for God’s nurturant, loving, sustaining relationship to humanity and the world.” (Stewart Van Leeuwen 1993:163).

Boyd (1995: 116-118) states that we highlight male images of God and tend to suppress female images of God. Therefore, a persistent issue in the history of theology is how to develop ways of talking about God that integrate both God’s transcendence (distinctiveness) and God’s immanence (withness), in order to be reconciled with God in new ways<sup>409</sup>. *The answer*, according to Boyd (1995: 118), is: “[Rather], since men are both active and vulnerable and women are both active and vulnerable, we need to distinguish maleness from distorted notions of masculinity and femaleness from distorted notions of femininity. Consequently, ***male images and female images can convey both transcendence and immanence, and we need to use both***<sup>410</sup>.” (own italic and bold).

### **3.1.1 Problematic issues connected to God as Father<sup>411</sup>**

Samuel Terrien (1985)<sup>412</sup> recognizes that the concept of the fatherhood of God<sup>413</sup> can be (mis)used to justify patriarchy on earth as sanctioned from heaven, and he rejects this meaning to argue for

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and omnipotent permit no sense of mutuality, shared responsibility, reciprocity, and love (except in the sense of gratitude).

<sup>409</sup> According to Boyd (1995:118) part of what it means to be reconciled with God is to pay attention to images of God that express both God’s transcendence and God’s immanence. “We have historically ascribed one set of human characteristics to men and then associated those with transcendence, and we have ascribed another set of characteristics to women and associated those with immanence. Consequently, since we have emphasized the transcendence of God, we have associated God with masculinity, or maleness.”

<sup>410</sup> This assertion is affirmed by Martinson (1996: 118) who states that: “Female and male differences can be accurately discovered, articulated and validated. There need to be both female and male symbols of God. Motherhood and fatherhood share parenthood. But motherhood is not fatherhood.”

<sup>411</sup> According to McFague (1987:19, “Father,” The primary metaphor for God, *might* in principle allow for a more relational and interdependent view of God and the world. But this metaphor “has been so qualified by being associated with the metaphors of king and lord [as, for instance, in the phrase, ‘almighty Father’] that its potential as an expression of unified, interdependent view of God and the world is undercut.”

<sup>412</sup> Although the researcher is acutely aware of the complexity of the issue surrounding language and images of God as Father, it will exceed the limits of this study to give an in-depth discussion on this issue. After carefully selecting and analysing a large amount of literature on this topic, the insights from Samuel Terrien proved to be the most substantial and theologically viable.

<sup>413</sup> For an insightful discussion on the topic of God’s gender, see Reuther (1981: 64-70).

a liberating message. He views the divine fatherhood that is elaborated in the Jesus traditions as the gracious goodness usually associated with a mother<sup>414</sup>.

In his book *Till the heart sings* (1985), Terrien pursues the main points on the agenda of feminist interpretations of manhood and womanhood, i.e. first, systematic analysis of gender relations and, second, critique of androcentric and patriarchal privilege. He analyses gender relations in the Bible from the creation account in Genesis through the story of ancient Israel and the early church to the eschatology of the book of Revelation. *He criticizes some fundamental male-centred perspectives through essentially feminist interpretations.* For example, he denounces the politics of male dominance and eventual supremacy that governed Christian communities of the Roman Empire, and he faults church officials who display a subtle uneasiness if not an implicit hostility to women in the pastoral ministry of the contemporary church.

It seems to Terrien as if the problem boils down to Biblical hermeneutics - which lies at the heart of the crisis that smothers Christian life and thought (still today). His *main argument* is that, “Biblical faith, from Abraham to Jesus the Christ, lays the basis for a theology of manhood and womanhood that goes counter to the traditional attitudes and practices of Christendom and challenges the church of today to rethink critically not only the respective functions of both sexes but also the suprasexual meaning of the gender of God.” (Terrien 1985: 6)

Can we maintain today that the God of the ancient Hebrews was a male deity? Can we still call God “Our Father”? Why not pray to “Our Mother”? Are there not feminine as well as masculine dimensions within the divine reality? These questions have been legitimately asked in recent times. It appears, however to Terrien, that many of those who formulated them ignored the uniqueness of Hebraic faith. According to him (Terrien 1985: 69) the language of Israel’s faith renders totally irrelevant the modern charges of male sexism in the biblical notion of God.

“On account of Israel’s inheritance from a mythological past, which was repudiated and replaced by a theology of time, the theological language of the Bible speaks of God in the masculine

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<sup>414</sup> See also Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983) for an affirming view of Terrien’s concept of the fatherhood of God.

gender. Yet, one cannot dismiss the God of the prophets and of the psalmists as a puppet of paternalism. Those who wish to go ‘beyond God the Father’<sup>415</sup> may be inspired by legitimate intentions, such as that of liberating oppressed womanhood from patriarchal culture, but they have misread the biblical evidence and ignored its dynamic tensility. They have seen in the metaphor of divine fatherhood an expression of moralistic or ritualistic tyranny, which was not typical Hebraism but was current only among the Jerusalem priests who founded Judaism. They did not pay attention to the stress of prophets and psalmists on fatherhood as metaphor of grace and motherly compassion. The prophetic and psalmodic theology of fatherhood dismisses as an egregious error the popular conception of mercantile God who rewards and punishes, in and oversimplification of providence.”

Terrien’s core assertion in this regard is that *the prophets in the Bible promoted religious equality between men and women. It was nascent Judaism in its priestly form that debased the religious status of womanhood* with its legal censures on sexual purity and the new meaning it conferred upon the rite of circumcision. Therefore he views God as Father no longer simply as a transcendent deity, who exercises his lofty power and remains detached from the weaknesses and the tragedies of the human condition. “God is the self-offering Spirit, who shares in the suffering and even in the death of humanity. The impending death of Jesus prefigures the true fatherhood of God, a God who immolates himself for the sake of his children.” (Terrien 1985: 141-142)

Terrien (1985: 210) critiques recent writers on the feminine dimension of the divine that have, according to him, so far failed to delineate certain subtle distinctions in the debate. He understands that the challenge for “gender healing” is not to restrict all hierarchical religious language because then it will be impassable to speak about divine transcendence. He contends conclusively: “When transcendence is taken seriously, masculine language in itself is not offensive. As soon as one reflects upon the processes of language, one discovers that gender is not to be confused with sex. This fact cannot be stressed strongly enough. This is the reason for which such expressions as ‘beyond the sex of God’ are irrelevant. It must be emphasized again and again that language about God is always metaphorical. **The change to the metaphor of**

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<sup>415</sup> Referring to Mary Daly’s book (1973) with the same title.



**mother will not solve the problem, which, for some women today, arises from the metaphor of father.”** (own bolded part)

Opposition, in some quarters, to the notion of divine fatherhood is due not only to the human experience of domineering and despotic fathers but also, and paradoxically, to the human experience of effeminate fathers, of absent fathers, of irresponsible fathers, and of fathers who have failed. It must be remembered that the biblical metaphor of divine father<sup>416</sup> is never divorced from the memory of dual parenthood (Hosea). It never means genital procreation.

Consequently, the father image cannot be separated from the motif of love as motherly compassion in nurture: *“it implies both divine self-immolation in the **theologia crucis** and a human willingness to become, for women as well as for men, humble, open, and recipient like little children. **Divine fatherhood has nothing to do with the American idea of manliness or virility. It points to strength in weakness, to the power of love that lives in death and beyond death.**”* (Terrien 1985: 221) (own italics and bold)

Terrien concludes strikingly that the offensiveness of naming God, Father vanishes when the speech of prayer precedes and informs theological discourse: “To say, ‘Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be they name,’ is not an attribution. It is an invocation. The Lord’s Prayer lifts the metaphor of divine fatherhood far above the notion of maleness and femaleness or even of masculinity and femininity. It transcends the imagery of generation and nurture, It does not use the word ‘Father’ alone, out of context. It does not offer an intellectual proposition. It does not detach the invocation from the hallowing of the name.” (Terrien 1985: 222)

**The researcher’s summarising conclusions<sup>417</sup> are that** - *when thinking about the relationship between men and God-images in terms of power and gender* - **one should:**

1. Take serious cognisance of the risk of the abuse of biblical and traditional God-language which can lead to the detrimental and unacceptable oppression of women and the exploitation of nature.

<sup>416</sup> See also Moltmann (1981a: 54-59).

<sup>417</sup> These conclusions are drawn from the above-mentioned arguments in section 3.1 thus far.

2. Make God-language more inclusive, whether by using imagery that is overtly feminine or by diversifying imagery for God. Male and female images (or metaphors) can convey both transcendence and immanence, and we need to use both.
3. Recognize that specifically the concept of the fatherhood of God can be (mis)used from fundamentally male-centred perspectives - to justify patriarchy on earth as sanctioned from heaven - and reject this meaning to argue for a liberating message through mainly feminist interpretations.
4. Opt not to restrict all hierarchical religious language because then it will be impassable to speak about divine transcendence.
5. Emphasize essentially that language about God is always metaphorical.

### **3.2 Men's (mis)conceptions of relational power within contemporary contexts**

It is inevitably clear - as has been argued in previous chapters, and intertwined with the above-mentioned - that power is one of the central issues in the lives of men and their understanding of their manhood and their God/gods. Power is clearly present wherever people are together, and it was indicated earlier that patriarchal power still exists and dominates in many cultural contexts worldwide. *Patriarchalism emphasises the presence of male power and control in intimate relationships as well as discrete acts of behaviour.*

This philosophical paradigm of patriarchy is related to a hierarchical understanding of human value and identity. It was indicated (in chapter four) that *patriarchy does not only cripple men in terms of their functioning in society on a human level. It also influences their relationships with God in many fundamental ways.* Implicitly, the effects of patriarchal power upon the development of an authentic spirituality for men (and women) are profound. Patriarchal God-concepts<sup>418</sup> lead to assumptions which influence men and their relationship to their community

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418 Louw (2007: 370) argues, "Nobody can deny that images of a strong, patriarchal God did not play a role in the Christian tradition to project force and male superiority. For example, Augustine argues the man alone is the image of God and that will be completed if the woman too is joined to him, but separately she is not the image of God."

and to the divine<sup>419</sup>, and pastoral caregivers should be acutely aware of this when caring for men within therapeutical relations<sup>420</sup>.

Men's lives – and the lives of everyone that is influenced by patriarchy – are therefore often dominated by one specific perception of power. Nelson (1988: 101) describes this power as “*unilateral power*”. It is non-reciprocal and non-relational and this one-dimensional power's purpose is to exert the greatest possible effect on others, and to be the least possibly influenced by others. The ideal is control and/or dominance. Within this power, space is therefore not created for interdependence or for the mystery of each other. It is unchanged and unchangeable *phallic power*.

*Power is similarly then also one of the central issues within the sphere of Christian spirituality.* The Christendom-era has often embraced this view of power in the conceptualisation of God. Within the modernist paradigm the aim was to describe God purely. In other words the focus was on orthodoxy (in a positivistic fashion) in order to get a grip on the truth – it was relevant since Hellenism was the only philosophical paradigm whereby such a connection could be found. God was used as a principal rule of explanation, and presented as essentially unchangeable (i.e. an unmoveable, stark concept of God) in order to barricade the people against a world wherein everything changes constantly<sup>421</sup>.

Within our contemporary post-Christendom context (typed postmodernism) - as a reaction to the above-mentioned - God concepts are declared with less absoluteness. Assertions about God are more relative. There is a greater focus on doing the right things (orthopraxis), rather than to formulate the “truth” perfectly (orthodoxy). “Truth” within such a paradigm does not have

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419 In Biblical studies and theology there has been distinguished work demonstrating how intertwined are the notions of a patriarchal God and the oppression of women, and how the methods of Biblical study and doctrinal formulation have rested on assumptions that arise out of and reinforce (white) male domination, not only of women, but also of other races and cultures and of the earth itself (cf. Reuther 1983; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983; Ramshaw 1995).

<sup>420</sup> See in this regard also Neuger and Poling, eds. (1997)

<sup>421</sup> This theology is (amongst others) grounded on the same sexual dualism which has propagated the body/spirit split (as has been explicated earlier in this study). The spirit/soul was seen as eternal, complete and unchangeable, whilst the body was seen as transient, incomplete and changeable. God had “unilateral” power. “He” was perfect in his completeness and untouched by the people “there below”.

merely to do with facts, but it is discovered within relationships/community with God and people (relational truth and critical realism)<sup>422</sup>.

Nelson's (1988: 102) re-interpretation of one-dimensional power ("unilateral power") into relational power resonates in this above-mentioned paradigm-shift. Because masculine sexual experiences always include power: "*The experience of phallus without penis (is) unilateral power. The colloquial male ideal of the phallus is 'two feet long, made of steel, and lasts all night'...In contrast, the man who affirms his whole sexuality knows that both phallus and penis are one. They are different but interdependent qualities of one male reality...What was once hard and imperious is now soft and gentle. In both dimensions the man is experiencing his masculine power, and both are aspects of relational power.*" (own italics).

**The important conclusion can consequently be made that:** *when a man understands his sexuality in terms of (non-patriarchal) relational power, he has a better understanding of the real nature of power. When he thus truly understands power (i.e. re-interprets it), he will have a clearer understanding of his maleness (sexuality) and masculinity (gender identity), and can implicitly re-interpret his masculine identity and his understanding of God and God's power.*

### 3.3 Looking for other meaningful ways of understanding God and God's power

But what does such a re-interpretation of God's power look like, theologically speaking? It starts with a theology that takes God's *incarnation* (in Jesus Christ) - and even more so, primarily - God's *inhabitation* (through His Holy Spirit in human beings) seriously. Within such a theological framework the questions of justice and human dignity are of crucial importance. As epistemological starting point – within the field of practical theology and pastoral care - of our thoughts about God's power within the postmodernist context, we can therefore *not* make use of a *positivistic scientific model*, i.e. "I know exactly who God is". We should not be seeking for proof of God, but can rather bring our understanding of God into conversation with the questions about the meaning of masculinity and maleness within relational networks.

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<sup>422</sup> This paradigm shift was explicated in chapter two.

It has been proposed that a *hermeneutical scientific model*, which explores certain schemata of interpretation, should be used. This model emphasises connections within systemic networks – in order to comprehend something of the network of relationships. This important paradigm shift from a positivistic to a hermeneutical approach can however not be forced down in a rigid, one-dimensional way.<sup>423</sup> Louw (2001b) warns that this hermeneutic model should not merely become an alternative to positivism. He argues that *hermeneutics must take the sacramental dimension of life events seriously*<sup>424</sup> (2001b: 203) – and this is of great importance in the light of the researcher’s above-mentioned *contention that God’s power should be related with men’s understanding of power and embodiment*.

Louw (2001b) contends that life cannot be separated from a holy and spiritual dimension. Sacramentality is less perceived as a mechanic allocation of grace to rise above immoral behaviour. A “critical pneumatology of perichoresis” (2001b: 207) implies God in humanity (not that the humanity is God, but humanity as metaphor of God’s love). Such a *pneumatological understanding of reality furthermore implies the interpenetration of God’s inhabiting Spirit in order to change people’s “being qualities”*. Gratitude and deeds of justice (which promotes human dignity), consequently becomes anticipating signs of God’s presence among human beings. It is *therefore of crucial importance to relate God with life issues, such as - the core question in this study – contemporary images of men and masculinities in cultural contexts*.

Erhard Gerstenberger (2002) affirms the necessity of this initiative by stating that *the images of God corresponding to our time*<sup>425</sup> *have in part still to be found*. According to him, our religious imagination is impoverished because it has constantly fixated itself only on what is there in the

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<sup>423</sup> In affirmation of this proposed shift in scientific models Dill (1996) explicates the nature of this shift and these models in similar terms, as it relates to the field of practical theology. He asserts that what is known as the standard scientific model (logical positivism and empiricism), has led to numerous epistemological perplexities for scientists (in the natural as well as social sciences). Postmodernism (“by lack of a better descriptive term”) has been elicited as the reaction to the standard scientific method, and it simultaneously proposed new epistemological outcomes to problems (such as critical realism, holism, pluralism, hermeneutics, discourse analysis and the narrative paradigms). Dill contends (1996: 2) that practical theology can “also benefit from these meta-theories as an alternative to the limiting effect of subject centred thinking, as is the case with the standard scientific method. It brings hopeful possibilities and can be known as the epistemology of communal dialogue.”

<sup>424</sup> The sacramental dimension of embodiment has also been highlighted in chapter five.

<sup>425</sup> Therefore Sallie McFague (1987: 13) argues: “Language that supports hierarchical, dualistic, external, unchanging, atomistic, anthropocentric, and deterministic ways of understanding these relationships (between God and the world and between humanity and the world) is not appropriate *for our time*, whatever its appropriateness might have been for other times.”

Bible and has regarded these images as the only possible metaphors. “At any rate in Europe and North America, our theological ideas can no longer presuppose monarchical or imperialistic conditions. We live under democratic constitutions, in which electors and citizens have certain possibilities of action and co-determination...God cannot exercise the patriarchal authority of a former time or even be imagined as masculine in a sexist way.” (Gerstenberger 2002: 304-305)

In light of the above-mentioned the researcher is convinced that Louw’s suggestion of the concept: *“God as our Companion for Life”* (2001b: 209), can substantially contribute to an expanded understanding of God and (God’s power), by men (and women) today, in a postmodernist context. *Can it possibly serve as a meaningful re-interpretation of, or as an expansion of/alternative to the traditional and misused “Almighty Father”-description?* (as will be indicated in the following section).

**The theological question that should thus be asked is:** “Will Christians (specifically men) maintain a concept of God and an understanding of providence which satisfies our need for development, achievement and power<sup>426</sup> *or a God-concept that addresses our deepest need for life-giving intimacy and vitality, and discloses new horizons of hope?*”<sup>427</sup> This statement touches the heart of our understanding of God. *It inquires to our understanding of God’s revelation and essence, as well (amongst others) to our understanding of God’s sovereignty (almighty power) and God’s involvement with men in their struggles with their (sexual and gender) identity and the search for meaning within their existential life-contexts. The Christian man’s search for meaning therefore challenges his faith-system, and it explicates his understanding and conceptualisation of God (i.e. God-language).*

Subsequently, *the pastoral-theological challenge in a globalising, postmodernist context is to re-evaluate traditional, settled God-concepts.* This is especially applicable to those concepts which was/is misused to serve our own selfish objectives, and to try and satisfy our human need

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<sup>426</sup> (Louw 2007: 63) contends: “In our time the synthesis and even syncretistic association between expectations of Christians in our society and their ideological need for ‘strong and powerful gods’ leads to an imperialistic interpretation of the power of God in terms of ‘omni-potence’”.

<sup>427</sup> Hall (1993:55), puts a related question as follows: “How is it possible to think of God within the parameters of Christian faith without either projecting upon the divine person our entrenched models of power or, in reaction, making a romantic caricature of divine love?”

to obtain power over the ones that are powerless. The God concepts of postmodernist Western citizens (who often lead very individualistic lives with a type of prosperity faith), are mainly influenced by the patriarchal system of dominance and authoritarian oppression, and not by the God of the Bible.

The “God” which is “created” by the above-mentioned culture is a God in which there is no weak spot, an “unwrinkled” God. It therefore leads to the romanticisation of God which ensues in triumphalism: i.e. all problems are solved and there is no place for weaklings. Hall (1993) contends that one of the most oppressive God-concepts of Christian Theism and Christian imperialism was the “Almighty Father” – an image/description which was misused within the North-American context to protect people against the reality of their situation. They view **God’s** almightiness/ sovereignty more as an imperialistic power (*God as Caesar*<sup>428</sup>) than as a **fragile identification - God as Friend**<sup>429</sup>, **Life Partner / Companion for Life** - with our existential human predicament.

Hall (1993) tries to establish a reconstruction of this theology so that it can become possible to profess the faith in a public God without suppressing the reality of the Godly concealment – as it is experienced in the current context. When he (in co-operation with other theologians) reflects on the essence, knowledge and works of God, he tries to find a way to affirm God’s eternity, omnipresence, sovereignty etc., and simultaneously to contend that God is compassionate, faithful, merciful, patient etc. The problem is however that God has been presented as figure of almost unapproachable majesty for the biggest parts of the Christian tradition – from the earliest times to even the time of the reformation and thereafter.

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428 Christian orthodoxies have in the past often been based on models of God of which the most traces of softness have been eradicated – the typical picture of Godly almightiness is an issue of attributing to God which exclusively belonged to Caesar. God as “Almighty Father” was portrayed as a being that was almost exclusively presented in terms of holy distance, absolute power and unearthly glory and exaltation.

<sup>429</sup> See Louw (1998b) for more detail on the notion of “God as Friend”. McFague (1987) also argues that gendered images (or God), which are usually paternal or maternal, need to be balanced by die gender-neutral metaphor of God as “friend”. The great variety of biblical imagery for God challenges the hegemony of masculine imagery and serves as an invitation to envision God in new ways.

Hall's hypothesis (1993: 92 and further) is that the Christian doctrine (dogma) regarding God tended to overemphasise the aspects of transcendence and power (as it fits into a patriarchally-interpreted deity in service of the kingdom); to the detriment of the essence of God, of which the Word witnesses. Consequently it ran the risk of restricting the faith in God to contexts which is subjected to "positive religion". A triumphalism did not leave much room for uncertainty and doubt – which could actually have created a healthier process of understanding. Inevitably we ascribe to God which belongs to Caesar, we project on the deity/deities of our choice what impresses us the most in our experience of earthly power and glory.

*However, in this final part of the last chapter an alternative proposition for a re-interpretation of God's power is made out of a theologia crucis and a theologia resurrectionis.*

### **3.4 An alternative understanding of God's power**

*The core of the theology of the cross (theologia crucis) reveals: **the final power of God over the human is deduced out of the self-imposed weakness of his love**, "God's abiding commitment to the world and to life." According to Hall (1993) we learn to know God as a "revealing Presence who meets us in our state of estrangement". He contends: "The Bible directs man to God's powerlessness and suffering: only the suffering God can help...The God of the whole Bible is a suffering God. God suffers because God loves."(Hall 1993: 28). In conjunction with Berkhof (1985) he asserts that we must understand the essence of God in relational terms<sup>430</sup> (God's being-with-us – "Mitsein").*

God is therefore rather "a revealing Presence, a Companion – 'your God'"; and what God reveals is not "something", but God's own person. Biblically speaking the core factor in God's essential being is not God's absolute distinctiveness from all other realities, but rather God's determined orientation towards creation: "I will be your God". The Biblical faith's historical concreteness

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<sup>430</sup> This contention – of understanding God's essence in relational terms – affirms the researcher's earlier assertions with regards to the doctrine of the Trinity.



and continuing anthropomorphicity<sup>431</sup> affirms that God’s nature and temperament is one of grace and love – God is love!

The relationship which God continually wants to establish with God’s creatures is therefore not a sign of godly exclusivity, but indeed of the inclusiveness of God’s grace. *Any “God-talk”, and the God-concepts of men should (according to the researcher) thus give expression to God’s “being-with-us”* – it therefore should flow forth out of a confession of faith and a relationship with God, characterised by an orientation towards truth. God’s being-with-us not only implicates God’s being-amongst-us, but also God’s being-in-us (*through the inhabitation of God’s Holy Spirit*)<sup>432</sup>.

According to Hall (1993) the glory, triumph and power which belong to the suffering of God (as stated above) is of a totally different order as the one of the imperialistic imagination of the fallen humanity – only the compassionate (in other words co-suffering in love) God can help suffering people. *God suffers because God loves and is love* – only people who share God’s suffering love can see and realise something of his glory. God’s faithfulness – in terms of Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection to new Life – gives meaning and security: “I am what I am...” (Exodus 3) – I will always be there where you are.

In the light of the above-mentioned discussion Berkhof (1985) makes another very important contribution to the debate and reflections about God’s revelation and essence (God’s attributes). Berkhof asserts that, because of the one-sided emphasis on God’s transcendence in the traditional

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431 According to Frame (2002: 366) all human language is anthropomorphic; but more fundamentally it is, like the creation itself, theomorphic. God is really involved in human life, and so our language naturally refers to him as well as to created referents. “The Bible therefore often speaks of God as if he were a man, not only by using images that describe him as a king, a shepherd, a father, and a judge, but also by speaking of God as walking (Gen. 3:8), smelling an aroma (Gen. 8:21), etc. Scripture also ascribes body parts to God, including arms (Num.11:23), hands (Ps.111:7), a mouth (Deut. 8:3), and eyes (Deut. 11:12)” (Frame 2002: 367). In one sense all Scripture is anthropomorphic - written in human language, not some divine language. God’s revelation is “accommodated” - referring to Calvin’s understanding - to human understanding. “Scripture takes abstract attributes of God, no less than concrete images of him, from human life – words that have uses in our conversation about earthly things. This is the only kind of revelation there is.” (Frame 2002: 368)

<sup>432</sup> Christ’s cross and resurrection naturally contains implications for being human. But, these implications can only fully be understood and translated in anthropological terms via the inhabitation of God in humans, in other words out of a pneumatological perspective. The new person is indeed in his/her core existence a pneumatological being. (as was explicated in the section: “The essential role of pneumatology in our eschatological re-creation” in chapter five)

doctrine about God, the attributes which epitomizes God’s supernatural exaltation – i.e. eternalness, incomprehensibility, unchangeability, holiness, omnipresence, almightiness etc. – was studied and developed further. The attribute of God’s condescendence was left behind much more obscurely – the most important thereof was wisdom, goodness, love and justice. God’s core being (essence) was not deduced from God’s condescendant goodness to Israel and in Christ. In this way an image of God was created that was distant, uninvolved and cold.

What is therefore important in this regard is Berkhof’s theological method in his handling of the (almightiness of) God-question. Berkhof (1985: 124 and further), in this regard (of God’s faithfulness) emphasises the fact that God’s transcendent and condescendant attributes may not be split, but should be viewed in an integrated way. *The crucial factor to remember when using Berkhof’s summary* is that his argument – for the integration of God’s transcendent and condescendant attributes – is based on the fundamental presupposition that God’s transcendence must always be understood on the grounds of God’s condescendence. Thus, every attribute of transcendence should be assessed with the criteria of love which is lived out (died out) on the cross (of Christ). He speaks of:

“**De Heilige Liefde**” (in our dogmatic understanding of God we may not speak of God as Holy one without speaking of God as love);

“**De Weerlose Overmacht**”<sup>433</sup> (a combination of God’s almightiness and his fragile identification with us – God’s power has another/different type of quality than human categories of power); and

“**De veranderbare Trou**” (God manifests God self new in every new circumstance – it presupposes continuity, not erratic-ness).

This illuminating description of Berkhof reminds us that: if such a God - as described here above – seems weak at first, perhaps that is because we have bought so many of our culture’s assumptions about what constitutes strength and success. Placher (1999: 204) asserts strikingly: “If we worship power and wealth, then a God who, in the freedom of love, accepts suffering and

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<sup>433</sup> Berkhof’s concept of “de weerlose overmacht” (1985: 136 and further) is expanded and re-interpreted further by Van Gennep (in Biezeveld 1996: 110) as the “overmacht van de weerloosheid”. These concepts are highlighted as important patristic and theopaschical notions to indicate that God as Father was present with and in the suffering of the Son. A deeper analysis of this important theological argument and concepts unfortunately exceeds the limits of this dissertation.

humiliation may well seem weak to us. Jesus, however, seems...weak in *power* but strong in *love*...Suffering love has its own kind of strength.”

Therefore: “If a love willing to be vulnerable lies at the core of the origin and sustaining and end of all things, then *all things are transformed*. Compared with the God implied in such a vision of things, a merely omnipotent deity, isolated in invulnerability, seems oddly enfeebled.” (Placher 1999: 205)

**All things are transformed!** In other words: *an alternative understanding of God’s power – re-defined in terms of the self-imposed weakness of His love for all creation - can include the transformation of our masculine (and feminine) identity and the assertion of our power within relational networks.*

Attention has now (and earlier) been given to a possible re-interpretation of our understanding of God’s (sovereign) power. In order to now connect it meaningfully to a *cross- and resurrection theology and then to a re-interpretation of masculinity/ies (out of an eschatological perspective)*, the following remarks will suffice.

#### **4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A *THEOLOGIA CRUCIS* AND A *THEOLOGIA RESURRECTIONIS***

**God’s identification**, compassion and transformation does not originate out of mere relationality, but **is settled in God’s faithfulness**. The way in which God’s almightiness and will is understood, is primarily linked to this theological idea of God’s faithfulness. God’s power was never meant to be a violent force, but a clear **covenantal promise: “I will be your God.”** Through the creation and re-creation, within both spheres of the cross (vulnerable identification) and resurrection (powerful transformation), the paradigm for the interpretation of God’s power is not deduced from social relationality, but out of the theology itself: continuity within discontinuity (faithfulness). The “goodness of God” is not all-round-beneficiary, but steadfast faithfulness, mercy and compassion.

Although there are differences amongst trinitarian theologians, they mostly all imply that *the power of God should be defined by the cross and the resurrection*. The suffering God and the theology of the cross therefore constitutes the framework of this new paradigm, i.e. *God's almighty presence and power interpreted as fragile faithfulness and overwhelming pathos*. This paradigm is rooted in Luther's theology which established the cross of Christ as the real *locus* of the human's knowledge of God. Moltmann<sup>434</sup> (1971: 142-143) contends profoundly: "**Zijn heerschappij is van andere aard dan die van de machtigen van deze wereld**. Ze bestaat niet in een superlatief van heerschappij ('Koning aller koningen' of 'Superstar'), maar in de verandering van heerschappij in dienst, van macht in liefde en van aanspraken in plaatsvervangend lijden...**Zijn macht is de onmacht van de genade, de verzoenende kracht van het lijden en de heerschappij van de zich gevende liefde**" (own bolded parts).

*The implication thereof is that God's power (almightiness) is revealed in God's supposed weakness and God's wisdom in "foolishness".* God (in Jesus Christ) often did his most wonderful work through apparent defeats. So he told Paul, "My power is made perfect in weakness", and Paul replied, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**" (2 *Corinthians 12:9-10*)

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<sup>434</sup> Moltmann advanced a renewed Christology from the perspectives of resurrection (hope) and cross (suffering). Moltmann's *The crucified God* (1974) reinterpreted and criticized theology from the radical perspective of the cross of Christ. "Either Jesus who was abandoned by God is the end of all theology or he is the beginning of a specifically Christian, and therefore critical and liberating, theology of life" (Moltmann 1974:4). In his theology, the *cross and resurrection are two key concepts which he relates dialectically to one another*. God experiences a history with the world in which he both affects, and is affected by the world. The cross and the resurrection are the decisive moments within the Trinitarian history. It represents complete opposites: death and life, the absence and presence of God. Yet the crucified and risen Jesus is the same Jesus who paradoxically brings new life through his death. By raising the crucified Jesus to new life, God created continuity in the radical discontinuity. The contradiction of cross (suffering and death) and resurrection (power and life) corresponds with the contradiction that exists between what reality is now and what God promises to make it. By his death on the cross, Jesus identified himself with the present reality of the world in all its negativity. This included subjection to sin, suffering and death. However, since the same Jesus was raised, his resurrection constitutes God's promise of a new creation for the whole of reality which the crucified Jesus represents. The *cross* therefore represents the themes of dialectical love, suffering and solidarity; the resurrection represents the themes of dialectical promise, hope and mission. This *resurrection* as eschatological promise opens theology and the church to the whole world and its future. Their function is to transform the world in anticipation of its promised eschatological transformation of God.

Denise Ackermann (2003)<sup>435</sup> asserts that relating power to God raises at least the following two intriguing questions: What level of power do we ascribe to God? What can one say theologically about God's power? According to her the very hiddenness of God simply does not accord with the picture of a God who dominates creation.

In Scripture the obvious forms of divine power - as seen in creation, providence and miracle - are emphasized in many instances. By focusing on spectacular exhibits of God's power, Frame (2002: 526-527) warns that we may tend to think of it as a kind of brute strength that can overpower any obstacle by sheer force. He quotes Paul Helm (1993:224) "who says: 'It is tempting to think of God as a Herculean figure, able to out-lift and out-throw and outrun all his opponents. Such a theology would be one of physical or metaphysical power; whatever his enemies can do God can do it better or more efficiently than they.' But, he adds, we should resist this temptation, 'for the Christian view of providence reveals not only the power of God, but his weakness also.' How is God weak? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:25 that 'the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength'. He is thinking here of the cross of Christ (see 1:18, 23-24). Jesus<sup>436</sup> was delivered up to death by wicked men, so that God would raise him up in glory, having made him an offering for the sins of his people (Acts 2:23)."

The *theologia crucis* indeed reminds us of the mysterious and concealed way in which God is at work in the world. God's almightiness should thus not be interpreted against the background of the Hellenistic Pantocrator (power and violence) or the Roman Ceasar (*despot*). God's almightiness describes God's unique revelation (his majestic sovereignty and glory) which gives expression to God as the One with overwhelming love and steadfast faithfulness. It is therefore

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<sup>435</sup> "Theologically speaking, I see the power of God in the power of life, throbbing glorious profusion in the midst of suffering and death. I see the power of God in the "foolishness" of the cross...Instead of direct confrontation with the military and political power of the Roman Empire, there is a man on a cross - the very opposite of dominant power. Everything is inverted - no dominance, no control, only defeat and death. To find power for life in the cross seems foolish. **Yet the power of the cross is the resurrection.** That is why Paul can say: "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." (1 Cor. 1: 18-25)" - Ackermann (2003: 76-77)

<sup>436</sup> Frame (2002: 527) asserts that Jesus refuses to be an earthly ruler, or to bring in his kingdom by the sword. "Rather than kill his enemies, he dies at their hand. All of this gives every appearance of weakness. But Paul says that the cross is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1:24). Clearly, God used this time of weakness to accomplish his most amazing - indeed, his most powerful - work, bringing life from death and defeating Satan and all his hosts. *But it is important for us to recognize that God's sovereign, controlling power appears, not only in spectacular displays like the miracles of Jesus, but also in events in which people perceive him as weak.*"(own italics)

related to God's covenantal encounter and merciful identification with our human predicament and need. Almightyness is also related to righteousness and social justice (cf. Deutr. 10: 17-19). (Louw 2000)

**In summary:** Christian men's perception of God has an important influence on how they daily understand and enact their masculinity within power relationships. *The cross (representing God's vulnerable identification) and the resurrection (representing God's powerful transformation) affirm the authenticity of God's faithfulness and the truth of the eschatological triumph within this reality. On the grounds thereof men's manhood/masculinity acquire a new quality – a quality of manhood which is (amongst others) orientated towards spiritual health (vitality) and the promotion of human dignity and vulnerable courage (by means of empathic justice and a character of integrity).*

#### 4.1 Spiritual health defined within a culture of 'healthism'

*What is this spiritual health to which men's new quality of manhood should be orientated?* Chapter three clearly explicated that the contemporary concern with (specifically men's) health has become a central cultural value<sup>437</sup>. As was indicated thoroughly, magazines project youth and physical health as the archetype of human striving and meaningful action<sup>438</sup>. This is confirmed by Louw (2007: 28-29) who argues, "Maximum bodies, bodily fitness, men's health and women's beauty dictate the understanding of human's health." - *Health as a core cultural value is thus creating a new religiosity which has been typed 'healthism'* (with its accompanying bodyism) - "This term suggests not only a near cultural obsession with health as a matter of being free of

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<sup>437</sup> The researcher gave a short introduction on this very complex issue under the heading "A closer look at men's health."

<sup>438</sup> Refer to chapter three's thorough analysis under the headings: "Men's Health Magazine (MHM) – something different or not?!", and "South African MHM – an empirical analysis." The researcher highlighted (amongst others) the facts that (1) MHM creates images of the 'ideal man' (as a body builder and as a sexual champion), (2) the magazine plays a significant role in reproducing male power, and (3) men's health behaviour particularly includes certain negative aspects associated with hegemonic masculinity. This *discourse of traditional masculinity is encouraging many men to act destructively in the name of male power and privilege over women.* The presence of men's health (and of a magazine bearing that name) on newsstands and television broadcasts suggests the progressive increase of a shared public realisation of men's health. "However, to truly address men's health needs, all participants in the creation of this concept will need to challenge the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and work toward the social construction of a new, healthier form of masculinity." (Stibbe 2004: 49)

sickness, but has come to denote a positive and proactive attitude to health. Healthism represents a focus on optimum performance and efficiency in all aspects of life.”

In bodyism and healthism the body is often separated from the dynamics of embodiment and ensoulment and portrayed in terms of marketing images and the current recreational and sport images - through what Louw calls model tyranny, i.e. the power of the communication media to promote the beauty myth and the power ideology. “The aspirational male image has become: tall, lean, tanned, firm-muscled and square-shouldered. The myth of eve is subjugation and submission.” (Louw 2007: 374)

Therefore the researcher contended (in chapter three) that **a sensible preventive health strategy** for the 1990’s calls upon men to *critically evaluate the “Superman legacy”, i.e. to challenge the negative aspects of traditional masculinity that endanger their health, while hanging on to the positive aspects of masculinity and men’s lifestyles that heighten men’s physical vitality*. It was also asserted that *true masculinity and men’s bodies are therefore intimately linked with health, providing the focal point of self-construction as well as health construction*.

Within a theological framework and *pastorally speaking, one is healthy when one has a source of faith which enables you to impart meaning to life*. This means that mature faith behaviour reflects a certain understanding of God which enables a meaningful life. By ‘a mature faith’ is meant the congruency between that which one believes of God (content) and how one acts in the awareness of God’s presence (witness).

Louw (2007: 34) states that healthy people in the *Old Testament* were people who expressed the quality of fullness and well-being of life as represented by the notion of *shalom* (peace and harmony). “It refers to complete fulfillment and is connected to moral activity, spiritual achievement, righteousness, faithful fulfillment of the covenant and the torah (holiness), obedience to God and the law, blessing, fertility and longevity. These concepts within a comprehensive understanding of health as wholeness and well-being, refer to a positive state of complete fulfillment and a sense of destiny as it emanates from God and his will for a humane

life in dignity and righteousness. Health includes right relationships. This comprehensive understanding dovetails with the New Testament's understanding of health and healing."

Louw (2007: 40) therefore pleads for a theological interpretation of (spiritual) healing which understands a comprehensive approach to human wholeness from the perspective of Christian spirituality. In this regard the following theological perspectives are relevant - spiritual healing as a: (1) ***new state of being***: healing represent the fact that "... if anyone is in Christ, he is new creation" (2 Cor 5:17); (2) ***new state of mind***: peace. *Shalom* describes a contentness with God and life. "For He himself is our peace" (Eph.2:14); (3) ***new attitude and way of doing and living*** "Live by the Spirit... but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:16, 22-23); ***wholeness: purposefulness and direction***. "For in this hope we were saved" (Rom 8:24)

Ultimately, ***spiritual health and healing is aimed at growth into health as maturity (in faith)***<sup>439</sup>, i.e. direction and meaning as it emanates from the eschatological fullness of Christ, salvation. Furthermore, spiritual health (vitality) also implies an integratedness with God's creation (nature), and this dimension will be attended to concisely in the next few paragraphs.

#### **4.2 Spiritual health and vitality via an ecological orientation**

It is important that not just the human person's spiritual health and healing is promoted, but also the beauty and fairness (aesthetics) of creation, in the midst and in spite of the human being's sinful brokenness. It was argued earlier that *a pastoral-anthropological perspective on masculinity should reflect something of a celebration and wholeness – in other words an appreciation of something beautiful and unique (vitality)*. Subsequently, room must be made for a positive appreciation of humanity *and* creation, so that not only all forms of existing human potential, but also the potential included in creation can be unleashed in loving and caring ways.

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<sup>439</sup> See Louw (2007:61-62) for further detail on what 'maturity in faith' denotes.



In accordance with Heitink's plea for a broadened anthropology<sup>440</sup>, pastoral care (within a Reformed theology) should also give some new attention to the important issues of creation and ecology. If sin (as it is viewed within Reformatory circles) destroys the created order and harmony (*shalóm*) between the human being and the natural world, then God's salvation – *made real in our lives by the powerful inhabitation of the Holy Spirit* - must heal and renew the initially created unity, and recreate the earth wherever it is destroyed by humans' surge for power and greed<sup>441</sup>.

*Spiritual healing and salvation should* thus be perceived as the complete transformation of individuals in their personal and social lives. It must also *bring back the balance, harmony (shalóm) and fairness of that which was damaged and destroyed in the world*<sup>442</sup>. Spiritual healing - which is viewed holistically within pastoral care should therefore (according to Clinebell, 1996a) - be perceived globally within all relationships<sup>443</sup>. He speaks about a “**wholeness centred in the Spirit**” and then describes six dimensions of wholeness which promotes healing and growth in faith. He also describes intensification in the relationship between human beings and nature (as well as the whole biosphere), as one of the essential interdependent dimensions for a basic model of growth in pastoral care: “People in pastoral care and counselling can become more whole - physically, mentally and spiritually - when they are helped to develop and cherish a nurturing interaction with our great mother – Mother Nature” (Clinebell 1996a: 32).

It is thus very important to take cognisance of the fact that healing and growth in faith can only be optimally created and developed if it is nurtured (in other words ecologically cared for)

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<sup>440</sup> This broadened anthropology was motivated at the start of chapter four.

<sup>441</sup> This holistic view of redemption/salvation has however never before featured strong enough in the church's dogma, and especially not in her praxis. The Neo-Platonic distrust of the body and the natural world has gained more ground in theological debates about salvation in the last couple of centuries than the integrated Biblical viewpoint. Neo-Platonists viewed the body as the soul's prison. Within that understanding salvation was seen as assistance to the soul to escape out of the body's constraint. Such dualisms had no right to exist within the Hebrew paradigm (of the Old Testament). Salvation includes the total human and earthly realities, and it consists of social, political, economic, ecological as well as an other-worldly dimension (McDonagh 1986: 126).

<sup>442</sup> One of the creative challenges which is currently (in the light of the ecological crisis) on the agenda of the field of soteriology is the question: *how to relate the salvation of people (individually and socially) to the salvation of the earth?* A further discussion of this issue unfortunately exceeds the scope of this study, but the core principles discussed here above will be integrated at the end of the chapter.

<sup>443</sup> See also Clinebell (1992, 1994)

through wholeness-advancing interaction with the earth (nature). Clinebell (1996b) refers to the last-mentioned reciprocal-therapeutical processes as *ecotherapy*, in his book *Ecotherapy: healing ourselves, healing the earth*: “Ecotherapy aims at incorporating biophilia<sup>444</sup> into healing and growth practices and thus at utilizing the healing energies of nature” (1996b: xxi).

We urgently need an openness to and deepening of our relationship with the natural environment which we live in (because it also lives in us). In relation to the theme of this research, ***it can henceforth be concluded that:***

- *We as human beings (especially men) need the re-creation of ourselves; as well as the re-creation of all our relationships - which can only emerge if we are receptive and open enough to celebrate and enjoy our organic interdependency with the natural world, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (inhabitational perspective).*
- *The development of an ecological awareness and an ethic of responsible nurturing practices and care are not only of essential importance for the termination of the rape of nature. Such an ecological sensitivity is simultaneously crucial for our own wholeness (i.e. our spiritual health and vitality) – especially for the wholeness and integration of ourselves as embodied souls and soulful bodies.*

This awareness and sensitivity has often in the past not been valued enough within the field of pastoral care, and was therefore introduced here to contend that a re-appreciation thereof is essential.

#### **4.3 The cross and resurrection of Christ: implications for the pastoral care of men**

What does all the above-mentioned assertions mean for the pastoral care of men which is aimed at growth of spiritual health/well-being (i.e. a mature faith) in men? According to Louw (2007: 66) a pastoral model for the development of a mature faith should be closely connected to a theology of the cross and a theology of resurrection. *This means that God is not only identified with suffering, but that - in the resurrection - God is active in suffering.*

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<sup>444</sup> The term *biophilia* refers to the inherent, genetically rooted affiliation of humans to animals and other living organisms.

Louw explains (2007:66) that on the one hand:

(1) *God is the compassionate and suffering God.* In Christ's crucifixion, God identifies through Christ with human suffering. In Christ's work as Mediator, suffering becomes an essential part of God's involvement with sinful and suffering human beings to the extent that the Mediator becomes the sinner in our place (1 Cor 5:21). On the other hand:

(2) *God is the transforming, empowering and transfigured God. The primary category for a pastoral model which operates for the development of hope in faith, is the resurrection*<sup>445</sup>. "The Christian faith does not introduce only a vulnerable God. The strength/force of God is displayed in the overwhelming power of the resurrection which empowers people to live with dignity and purposefulness despite the reality of suffering, pain, illness, disability, impairment and death. The victory of the resurrection over the powers of suffering and death defines God finally, once and for all, as the living God (not merely the overcoming of God)." (Louw 2007: 67)<sup>446</sup>

*Therefore, in the light of the resurrection, life is understood as a power towards vitality reconciliation, forgiveness, dignity, meaningful embodiment and healing. This perspective generates authentic spiritual health and vitality*, i.e. joy and gratitude for life and hope for the future to which maturity of faith is thus linked. Spiritual well-being then is the result of an empowerment by God: God empowers people with a living hope, which becomes a reality in the

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<sup>445</sup> This assertion is aptly affirmed by two other theologians; (1) Ackermann (2003: 29, 82) who contends: "Hope is not religious optimism. It is toughminded perseverance in dire times because we believe in God's promises and know that faith without hope is simply not possible...**Christian hope is resurrection hope.** Without knowledge of what Christ means and has done, hope is truly just an airy fairy utopia...Hope is sterile if it does not transform our thoughts and our actions here and now. Hope opens a future outlook that embraces all of life, everything we do and know, and that includes sickness and death."; and (2) Hall (1996: 459) "Christian hope is 'hope against hope' (Rom.4:17). It is hope that knows and dialogues with its antithesis, despair...It is the consequence not of nature but of grace. Sola Gratia." (own italics and bold). See also Migliore (2004: 348-353) for an excellent concise exposition of eschatological hope.

<sup>446</sup> Louw (2007: 71) consequently introduces the notion of a suffering, disfigured and handicapped God in his pastoral hermeneutics. He states that crucifixion, suffering, guilt and sin cannot be ignored, but are indeed spiritual realities to be dealt with. Due to God's identification with our suffering at the cross, the cross reveals the weakness and vulnerability of God. In this regard we need to deal with the vulnerability of a crucified God (*theologia crucis*). Louw contends: "The notion of a disfigured and disabled God in pastoral care and counselling introduce empathy and sympathy, i.e. pathetic identification." He quotes Eisland (1994: 25), who states: "Together people with disabilities and the able-bodied must be reconciled with the disabled God through Jesus Christ's broken body in Eucharistic repentance and celebration."

lives of Christian believers *due to God's inhabitational presence within our bodies*<sup>447</sup>. (The body as "a temple of the Holy Spirit within humans" - 1 Corinthians 6:16).

**It is henceforth necessary to affirm again: *theology involves more than cross and suffering.*** Theology's task is not merely to interpret the world as God's world, but to change it. *Its task is also* to install, support, transform and transfigure life as such. In short: *to affirm the courage to be*. "The notion of a disabled God must be supplement by the notion a transfigured, powerful, able God. The key concept for a theological understanding of God's ability is the notion of trust and the faithfulness of God. And all the fulfilled promises of God is displayed in and proved by the resurrection of Christ (theologia resurrectionis). The resurrection of Christ reveals God's power as faithfulness within the value of physicality and life." (Louw 2007:72)

In this regard the researcher implicitly argues – in accordance with Louw's theology and care of life (2007: 72) - for a *'physical God'*<sup>448</sup> *redefined by a theology of resurrection*. "The resurrection is a cruel revelation and attack on what stigmatisation has done to the human dignity of people. The resurrected Christ is now the stigmatised<sup>449</sup> Jew, person of colour and raped woman. He is the representative of the poor and hungry - those who struggle to maintain the integrity and dignity of their bodies in the face of physical suffering and the physical mutilation of injustice and rituals of bodily degradation"

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<sup>447</sup> It was argued convincingly in chapter five that *a pastoral anthropology is embedded mainly in the inhabitation as a pneumatological event* (and not primarily so much in incarnation as a Christological event). Even the Christ event of incarnation and resurrection is being interpreted in a theological hermeneutics from the perspective of pneumatology (Romans 1:4). Therefore *this inhabitational perspective is also paramount to a Christian and theological understanding of spiritual health and healing*.

<sup>448</sup> Louw's argument is in line with Eisland's conception of 'God as Survivor'. Eisland's contention (according to Louw) is that the significance of the disabled God is not primarily maleness or gender but rather physicality. Her Christian incarnational theology appreciates the human (and the immediate) as a 'sacrament' of the transcendent and divine: "Our bodies participate in die imago Dei, not in spite of our impairments and contingencies, but through them" (Eisland 1994: 101)

<sup>449</sup> Louw (2007: 72) qualifies this disfigurement of the resurrected Christ by stating that it does not support a theology of sin, disability or virtuous suffering, but a theology of life embodied within the realities of disfigurement, impairment and disability. "Disability does not contradict the human-divine integrity."

**In summary:**

- *A Theologia crucis* reveals the passion and compassion of a suffering God. The cross also reveals our human predicament, i.e. our destitution, powerlessness, brutality, violent behaviour, irresponsible actions.
- *A theologia resurrectionis* reveals the overwhelming and victorious power of a living and faithful God. The resurrection is a divine protest and nihilation of all forms of death, rejection and destruction. *Resurrection establishes and affirms<sup>450</sup> life as the courage to be;*  
 “...it transforms life into the new mode of the fruit of the Spirit (pneumatology) in order to promote human dignity, justice and the sjalom of the kingdom of God...the resurrection instills hope as a new condition of being and new state of mind. Resurrection is about a final critique on stigmatisation, it empowers the powerless and summons them to lament, to resist and to transform. *Stigma does not determine our identity anymore, but charisma.*” (Louw 2007: 404) (own italics).

**Subsequently it can finally be concluded and contended:**

- *In terms of masculinity from a Christian perspective: the cross (representing God’s vulnerable identification) and the resurrection (representing God’s powerful transformation) form the core matrix for the embodiment of authentic manhood<sup>451</sup>.*
- *Due to the resurrection* we don’t have a ‘soul’ or a ‘body’. We are in our bodies our soul: *ensoulment in and through embodiment. The power of the resurrection* serves as an empowerment of men (and women) in terms of their ‘being functions’ – *affirming the courage to be.*

*Therefore, pastoral care of men* – aimed at facilitating spiritual health (i.e. growing a mature faith) – *should use the liberating reality of Christ’s cross and resurrection as essential framework to counsel men with regards to embodied experiences of authentic power (courage)*

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<sup>450</sup> This notion of affirmation testifies to the Biblical concept of *parrēsia* (denoting confidence, boldness or assurance), which is found (amongst other places in 1 John 5:14 and 1 Thessalonians 2:2). The researcher intentionally uses this word “affirm / affirmation” to explicate this idea more fully in terms of the resurrection power of Christ which establishes and affirms our (human) courage to be.

<sup>451</sup> This contention of the researcher is based on the conclusions which were drawn in chapter four where he highlighted the core tension in masculinity as *the tension between power (‘kracht’) and vulnerability (‘kwetsbaarheid’)*. Now the researcher supplies a new matrix: *the resurrection (power) and cross (vulnerability) of Christ gives an essential theological meaning to masculinity.*

*and vulnerability (suffering), so that authentic intimacy and integration (shalom) can be actualised through the work of the Holy Spirit (within the context of the whole creation).*

## 5. TOWARD A HOPEFUL RE-INTERPRETATION OF MASCULINITY OUT OF AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our entire Christian life is lived in the light of the tension between what we already are in Christ and what we *hope* some day to be. It has been stated that incarnation and Christology are about the mediatory work of Christ: in our place and our behalf. “It is about the transformation of our very being, i.e. justification and the ontological change from darkness into light. It describes the reality of the new *aeon*; the new state of being as a Christian.” (Louw 2007: 160). But, as has been argued, *what is more essentially needed is a deepened understanding of the inhabitation of Christ through his Spirit (inhabitation theology). It is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit in us to be transformed and empowered in the light of Christ’s resurrection.*

The researcher argued in chapter five that the purpose of the *work of the Spirit (in our embodied souls) must be understood from an eschatological point of view*<sup>452</sup>, on the basis of the once-for-all work performed by Jesus as the Christ. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18, that the *Spirit is already at work in us now*<sup>453</sup>, transforming us into the image of Christ. It follows that this progressive renewal is a kind of anticipation of the resurrection of the body. The Holy Spirit is thus the connecting link between the present body and the resurrection body.

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<sup>452</sup> The key text for an eschatological foundation of human sexuality and the affirmation of our embodiment, is (Paul’s theological argument in) I Corinthians 6:13 –20. Louw (2007: 331, 333) argues “the theological reason: God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. In Christ our body already partakes in this resurrection promise as fulfilled in the resurrection of the Christ-event. The implication for an eschatological interpretation of Christian anthropology, is the following: *body attained a new eschatological status as an expression of the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit*...In terms of pneumatology, one can now argue that the human body is the very embodiment and enfleshment of God’s presence...Even in our sexuality we must display the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Pneumatology crushes every form of promiscuity and sexual immorality by positing a new constructive understanding of embodiment, including the meaning and destiny of sex and sexuality.” (own italics and bold)

<sup>453</sup> This present-day implications of the eschatological work of the Spirit is affirmed by Hall (1996: 471):

“Its (eschatology’s) great question is not, How will everything end and what will happen ‘afterwards’? – a question that always *begged* the question of how, after the end of time, there could be any afterwards in the first place. Now, rather, the question is, What is the purpose of this process that we must regard as having a beginning and an ending?”  
**Note: it is about the question of the hope and meaning of life itself today.**

Ridderbos (1975: 551) contends therefore that *the Spirit not only works in man, but also renews his manhood (i.e. his being qualities as a human)*<sup>454</sup>. “But the secret of the continuity (between the present body and the resurrection body) does not lie in the human ‘being’, but in the Spirit. And the firm ground of the belief that the mortal will one day put on immortality is in conformity with it. He who has prepared us to that end is God, who has given us the Spirit as an earnest (2 Cor.5:5). In that sense the renewing and working of the Spirit in believers during their present life can also be understood as a beginning of the resurrection of the body, and be described by Paul in this way (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:10, 11, 16, 17; Eph. 5:14; Phil.3:10,11).”

*Eschatology views human beings from the perspective of who they already are in Christ. Our identity is determined by salvation and grace. We are accepted unconditionally for who we are. Who we are for one another, and not what we want to achieve through one another, is of fundamental importance.* “The crucial point is the transformation and metanoia of the individual (transformation of stance, conduct and orientation, the telos of life) in terms of intention, motivation and goal.” (Louw 2007: 255)

According to Moltmann (1967: 16), therefore: “From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set...Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, and of every Christian existence and of the whole Church.”<sup>455</sup>

But what does Moltmann (1967: 224) understand eschatology to be? Christian eschatology, says Moltmann, speaks of “Christ and his future.” Since it understands history as the reality instituted

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454 It was asserted in chapter five that our new humanity in Christ grants us a new freedom from the bondage of sin and for partnerships with God and others. This opens us up for **love**, as well as **faith** and **hope**, i.e. ways of living into the image of God realized for us and promised to us in Christ.

455 This core presupposition of Moltmann – that the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation – is affirmed by Hall (1996: 456-457) who asserts: “Eschatology is not about what people naturally think of when they hear a term like ‘last things’; it is about everything...That is, eschatology is not ‘a doctrine’ among doctrines, but a dimension of every other doctrinal area. Without this dimension they all – theology, Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and the rest – become flat and one-dimensional: they do not live.”

by divine promise, its language is the language of promises. *Eschatological thinking is “expectation-thinking” which corresponds to the Christian hope.* In the light of Paul’s words about “the earnest expectation of the creature,” theology must attain to a new way of thinking about history – a way which is oriented to God’s future for the world. (Moltmann 1967: 35)

Because hope stands in contradiction to present reality, hope may not be a mere passive anticipation of future blessings, but must be a ferment in our thinking, summoned to the creative transformation of reality. **Christian hope may never rest content with the *status quo*** but must take up within itself all “movements of historic change” which aim at a better world. Moltmann’s contention that eschatology is not just an appendix to dogmatics but is the key in which the entire message of Christianity is set, must indeed be re-appreciated. He insists that **Christian hope must be ferment in our thinking and an incentive for Christian action**, and emphasises the fact that biblical eschatology does not concern merely timeless moments of existential encounters but involves God’s fulfilment of his promises in history<sup>456</sup>.

According to Louw (2007: 161) *the core theological and Christian spiritual notion in inhabitation theology is the hope to which God has called us.* This hope is connected to the knowledge and hermeneutics of the Spirit which refers to the power<sup>457</sup> which God exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20).

**Conclusion: *Christian hope, an eschatological reality which is grounded in the resurrection of Christ, is another core aspect of meaning in men’s lives. It can – through the work of the Holy Spirit - provide real and profound depth to manhood, by transcending the superficial briefness***

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<sup>456</sup> The researcher is very aware of the fact that there are obviously some points on which critics can and have taken issue with Moltmann, as is the case with all other theologians and their theologies. Unfortunately any further discussion in this regard exceeds the limits of this dissertation. The researcher has consciously made the choice to focus on Moltmann’s viewpoints seeing that he believes it makes the clearest and most meaningful contribution to the pastoral-anthropological assumptions that forms the core of this dissertation. Furthermore, his concern for the cosmic implications of eschatology comes as a welcome corrective to other individualistic eschatological outlooks.

<sup>457</sup> Louw argues (2007: 161) that “all forms of power should be challenged by a pneumatology which exhibits the fruit of the Spirit in our lives in such a way that we demonstrate the transformation of power by the display of the charisma of the Spirit. And the charisma of the Spirit is about the transformation and healing of life (*cura vitae*).”



*of illusory, idealistic, and empty images of ‘macho’ masculinity, which are tirelessly dished up by the mass media and popular culture*<sup>458</sup>.

### 5.1 Neutralising the plea for performance with a spirituality of vulnerable courage

It has earlier been indicated (in chapter four) that the issues concerning embodiment and power (especially the abuse of patriarchal power), are primary contributing factors in terms of the confusion, conflict and stress in male identity. These issues, together with an exacerbated achievement-ethos elicit the “intimacy void” many men experience. It also hampers the process of spiritual growth and the fostering of spiritual health in men.

The researcher has also indicated that male sexuality is strongly driven in the direction of genital centrality, but that although the reigning creed on men’s bodies therefore (still) seems to be: ‘big, hard and up’, men need to re-evaluate this dominating discourse critically and learn to embody alternative ways of being men, i.e. valuing vulnerability as necessary equivalent to power<sup>459</sup>.

In this chapter it has thus far basically been illustrated how a deconstruction of power– from an eschatological perspective - can contribute to an “emasculatation” of such culturally-determined discourses of masculinity<sup>460</sup> in terms of brutal force and control, by reframing it in terms of God’s power as love (vulnerability, woundedness and courage). God’s power as revealed in the suffering and resurrection of Christ (*Theologia Crucis* and *Theologia Resurrectionis*), is a source of power can foster the experience of authentic intimacy and vitality.

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<sup>458</sup> Refer to chapter four (9.4 “South African MHM – an empirical analysis) for more detail on this ‘macho’ type of masculinity.

<sup>459</sup> Refer back to section 4.4 in chapter four: “The creed of ‘big,hard and up remains intact’” for more detail on this assertion..

<sup>460</sup> According to Louw (2007: 355), “Culture refers to tradition and customs amongst a group of people within a specific context. The most determining factor in masculinity and femininity is the current, dominating philosophical paradigms which determine perception pertaining male behaviour and female behaviour. These perceptions are embodied in gender role functions and become prescriptive for the expression of masculinity and femininity.”

These perspectives bring new hope to the possibility of changing men's God-images in life-giving ways. But a change in God-images alone would however not be adequate. The underlying question at stake is: what will be the impact of such a change in God-images on our understanding of being human within the realm of sexuality and embodiment (i.e. in our search for intimacy). In other words: *how can we connect the body with our quest for meaning?* The integrative approach to a theology of embodiment (i.e. the ensoulment of the body and the embodiment of the soul) – that was explicated in chapter five – will serve here as the basis to viewing both the body and health as a socio-religious text to be connected to the ultimate and the realm of spirituality.

Henceforth, the researcher presupposes that this can be facilitated by an applicable and integrated spirituality of vulnerable courage. But first, we must ask: What is the intention of men's enhancement of bodily performance in the culture of healthism, i.e. fitness, strong body etc? Is it possibly to gain status, acceptability, affirmation and to fit into the commercialized view of branded masculinity? But then: what would the meaning of performance be, if you cannot correlate it with intimacy? The researcher presupposes that the contemporary culture of production, performance and efficiency is not aware of the need for a spirituality of vulnerable courage, but he will attempt to indicate here that such a spirituality can indeed contribute to the assignment of "saving" masculinity and male identity from a commercial reduction (as was proposed in the hypothesis at the start of this study).

### ***5.1.1 What does a spirituality of vulnerable courage then entail and envisage?***

According to Chittister (1998: 143) "Vulnerability turns the potential for narcissism in the commitment to community...Vulnerability saves us from ourselves and, as a result, makes us more than, without it, we could ever be. It taps every fear, every feeling, every ounce of heart we have. It ties us to the human condition. It makes us feeling people. Because we know ourselves to be vulnerable, we know ourselves to be human – full of humanity, full of love, full of hope. It is the stuff of great spiritual insight, deep spiritual experience, and boundless spiritual bonding. "

*At its core a spirituality of which appreciates both components of vulnerability and courage implies that we accept our limitations and renounce our self-control by welcoming that God is the main authority in our lives.* It implies that we strive for spiritual health and the move towards a mature faith, while realising that the road of spirituality is not a fixed entity to be classified, but a dynamic entity to be lived. According to Louw (2005) spirituality indicates within soulfulness the dynamics of transcendence as a continuous movement and process of growth. He describes spiritual growth as the movement and the transformation of the human soul (2005: 133-135) - based on Nouwen's (1991) description - in the following:

- 1) From loneliness to solitude (authenticity)
- 2) The discovery of the other: from hostility and enmity (resistance) to hospitality and intimacy (unconditional love)
- 3) The worshipping of God: from the illusion of immortality (the irrational self-centered idea that one will always be there and is indispensable) to vulnerability of grace (Godliness)
- 4) The fostering of meaning: from anxiety (performance anxiety and the anxiety for loss) to hope
- 5) The changing of position and attitude: from anger to peace
- 6) The reframing of work: from achievement (stress) to vocation, devotion and service (reaching out)
- 7) The shifting of priority: from competition to compassion (sacrifice)

The researcher deems these movements as a vital part of a spirituality of vulnerable courage. The following paragraphs will expand more in detail what such a spirituality might further envisage and entail.

### 5.1.2 Christ as normative-critical counter-image to men's cultural power struggles

Men need redemption from the many destructive stereotypes and discourages which popular culture produces<sup>461</sup>. Such an acquisition can introduce more space to experience vulnerability, and ultimately authentic intimacy. It was indicated earlier that the dominant values suggested and promoted by the mass-media are in many ways not affirming respect for diversity, human dignity, tender and life-giving intimacy, and nurturing care. Now the question remains: is there a normative-critical counter-image to be found in Christ?

*The reframing of God's power and the re-interpretation of who God is for us through Christ's cross and resurrection - i.e. His vulnerable identification and faithful empowerment – has created an essential matrix that can help men to be redeemed from relying on the ethics of achievement, performance, power, and control. Instead, Christ self now - **through the inhabitation of His Holy Spirit** - motivates men to live life with hopeful vocation toward God's destiny, i.e. sacrificial neighbourly love and service, in peace<sup>462</sup>.*

The image of the crucified and risen Christ can indeed now serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the macho-image<sup>463</sup> portrayed by most postmodern masculinities (with its dominating cultural messages many men presently experience as confusing). The researcher contends that ***this image of Christ can transcend the abuse of power, the focus on performance and the commodification of male embodiment in men's lives. This counter-image can***

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<sup>461</sup> All men have a responsibility to help foster inter-personal relationships based on mutual respect, solidarity and love. Unfortunately, stereotypical social constructions of masculinity all too often deny such vulnerability. But still it must be appreciated that ***such vulnerability requires considerable courage***. "It certainly requires guts to expose oneself to the response of the other, to allow the other to be different from oneself, to expect to be enriched by the unexpected response of the other...It requires endurance and patience...It is epitomised by acts of non-violent resistance, by the risk of a confession of guilt, by the courage to forgive someone, by the risk of offering someone hospitality, by a magnanimous and non-offensive response to the provocation of one's enemies." (Conradie 2003: 149).

<sup>462</sup> This motivation (for men) to follow Christ's message example needs to be qualified (Louw 2007: 251-253). The ethical responsibility of Christian men to follow Christ, must be viewed out of ***inhabitation paradigm***, i.e. that is that Christ's life and work is not there for us to fulfill and to exemplify. "Christ was the Mediator and we can never repeat the meditorial work of Christ. The challenge therefore in a Christian ethics is not to imitate Christ, but to imitate the gospel and message of Christ. The call to discipleship and obedience is a call to en flesh and embody the presence of Christ through the charisma of the Spirit." Ethics is a consequence of eschatology and not a precondition. In this way an eschatological ethics undermines perfectionism and legalism.

<sup>463</sup> The macho-image refers to strength, virility, stark masculinity and sex appeal.

*furthermore enhance men's experience of God as intimate Life Partner and Vital Life Force/Friend.*

When dealing with the issue of power and control which occurred in his disciples' arguments in Luke 22:24-27, (cf. Matthew 20:25-28 and Mark 10:42-45) Jesus denoted a spirituality characteristic of vulnerability and courage by requiring the renunciation of power, violence, dominion and being a servant (i.e. showing power through sacrificial love). Jesus also gave a model for vulnerability and taught meekness and humbleness in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5-7). The living Christ's narrative can transform the narratives of men who struggle to find authentic meaning<sup>464</sup> in the (power struggles within the) culture of our day. *This transformative counter-narrative of Christ promotes a spirituality of vulnerable courage which can empower men to live meaningfully and purposefully with spiritual maturity in the midst of our technocratic predicament.*

*The following paradox illustrates the above-mentioned assertions:*

The prevalence of phallic depictions of male power images in the mass media (specifically in the films and the MHM issues that were analysed in this study) is unmistakable. These stereotypical representations reflect men that are able, capable, competent, skillful and strong – typical hegemonic masculine traits that emphasize activity, ability and autonomy. *The focus is thus on unilateral power and self-orientated lust, and not relational vulnerability and life-giving intimacy.*

*But how is God imaged in the core message of the Bible? Christ's disfigured body* – which is the genuine *Imago Dei* - is not potently powerful and phallic. He is not presented as the almighty ruler, but as the *vulnerable survivor*<sup>465</sup>. The spirituality He embodies follows the path: *Via Negativia* – emptiness, vulnerability. All men must come to terms with vulnerability in some way. The researcher proposes that *men do not need* another movement to reconnect with the so-

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464 In men's (and women's) search for meaning through an experience of integrated spirituality (i.e. embodied and earth-grounded) it is essential that they should focus on the question: "Who am I?" (i.e. what are my existential "*being functions*"), rather than just on the functional matter: "How can I reach certain goals in life" (with the weight on "*doing functions*").

<sup>465</sup> See Eisland (1994)

called *'Zeus energy'* that they have lost<sup>466</sup>, but rather that they (we) are in dire need of an authentic spirituality (of vulnerable courage) that can facilitate life-giving intimacy and spiritual vitality via *Christ's cross and resurrection*.

According to Nelson (1996: 281) the *cross exposes our invulnerabilities*. But it even goes further. "It invites resistance to every form of violence against the incarnate bodies of God in the world. It invites that healing justice that comes from standing with and suffering with. It invites our transformation, the suffering journey into our own homophobic fears. Some of us men have been learning how deeply connected are homophobia and male sexism, how much homophobia in men is the projection of an anxious quest for masculinity, that we did not need to fear our desires for emotional intimacy and physical touch with other men, and that our lives could be immeasurably, enriched when those fears were diminished. Indeed, we are learning to fear ourselves less and love ourselves more, and that is a gift."

Furthermore, our anxieties as men run deep into the social construction of our masculinities, but *what is constructed is not fated. It can be transformed. This is the hope of Christ's resurrection for our being-functions as men today: we can change by being vulnerably courageous through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

## 5.2 Restoring the intimacy void

Boyd (1995) asserts that through his research on masculinity he has discovered two significant things. First, that there is a *pervasive restlessness*, or stirring, among men; and secondly that underneath this stirring is a *profound spiritual longing*, though many men are seeking its fulfilment outside the institutional church. According to him the causes of the restlessness among men are many, e.g.: guilt about our role in the mistreatment of others; resentment about being overburdened; anger at being unfairly blamed for things that are not our responsibility and deep feelings of isolation. He contends that it is this isolation and felt sense of powerlessness that constitutes one of men's primary identities, which he calls the *"desperate lover"*.

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<sup>466</sup> See the heading "Meaningful critique on the mythopoetic men's movement" (in chapter 2).

In addition Boyd (1995:12-13) suggests that men, in response to their sense of isolation, particularly from their fathers, experience a profound grief which can be identified as the door to many men's feeling lives. This numbing of men's embodied souls results in many cases in a number of compulsive, even addictive, behaviours. This, along with many stressful burdens of their over responsibility in certain areas of life, lead many men to burn out. In addition some of the roles we are expected to play as men produce in us a "*lonely warrior*".

The ironic dilemma is that there exists in many men a tension between these two supposed identities. Many men have a growing awareness that they are caught in a system of behaviours and attitudes that not only don't feel good but are also lethal to them, to others, and to the earth. According to Boyd the "*lonely warrior*" and "*desperate lover*" are *false selves*, or the "old creature" in Paul's language, *that distort the image of God in us*. "These are deadly, but God calls us to life and healing. For those of us who are Christians, we have experienced that call in Christ." (1995: 100)

The researcher would like to conclude this study by summarising some of the key findings that can be made (in addition to that which will be reviewed in the final chapter). The above-mentioned metaphors which Boyd uses are deemed very meaningful and affirm two realities which the researcher has found to be the core of the (perceived) "crisis" in which contemporary men find themselves. The researcher contends that two of men's core struggles are:

- 1.) *A relational "impotence"* – in the sense of a relational network which qualitatively lacks inter-dependant and dynamic relations. The reason for this lacking is because such relations require emotional self-exposure and the willingness to exchange our inclination for self-assertion and independence for an dynamic inter-relatedness;
- 2.) *Loneliness*<sup>467</sup> – in the sense that one allows rejection-anxiety and fear to estrange you from other people, your embodied-self and your environment.

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<sup>467</sup> Hester (1996: 85) asserts, "*Perhaps the opposite of intimacy is loneliness, a pervasive disease in America today*. Loneliness, however, may be less a disease and more like hunger...loneliness warns us that important psychological needs are going unmet. Loneliness is a healthy hunger for intimacy and community – a natural sign that we are lacking companionship, closeness and a meaningful place in the world." (own bold and italics).

These two realities thus fundamentally seek for dignified self-affirmation and the recognition of existential identity. Both realities essentially comes forth out of the “intimacy-void”, i.e. the vacuum in terms of safe spaces<sup>468</sup> where vulnerable self-disclosure can take place which can establish and facilitate spiritual health (i.e. growth in faith maturity) and enriching, reciprocal self-knowledge and God-knowledge (Calvin). In a performance-driven<sup>469</sup> society men regularly find themselves only on the periphery of truly intimate relationships because the societal-ethos continually fails not make space for vulnerable and ‘non-driven’ - and therefore in a sense non-productive/non-effective – masculinity.

The researcher contends that the reality that opposes these two existential struggles in men is the reality of God’s unconditional and complete love which creates authentic intimacy. ***The real and most fundamental healing of the human “soul” occurs when a person experiences intimacy<sup>470</sup>, i.e. to be accepted unconditionally for who you are, without the fear to be rejected (1 John 4)<sup>471</sup>.*** Thus: *the unconditional love of God provides the healing dimension and therapy of intimacy.* God surrenders his power through Christ’s self-sacrificing love on the cross! This redeems us from fear and liberates us to experience true intimacy and vitality. “The good news of our Christian faith, therefore, is that our fear of one another – of being vulnerable and rejected or abandoned – was met by Jesus on the cross.” (Dalbey 2003: 72).

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<sup>468</sup> It is the contention of the researcher that the Christian church and its practice of pastoral care can/should be/become a safe dialogical space where men can share their uncertainties in an intimate way, i.e. without the anxiety of being rejected or frowned upon. This research endeavour is done with the aim to promote such care.

<sup>469</sup> Louw (2007: 364) argues that **performance is a core aspect of maleness** which is “connected to the courage to act and to produce (pleasure production and sperm production)...In the quest for performance, the body-image plays a fundamental role. The body becomes a tissue with well-developed muscles...The danger in these male gender-symbols is violence. The effect of the symbols on male sexual behaviour is that it feeds aggressive behaviour, often expressed in violent actions (e.g. rape and sexual abuse).”

<sup>470</sup> Thomas and Patric Malone (quoted in Hester, 1996: 85) state: “Intimacy is derived from the Latin *intima*, meaning ‘inner’ or ‘innermost’. Your inside being is the real you, the you that only you can know. The problem is that you can know it only when you are being intimate with something or someone outside yourself...This sense of touching our innermost core is the essence of intimacy....Through relationships we experience the ‘connectivity’ or intimacy.”

<sup>471</sup> The researcher strongly argued in chapter five that because of the aggressive masculine conditioning we experience, many of our masculine ways of thinking, feeling and acting are held together by fear. And specifically the fear not to be “man enough” or good/rich/successful enough. If we are to recover from the distortions that fear produces in us, it must be cast out of our body-selves (including our hearts and minds). In short: the whole, or complete, love of God - 1 John 4 – can cast out the fear that leads us to try to dominate others and aspects of ourselves. This complete love of God can establish constructive self-acceptance, which is crucial to combat men’s regularly experienced restrained levels of intimacy and body-self estrangement.



But still, it is as if men – as Hester (1996: 87 – 88) contends - are afraid of close relationships and find vulnerability frightening. “Men suffer from performance anxiety not only in sexual activity but in all aspects of life where we feel the pressure to be potent. Underneath, there is the abiding fear of failure and weakness.” To become relational and experience intimacy men thus need to go “beyond androgyny” (Nelson, 1988). ‘True’ masculinity provides for vulnerability, relational power, and mutuality. Men have the inherent ability to be open and receptive with others and to share power through interdependence. In addition to being all-powerful, men can also be soft and gentle. Instead of competition and constant measurement of self, men can live in community and collegiality, truly applauding the well-being of another.

Intimacy<sup>472</sup> is essentially a space of safety and security where one is unconditionally accepted as embodied self for who you are, without the fear of rejection, isolation, unfair discrimination; and without any anxieties about being confined or maybe not measuring up and being deemed ‘not good enough’ / ‘not man enough’. This intimate experience and positive affirmation of embodiment is of crucial importance in the process of becoming ‘authentically and fully male’<sup>473</sup> – this experiential reality leads men to deeper self-knowledge and constructive self-acceptance (i.e. integration in terms of body-self).

Hester (1996: 95-96) indicates that the Bible (specifically the New Testament) provides many images of relational intimacy (referring to concepts like *koinonia* and *agape*). She also contends that ***Jesus Christ is our ultimate model for male intimacy***. “He provides for us possibilities for manhood and personhood. He was able to balance power and vulnerability through relational love. He maintained achievement and productivity while being creative and sensitive. He

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<sup>472</sup> The accent here on intimacy (as body-self) is related to the fact that the earlier explication of masculinity (and femininity) within the gender debate, elicited that especially males fear the loss of power and subsequently fear interdependence and sensitive interconnectedness.

<sup>473</sup> Ramphele (2002:14) expresses understanding with the inability of men to deal with intimacy. “They feel trapped in a social dynamic that has failed to provide them with the tools to negotiate relationships with women that go beyond women meeting their physiological and emotional needs. Many have yet to be exposed to loving and caring relationships between men and women. How are they expected to manage their fears, insecurities and inadequacies without safe spaces? Is it surprising that many are resorting to the violence they have witnessed so often in their lives?”

balanced dominance and submission through collegiality and mutuality. He was able to combine his head and his heart in his life's vocation."

Therefore, in Hester's view redeeming masculinity calls for us to break the bonds that enslave us. *The images of false masculinity have to die (in Christ). Indeed, without death there is no resurrection.*

"In Jesus Christ there is the saving possibility for us all to experience new life. In Christ there is neither male or female (Gal. 3: 28). The redemptive possibility is for shared humanity in which we experience community through our distinctiveness and our commonality. Redeeming masculinity from the bondage of manliness opens the way for nurturing and growth for all relationships. For God so loved each one of us he related to us intimately through Jesus Christ that we may experience wholeness and a special quality of living and dying. Even as Jesus sacrificed his own vulnerability for his friend, we too are called to a new masculinity, yea, even a new humanity, by being intimate with our brothers and sisters through 'laying down our lives' (John 3: 16 & 1 John 3: 16, my paraphrase). Through amazing grace we are all redeemed. (Hester 1996: 96).

In the light of these assertions masculinity (and femininity) should make use of new symbols to enhance the quality of life, and to stress generativity, empowerment and nurturance of others. In this regard pastoral care should emphasise and introduce images of wounded healer, companionship, trustful partnership, mediator, colleague, and nurturer in order to merge sexuality with intimacy<sup>474</sup>. (Louw 2007: 380)

**The concluding remarks for this last chapter is taken up in the next chapter under the heading: "Chapter 6 – review and key findings".**

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<sup>474</sup> See also Hester 1996: 94, for a fuller account of these images/models for men.

## CHAPTER 7: REVIEW, KEY FINDINGS AND BALANCE

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The researcher believes that this is a very timely dissertation due to the increased attention given to conceptualizing and studying masculinity, and how this affects our understanding of various social issues and problems. Especially the dearth of well-balanced theological perspectives on these issues has made this research effort even more invaluable and relevant.

The dissertation was divided into six main chapters (excluding the preamble and this last review and key findings). The first (chapter two) dealt with the cultural hermeneutical dimension of the interplay between identity, gender and masculinities (thus theories with reference to gender and masculinity from historical and interdisciplinary perspectives). Chapter three focused on the commercialization and representation of images of men and masculinities within the culture of the mass media, and the self-evident prescriptive role of information technology.

Chapter four mainly evaluated the challenges which embodiment, sexuality and power put to encounters of male intimacy, and chapter five considered the feasibility of a pastoral anthropology and a theology of embodiment to analyse stereotypical schemata of interpretation about men and masculinity. Chapter six concluded the study by deconstructing and re-interpreting men, power and God-images eschatologically.

The key findings of the various main chapters will now be reviewed and integrated chronologically, in order to balance and conclude with the pivotal insights.

## 2. CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

The dissertation started with a very diverse but functional chapter on the cultural hermeneutical dimension of the interplay between identity, gender and masculinities (explicated within the field of practical theology and pastoral care). It was asserted that the recent turns towards theories on globalisation and postmodernism in the social sciences and humanities, has led worldwide scholars to re-evaluate basic categories of social analysis. Therefore, self-identity has become an inescapable issue in the context of *post-traditional (or postmodernist)* societies where there are less clearly defined identities and roles. It was shown that there is a strong anti-essentialist trend within contemporary social theory (in disciplines such as sociology, social psychology and anthropology studies), which has had a profound impact on schemata of interpretation about gender identity.

The researcher argued that a merely biological interpretation of gender will not suffice and pointed out that biology is no more primary or real than any other aspect of lived experience. Gender was described as what you *do* at particular times, rather than a universal *who you are*. Thus, it is a process of becoming, a condition actively under construction - more by people, than by biology - and this construction is shaped by historical, cultural, and psychological processes. It was suggested that the ‘male-female’ dichotomy cannot explain the different ways people are gendered in time and place and that schemata of interpretation for masculinity and femininity as homogeneous and fixed binary opposites are not plausible and possible any longer. Instead of viewing them as two ends of a spectrum, the idea of masculinity/ femininity as ‘cultural space’ that men and women can choose to inhabit, was put forward. Masculinities and femininities are not distinct and separate but are unstable and constantly changing. This idea formed a core element of the dissertation, which was further explored in the subsequent chapters.

In addition, the researcher made a strong case for adopting a pluralistic view of masculinities rather than looking at masculinity as a unitary, cohesive concept that is uniform across time and place. The need for considering masculinity as a product of culture — like class, ethnicity, sub-culture, age, geographical setting etc. — was emphasized. Furthermore, the important distinction was made (already in chapter one) between ‘masculinity-as-experienced-and-enacted’ and

‘masculinity-as-represented’. This formed the template for understanding and exploring men and male attitudes/behaviors, as well as images and stereotypes/discourses of masculinity.

The important point was made that within the process of globalization, goods and profit become more important than people and being functions, because the market driven economy is determined and defined by materialistic values and achievement ethics which makes life itself a functional entity. The challenge was put to an anthropological (and hence a pastoral-theological) hermeneutics to assess human life, its significance and value, in broader terms than that of unqualified competitiveness, projected as the so-called key to success. It was contended that pastoral hermeneutics needs to find a deeper understanding and assessment of the schemata of interpretation which serves as motivators of the processes which daily affects the cognitions, identities and expectancies of people. This needs to be done in order to create a more humane society (community) and safeguard human dignity. A pastoral-anthropological perspective was thus employed in order to start shifting the emphasis on male identity in terms of gender and sexuality, towards a spiritual understanding of male identity in terms of human dignity and human destiny (meaning) – explicated in later chapters.

It was made clear that feminism played a pioneering role in the articulation, politicisation and development of the questions concerning masculinities. The researcher contended that the concept of gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics can and should be fruitfully applied to studies of masculinities from a pastoral-theological perspective. The battle against patriarchy, and its consequences in the form of masculine sexism, has not merely humiliated women, but it indeed has in some ways robbed many men of their fixed identity and prescribed understanding of humanity too. Partnerships should therefore be built between men and women in ways that are positive, progressive, respectful and healthy. This will only be possible if men are committed to change their attitudes and mindsets on the gendered issues in society. If/When men become more aware of their capacity to change their attitudes and mindsets on the above-mentioned issues, it can establish an essential matrix for the transformation of male identity.

Chapter two furthermore investigated the notion of the ‘crisis in masculinity’ and examined the extent to which the crisis is real or discursive. Certain evidence (i.e. the erosion of the central

tenets of patriarchy, the bread-winning role, tasks demanding strength etc.), was presented that may point to the fact that (specifically hegemonic) masculinity is indeed in crisis. On the other hand, evidence to support the view that masculinity has always been in 'crisis', and that there is no crisis as such, but a situation has been created so that men can again occupy the centre stage, was put forward.

The complex connection between fathers and masculinity was also put forward as an example of the crisis of masculinity. It was noted that fatherhood is a social role and an integral element in the construction of masculinities, but that it can and should be understood and exercised in different ways. Particularly in the context of the developing world, other categories of father (than the biological) – i.e. economic and social – are important. The most prominent concern in research on fathers in the recent period has been the phenomenon of the absent father. Boys who have experienced paternal neglect in many cases struggle enormously with several life issues. Fatherhood should therefore be a role that integrates men into families, rather than separating them from children, women and other men.

The last part of chapter two focussed on changes in South African perceptions of masculinity – before and after the political transition in 1994. Two specific ethnic groups, namely: black African males with their 'struggle and post-struggle masculinity', and white Afrikaner (hegemonic) masculinities underwent various changes in the late twentieth century. The metaphors and perceptions of masculinities that were transformed, alongside the diversification of ways of expressing it, were explored. However, it stayed very important to note that the responses of men to these changes cannot be generalised. Class, race, age and geographical aspects are important determining factors for the ways in which men react. Although men in general benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, they do not benefit equally. Indeed, many pay an extensive price.

In conclusion the chapter explored the so-called men's movements - some adopting an anti-feminist, some a pro-feminist, and others a pro-masculinist stance - as attempts by groups of men world-wide to address the issue of masculinity. Masculinist retreats (to retrieve deep, wounded, masculinity) were evaluated as one of the ways in which men currently struggle with their fears

and their shame. The researcher concluded that, at the very moment that they work to break down the isolation that governs men's lives (as they enable men to express those fears and that shame) they ignore the social power that men continue to exert over women. The privileges from which they (as the middle-aged, middle-class white men who largely make up these retreats) continue to benefit – regardless of their experiences as wounded victims of oppressive male socialization – is also in many instances still easily disregarded. Nevertheless, it was found that the mythopoetic approach to healing needs to be taken seriously because it is serious about making an important contribution in creating a safer, peaceful and equitable world order.

### **3. CHAPTER 3 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS**

The third chapter drew upon work in different disciplines such as cultural and media studies to examine issues of the information age and its cultural characteristics – specifically images of men and masculinities within the culture of the mass media and the prescriptive role of information technology. Thus, the core of the chapter actively engaged with and analysed the popular culture and mass media communications as settings within which masculinity is represented and enacted/performed in different times and places (cultural contexts).

It was initially explicated why and how human identities in general - including gender and sexual identities - have become more diverse and malleable. This is because of the pervasive influence of the mass media and popular culture, which proposes to offer important tools to help men (and women) adjust to contemporary life. The researcher found that some parts of popular culture are reasserting the traditional forms of masculinity, whilst others are challenging them - telling men what they are “supposed to” look like, act like, be like. Media representations were viewed as influencing our schemata of (theological) interpretation for masculinity. Therefore, selected examples from (amongst others) popular films, the fashion industry and international men's magazines were made in order to understand how an interplay with these cultural schemata of interpretation could assist theology to reflect critically on current images that determine male identity. By doing this more insight was gained in terms of the dominating discourses reflected by images of men and masculinities in die global mass media. This was analysed in more detail

specifically via an empirical survey of some recent issues of (South African) Men's Health magazines.

But first the social significance of the mass-media within the current information and consumer society (also called "Network Society") was explicated. It was highlighted as constituting a primary source of definitions and images of social reality and the most universal expression of shared identity. Being the largest focus of leisure time interest, the mass media provide the shared 'cultural environment' for most people and more so than any other single institution. Mass communication cannot be separated from the individual or society - it is a very distinctive global phenomenon of the twentieth century, a very pervasive force affecting every aspect of daily life.

The mass media are centrally involved in the social construction of reality for audience members - in many ways creating and/or reflecting a diverse variety of masculinity (and femininity) forms and discourses and schemata of interpretation to evaluate it. The researcher discovered that current media representations (in movies, magazines etc.) saturate us with images of masculinity that today are more complex and diverse, and less stereotyped, than in the past. It was asserted that very few persons, entities, organizations, institutions or powers in society today even come close to rivalling the power of film and television to shape our values and behaviour, and even our faith.

Learning to live and think as Christians in our time therefore requires learning to engage media and culture as Christians. We must become aware of the power of images and find both the tools to explore and critique these images as well as the opportunities to shape that which so thoroughly (albeit subconsciously) shapes us. The researcher contended that when we explore films theologically we are busy with theology as hermeneutical culture-analysis, thus describing the phenomena in our globalising culture in theological language, and interpreting material in films as symbolizations of fundamental themes in the society. In others words, theological perspectives on the content of films can and should enrich the dimension of meaning-making and the symbolization of (gendered) identity in life.



An analysis of some films in the 1920-1930 period - and 1980's-1990's more in-depth - revealed a tendency of the Hollywood action cinema toward the construction of the male body as spectacle, together with an awareness of masculinity as performance. Throughout the 1980-1990 period, the male body (principally the white male body) became increasingly a vehicle of display – of musculature, of beauty, of physical feats, and of a gritty toughness. In the early 1980's new visual representations of masculinities appeared in media advertising. The male body-form started to be eroticized and objectified in ways that had previously been applied to the female body, henceforth the commercial exploitation of men-as-sex-objects became very big business. In the 1990's, however, the emphasis on externality and the spectacle male body seemed to shift in focus. It began to give way to a presumably more internalized masculine dimension.

The researcher found that while there appears to be universal agreement that masculinity has changed considerably during the last two decades (1980's and 1990's), there is, seemingly, no longer any clear consensus as to what the 'new man' actually stands for<sup>475</sup>. More than one line of thought on the 'new man' has been woven together in the public mind into a vague and generalised 'new man-ism'. Thus, there are still a couple of questions left unanswered, but important to ask: Was it a media-driven illusion of change or a real change in the consciousness and behaviour of men? Has masculinity just become something which is now sold and is a 'design-driven' or 'branded' affair, or is this proof of an actual transformation in masculinity? Was the commodification of masculinity a genuine development in the nature of masculinity and an advance in sexual politics, or just a savage marketing tool? There are no transparent answers to these questions. One thing that is certain though, is that the (relatively) new, glossy men's style magazines were the principal vehicle for this above-mentioned commercial project advocating male narcissism. The remarkable financial success of these magazines has led to other areas of the media to follow a similar trend.

Another trend was explicated by the researcher: men's health has increasingly exercised the attention of the media during the 1990's. It was argued that macho attitudes and health are not compatible and that, in a health sense, men are the 'weaker' sex. Furthermore, the notion that

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<sup>475</sup> See addendum G (Cox 2005) for a recent example of an article in a South African newspaper that focuses on this issue of the confusion regarding what the "new man" actually stands for.

men act in ways that damage their health to gain power and privilege, has profound implications both for gender equality and for health promotion. It was proposed that a sensible preventive health strategy calls upon men to critically evaluate the “Superman legacy”, that is, to challenge the negative aspects of traditional masculinity that endanger their health, while hanging on to the positive aspects of masculinity and men’s lifestyles that heighten men’s physical vitality. Thereby, although health has not conventionally been a male concern, the shared concept of men’s health within the public domain can progressively develop in the next few years. One of the leading contributors in the development of this concept in the past few years was identified: Men’s Health Magazine (MHM). Henceforth, in the light of its above-mentioned essential relevance, the researcher justified the empirical analysis (see Addendum A) and discussion which explicated the magazine’s role in this regard.

Through an in-depth examination of 60 South African MHM’s the researcher found that the most significant messages advocated about masculinity is that it is constructed as having the ability to create a particular appearance: a hard-muscled (and stylish) sexy body - the ideal man as a bodybuilder and a sexual champion. Men should therefore also be (hetero-) sexually potent and performance-driven when it comes to displaying sexual virility. The researcher argued that these discourses of traditional masculinity are encouraging men to act destructively in the name of male power and privilege over women. Furthermore, the analysis of the MHM’s explicated the underlying problematic which the mass media in general represent for our interpretation of masculinity today. The problem is not (just) situated in the content that MHM presents, but in its intention of commercialising manhood (i.e. to shape the reader’s views of masculinity in order to transform modern men into postmodernist consumers). This creates an ethical dilemma, seeing that masculinity can become toxic and destructive when its illusionary and unattainable ideals of manhood is used to feed the consumer-mentality and branded masculinity, in stead of life-giving intimacy and vitality.

Thus, it was found that male gender role re-socialization becomes the product whereby male identity is based on consumption rather than production. This was typed ‘branded masculinity’ and is indicative of a distinct transformation of men’s understanding of masculinity, and some break from the form of hegemonic masculinity associated with past generations. Men are

encouraged and socialized to “read” masculinity as a consumer product that rests on one’s outward appearance. Branded masculinity in MHM is firmly rooted in consumer capitalism and influences the reader by constructing a well-toned body, a fashion sense, and the appearance of financial success as the necessary ‘products’ required by educated, middle-class men today. Therefore, the question of the male image (in fashion) was observed and it was found that a unified male identity was replaced by a manifold identity through wardrobes (with appropriate brand-name products) which multiplied to match each of the possible new identities.

Lastly in this chapter, the commercialization of masculinity was considered where new ‘types’ of men are constantly being invented by the media, i.e. the 1990’s ‘Millennium man’, the ‘dad lad’ (that is, the ‘lad’ grown up and settled down) ‘new man’, ‘nurturer’, ‘narcissist’, and ‘yuppie’, and the working class equivalent the ‘new lad’. In the past two to three years (2003-2005) it was explicated how two new popular catch-phrase descriptions - namely *Metrosexual* and *Übersexual* - have been coined and popularised with well-known icon-figures such as famous actors, sportsmen and musicians spearheading the trendsetting.

In all the above-mentioned mass media messages that were analysed and mentioned in this chapter there was a tendency to convey double messages. On the one hand men are nowadays expected to be in touch with their ‘softer feminine side’, and on the other hand they are simultaneously challenged to remain potent and hard, ‘essentially masculine’ and affirming their ‘M-ness’. Given this projection of double messages – power and vulnerability simultaneously – it was found (not surprisingly) that men seem confused and uncertain about their masculinity and male sexual identity - which is experienced as fluid and contradicting. The researcher therefore concluded the chapter by contending that men need another interpretation scheme except for the secular and the popular (media-saturated) culture’s trends to go by, in order to understand themselves as men and find meaning and real intimacy within a technocratic culture. In essence, it was proposed that men need a new type of Christian spirituality and relationship with God that can facilitate a healthier and integrated manhood amidst the fluidity of a globalizing culture and post-traditional society. This was the challenge put to be taken up in the remaining chapters.

#### 4. CHAPTER 4 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

This chapter considered the phenomena of embodiment and power as core challenges to men's experiences of intimacy within cultural contexts. Within sociology itself debates about the body have only a relatively recent history, being driven, particularly, by feminist scholarship and cultural studies. In contrast to the academic sphere, the mass media now endlessly dwell on and scrutinize men's bodies and in these ways new discourses surrounding men's bodies have emerged into the public arena. In particular, they include growing concern about men's health and new investigations on men in terms of body shape, style and deportment.

The first concern of this chapter was to consider the notion that the material form of the male body is inevitably inscribed with masculinities; and similarly, that masculinity by definition, speak to and of the male (body). Secondly, male embodiment was explored in order to give a critical analysis of how most male bodies have been objects and sites of power. Ultimately, the goal of this and the next chapter was therefore to make meaningful connections (within a hermeneutical theological framework), between a cultural analysis of the sociological aspects of masculinity, and the problem of power and embodiment within a Christian spirituality.

It was asserted that bodies are essentially affected by social processes but that we cannot think of social gender arrangements as just following from the properties of bodies. Furthermore, that in order to appreciate the centrality of the male body to masculine formations, it is necessary to understand the multiplicity of male embodiment and the complex ways in which masculinities come to materialize through men's physical presence in the world. True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body. Mass culture, however, generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the practices of daily life. Concepts such as 'real men', 'natural man', and the 'deep masculine' are used regularly – for instance by advocates of mythopoetic men's movement, Jungian psycho-analysts, Christian fundamentalists, socio-biologists and the essentialist school of feminism.

The researcher contended that the way we experience our bodies is powerfully affected by the cultural metaphors that are available to us. Henceforth, it was necessary to pay attention to both biology and culture – and their interaction – when thinking about the male body (or any body). Furthermore, the body was viewed not only as a physical, material entity but also as a cultural form that carries meaning with it. Bodies are not just biological nature at work but also values and ideals, differences and similarities that culture has ‘written’ so to speak, on those bodies.

The core framework within which embodiment and power was viewed in chapter four was patriarchy - as the masculine dominance of the interpretation of reality, and simultaneously as the normative paradigm of socio-political operation in the Western world today. Patriarchy rests on four interlocking principles: dualism, hierarchy, domination, and essential inequality. It was found that paradoxically: patriarchal masculinity cripples men – thus men are formed and broken by their own power. But patriarchy does not only cripple men and masculinities in terms of their functioning in society on a human level. It also influences their relationships with God in many fundamental ways.

The researcher asserted that patriarchal God-concepts lead to assumptions which influence men and their relationship to their community and to the divine. Furthermore, the patriarchal framework denotes experiences of the transcendent as dichotomised from the immanent; the spiritual as separated from the material; and creation as separated from creator. It was subsequently pre-supposed that religion and Christian theology, in other words the way in which there is talked and thought about God, exerts an important influence on the institutionalisation of patriarchal values and power, and e.g. on the subsequent oppression of women etc.

Another central point that was made is that: power is everywhere and plays a role in all relationships and interactions and therefore power and masculinity are relational constructions. Masculine power is largely exercised through self-regulation – a process of ‘identity work’, one consequence of which is to privilege and validate ways of being male/man/masculine in particular cultural settings. The practical implications hereof for pastoral care is that pastoral theologians must accept that we simultaneously (consciously and unconsciously) participate in the fields of power and knowledge and therefore we must be extremely aware of this within pastoral-therapeutical relations. When we engage in language, it is never a neutral activity – it is

also a part of our knowledge/power fields. Practically, the researcher presumed that through creating a new theological field of language we can possibly deconstruct and make attempts to re-interpret masculinity in a very meaningful way.

The next part of chapter four focussed on the present Western Culture's view that sexuality is at the heart of human (and specifically masculine) identity. Sexuality is also viewed as the area in which masculinity must be proved - thus men's masculinity is directly verified by their sexual performance-ability (virility). Consequently uneven power relationships have had a very clear impact on people's sexual enactment. The equation of masculinity to sexual power, dominance and violence has inevitably led to the development of a powerful and aggressive male sexuality. The researcher therefore contended that the hierarchical abuse of power often causes a loss of (humanly) dignified, respectful and healing sexual practices.

Consequently, the researcher found that a distorted, commercialised and utilitarian view of sex still dominates the cultural landscape, which further robs men of the power and beauty of their sexuality, and inevitably their human dignity. It was identified that men are expected to fulfill (at least) two predominant roles, i.e. the roles of the 'sexual warrior' and the 'sexual worker,' in order to explicitly confirm their manhood and feel manly through sexual behaviour. This has in many cases lead to a sexuality built around accumulating partners ('scoring'), emotional distance, and risk taking.

The main problem seems to be that male sexuality is strongly driven in the direction of genital centrality: that we live in a culture that encourages men to think of themselves as their penises, a culture that still conflates male sexuality with something called "potency" and that gives men little encouragement to explore the rest of their bodies. Today phallo-centrism is perpetuated by a flourishing medical construction that focuses exclusively on penile erections as the essence of men's sexual function and satisfaction, and (it) perpetuates a detached, unemotional masculinity. Many men also now possess a new, transformed relationship with biotechnology; one that now reaches past healing to the transformation of bodies. The reigning creed on men's bodies thus (still) seems to be: 'big, hard and up'. The cultural fantasy of the huge penis, like the idealized female body, still remains firmly intact: penis size = manliness.

But, the penis is simultaneously the source of a man's greatest vulnerability *and* his greatest feeling of power. This epitomizes the way the researcher perceives male identity: it is contradictory and ambivalent – simultaneously powerful and vulnerable (and these two inseparably belong to each other). Henceforth, many men suffer great anxiety and depression because they are not 'manly' in the stereotyped manner. They experience loneliness because they do not know how to communicate to someone openly about feelings. Furthermore, because masculinity is a homosocial enactment, its overriding emotion is fear, but more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay (homophobia). It is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us and reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not 'real men'.

The researcher contended that the above-mentioned culture of performance-driven masculinity is leaving a huge cleavage in the way men experience and facilitate real and life-giving intimacy. It was explained that this 'intimacy-void' is mainly caused by the presence of this kind of fear/anxiety that is infused in too many arenas in men's lives - especially on the terrain of sexual intimacy men are often estranged from their body-selves, and subsequently seldom experience meaningful integration and wholeness. The researcher assumed strongly that the problem originates (amongst others) with a lack of self-acceptance. Men often do not experience their embodied self as integrated whole. The reasons for this are, amongst others, the various impaired dualistic interpretation schemes through which they try to make sense of their embodied masculinity.

Henceforth it became increasingly apparent that the anxiety which an achievement ethic elicits can often lead to deficient experiences of real intimacy, and furthermore, can (in the worst degree) cause aggressiveness and violence (e.g. rapes, abuses, domestic violence etc.) – because men have been socialized to view sexual activity as the main vehicle of receiving intimacy and tenderness. Men thus regularly seek compensation for their pain ("intimacy-void") and powerlessness (fear and loneliness) by means of the hierarchical social system, whereby they attempt to prove their masculinity within dominant and unhealthy power practices which can serve as "suitable resources" for doing masculinity. This leads to major public health problems. The researcher argued that a big part of transforming a culture of violence means transforming

masculinity. In other words, encouraging and enabling men to make other choices about what they do with their bodies, and insisting that men utilize their own agency to make different sorts of choices, rather than freezing in a posture of aggressiveness, defiance, and immobility. The investigation thus also led to the discovery of the importance of men's health and vitality, and now the researcher is interested in exploring ways how to use this constructive side of masculinity to deepen the experience of intimacy. In this case though: intimacy in terms of real empowerment and not just performance-driven.

The chapter also focussed (in lesser detail) on the fact that in sports, masculinity is also tied to aggression and violence, and that many of the specific forms and actions of sport, and the idealizations of sport culture, are characterized by hypermasculinity and surplus aggressivity. The relationship between sport and consumer culture thus directly affects popular perceptions of masculinity and the body in various ways. The researcher explicated that men, in many instances, revert to power abuse through violence and crime, as well as power displays in the domain of sport, as illustration of their manhood. But, importantly, it was noted that sport does not exclusively have a (potentially) "negative" impact on masculinity.

Lastly the phenomenon of a "muscular Christianity" was explored. It was explicated that the problematic connection (between sport and hegemonic masculinity) can and do still continue today as long as Christians endorse society's idea of hegemonic masculinity (which is grounded in a view of gender relations characterised more by dominance and subordination than by equality and mutuality). Christian men should therefore challenge the current form of hegemonic masculinity, by developing a masculinity that is more consonant with the command to serve one another with love and to live by the fruits of the Spirit, i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

In light of these above-mentioned arguments on embodiment and power (in different cultural regards), the researcher contended that men's power to change cannot come forth out of the patriarchal system, but out of a totally different resource. The power to change must develop out of defiance against injustice and inhumanity/undignified actions and behaviour. The main focus should be relationships of respect, human dignity and loving hospitality with other people in



order to create an alternative social reality. This power is therefore rather spiritual power, not patriarchal power. Such power can (amongst others) only be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in other words implicitly by an applicable, integrated spirituality of vulnerable courage (as was proposed in the next two chapters).

## **5. CHAPTER 5 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS**

Chapter five formed part of the latter half of this study aimed at the theological deconstruction of the previously identified schemata of interpretation and cultural representations about men and masculinity. This contextual, theological deconstruction was done out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective. Henceforth a re-interpretation of manhood was envisioned in this chapter, by describing men eschatologically, in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the inhabitation of His Holy Spirit (pneumatology). The broader goal of this re-interpretation was the establishment and furthering of meaningful connections between male identity, human dignity (created in the image of the triune God) and experiences of authentic, life-giving intimacy via a Christian spirituality.

Early on in this chapter it was explicated that men's souls, i.e. their quality of being within relational networks in God's presence, needs to be explored in order to further this pastoral assessment. Subsequently, a responsible theology of embodiment was identified as being quintessential to facilitate a positive affirmation of and holistic perspective on male (and human) sexuality and identity. The researcher indicated that such an approach affirms embodied-ness and erotica as integrally part of the human being's existence as created in the image of the triune God. This theology of embodiment thus reflected something of a celebration and wholeness – in other words an appreciation of (aesthetically) vital, beautiful and unique aspects in men and in creation as a whole. But before this was explicated further, the researcher deemed it necessary to enlarge upon the basic presuppositions of a pastoral-anthropological perspective on men and masculinities.

It was asserted that a meaningful understanding of men and masculinities is impossible without a significant understanding of God, from a Christian perspective. Therefore, it was necessary to

view masculine identity, not only philosophically or phenomenologically, but out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective (which was qualified holistically), and within a trinitarian theological framework. The basic dogmatic tenets of the researcher's pastoral anthropology were outlined next. *Firstly*, human beings are created in God's image (*Imago Dei*) and relatedness, interdependence and communicative activity are the core elements of the *imago Dei* understanding. In looking at Jesus Christ, we see the perfect image of God. Christology owns a relational effect as well as a transformative effect on anthropology, eventually leading the human person to get to know himself/herself as God's property.

This leads to a new self-acceptance and a positive self-image, and henceforth Christology further recovers the human in his/her intended purpose before God, and provides meaning in life (via love, hope and faith). These implications are made reality through the work of the Holy Spirit in human lives. Our new humanity in Christ grants us a new freedom from the bondage of sin and for partnerships with (and participation in) God (through the Holy Spirit) and others. Seeing that love, faith and hope are ways of living into the image of God (realized for us and promised to us in Christ), the researcher contented that one should opt for an eschatological interpretation of the *imago Dei* concept (and its anthropological implications).

*Secondly*, the essential role of pneumatology in our eschatological re-creation was illuminated. It was stated unequivocally that the implications of Christ's cross and resurrection can only fully be understood and translated in anthropological terms via the inhabitation of God in humans, in other words out of a pneumatological perspective. The quality of our being human (i.e. our dignity) is given out of the re-creation (in Christ through the Holy Spirit). But, in order to fully understand this relationship between Christology and pneumatology, it was proposed that we also need an eschatological perspective, because the work of the Spirit is to express God's eschatological intentions in us.

The following section investigated the possible interplay between the doctrine of the Trinity and human (gender) identity. *Firstly*, some contemporary insights on the relationship: Trinity and anthropology were considered. It was identified that a (theological) anthropology of autonomy and power lies at the centre of many of the patriarchal traditions that caused the dehumanization

of both men and women, and concomitantly that patriarchy is therefore actually a (theological-) anthropological problem. The question was posed: how does one overcome or substitute such a destructive anthropological stance? An anthropology characterized by vulnerability, relationality and dependence, was suggested as a pathway towards building human (gender) relations that are characterized by harmony and joy instead of estrangement. The further task which the researcher took up was to make apparent what a relational understanding of the triune God entails, and furthermore to reflect on how we relate such a more relational doctrine of the Trinity to the lives of men and women (and their gender relations). Basically it was argued that an anthropology of vulnerability, relationality and dependence – based in the doctrine of the Trinity - teaches us men that our human dignity, worth and power do not reside in how much we can do and achieve, but in how much we give and receive.

The last part of this section considered the potency and peril of a trinitarian understanding of human relations via the concept *perichoresis*. The main point that was made here is that: the doctrine of the Trinity (as well as the concept *perichoresis*) is a second-order symbol and we should be careful to use the symbol to serve as an ethical ideal or divine model for human society. Nevertheless, it was indicated that it can still be fruitfully viewed as a creative image for portraying both relational identity and otherness. The researcher contended that from our participation in Christ and through the Spirit (in the triune life), we can give all people human dignity through our hospitality, and we can receive harmony and joy from participating vulnerably dependent within all human relations.

Thus: trinitarian discourse can offer rich possibilities – such as the notion of *perichoresis* - for a creative rethinking of human identity and relations. The researcher however deems the notion of participation as the most meaningful alternative in stead of the option of using the doctrine of the Trinity as fixed super-structure or social model for anthropological relations (all within the continual process of journeying toward deeper insight on this topic).

In the light of the above-mentioned some possible re-interpretations of gender relations - from a (trinitarian) theological perspective – were considered. The problem of (gendered) God-language was investigated and it was eventually concluded that: first, we should not seek to glean the

content of gender identity by mirroring God, because any femininity or masculinity we may find in God was projected onto God; second, the content of gender identity is rooted in the sexed body (“nature”) and fashioned by the history of social interaction between persons with such sexed bodies (“culture”). Biblical ‘womanhood’ and ‘manhood’ are therefore not divinely sanctioned models but culturally situated examples; they are versions of the triumphs and defeats of men and women to live out the appeals of God (i.e. love, hospitality etc.) in their lives, within specific settings. Thus, masculinity and femininity within a Christian-theological description (as such), cannot be precisely described and profiled.

Subsequently this chapter endeavoured to construct a theology of embodiment which is essentially dialogical and relational. The researcher contended that such a theology is necessary in order to also appreciate and enhance more constructive sides of masculinity. A meaningful and constructive theology of embodiment primarily includes the perspective of inhabitation, and not just incarnation. God lives in human beings through His Spirit; therefore the fruit of the Holy Spirit can help humans to live a quality of life which enhances vitality, human dignity and meaning.

*Firstly*, a holistic perspective - of the human being (as an embodied soul and a soulful body) - placed central value on the development of the entire person, and served as another core presupposition in this study’s pastoral-anthropological view of men (and women). *Secondly*, an ethos of bodily integration that promotes justice and human dignity was promoted. In the *third place*, it was shown how the overcoming of spiritual and patriarchal dualisms is essential in experiencing salvation as body-selves. It was also indicated how our sexuality forms a core part of our capacity to know and experience God (spirituality), and why therefore a pastoral anthropology (within a theology of embodiment) indeed affirms embodied-ness, sexuality and erotica as an integral part of the human being’s existence before God.

*Fourthly*, the transformation of men’s bodies (and men’s gods) in the quest for intimacy was supposed. In this change emotional communication (i.e. the expression of love and vulnerability), an erotic transformation of men’s bodies and the overcoming of homophobia (by developing meaningful male friendships) were put forward as important initiatives in order to

become authentically male and experience life-giving intimacy. The researcher made it clear that a 'phallic spirituality' not only disconnects us from our own bodies, it also disconnects us from our fellow human beings and from passion for justice. Thus, it was stated that we critically need erotic transformations both in our bodies and in our notions of the sacred, because these two realities are inseparable.

In light of this the best starting point for us men is: to become more aware of the vulnerability of our bodies, through body wisdom (listening to our bodies) and care (nurturing our bodies). Thus, we don't have to continually produce something to be okay or acceptable. To become a man (within a Christian framework), men must abandon their anxious striving (works righteousness) and learn to internally facilitate healthy self-acceptance and self-love as embodied beings - also in order to love God and our neighbour as ourselves.

The last part of chapter five focused on the interplay between male sexuality and spirituality; its reconnection was envisioned by making space for the erotic. The starting point of the researcher was that human identity, in real terms, is built on spirituality, from a Christian perspective. Thus the crisis in masculinity is indeed at core a spiritual crisis. In order to discover a more authentic experience of maleness / masculine identity, it was stated that we need to deepen our spirituality, i.e. we need to journey deeper into what is of ultimate value, that which gives meaning and vocation. Spirituality designates the justification of one's existence, the meaning and values to which one ascribes and can basically be defined as the human quest for and experience of God, meaning, and the other. Henceforth, spirituality as phenomenon was defined and brought into dialogue with cultural questions. The researcher opted to view Christian spirituality out of a Reformational perspective - essentially linked to wholeness, maturity, intimacy and human dignity, as well as revealing the ability to suffer. It was argued that spirituality essentially describes our human quest for meaning (soulfulness) and is therefore not about success, but about significance.

The second last subdivision of this chapter scrutinized some contemporary attempts to integrate maleness and spirituality. The researcher was reluctant to subscribe to or incorporate the perspectives of non-Christian attempts (mainly the mythopoetic men's movement) on so-called

masculine spirituality, seeing that it is essentialistic in its core. Furthermore, the researcher also had some serious objections in connection with the underlying gender and power frameworks of evangelical Christian initiatives (mainly the Promise Keepers movement, and two other individual attempts). It was assessed to be (amongst others) similar to the above mentioned secular movements, and as undergirding a masculinized theology (i.e. a 'phallic spirituality') - contradictory in the messages it sends forth about gender relations (i.e. promoting both servanthood and 'soft patriarchy'). The researcher found that this leads to a continuation of power and injustice seeing that these initiative lack a critical discussion of masculinities, seeks to restore male supremacy rather than confront it, and reads the Bible in an ideological way. This was also given as the reasons why this dissertation does not subscribe to essentialistic or so-called "deep" masculine archetypes as models for a contemporary (Christian) spirituality for men.

Subsequently some other more meaningful attempts to integrate maleness and spirituality was mentioned. The researcher contended that since patriarchal ways of knowing have limited the ability of men to develop authentic spirituality, serious attempts should be made to challenge and to be challenged by the male metaphors of God within the Biblical tradition. Simultaneously it must be acknowledged that masculine images of God are a rich source of reflection for many men (and women), and to demolish them from the religious recognition would be as strong an act of gender-violence as any ever performed by patriarchy.

Furthermore it was concluded that a meaningful and authentic Christian spirituality – i.e. integrated, embodied and earth-centred - can be facilitated and directed through an appropriate theology of embodiment that promotes life-giving intimacy and vitality (as was proposed and explained earlier). This type of spirituality can challenge and possibly overcome the problematic nature of patriarchal ways of knowing and being. Subsequently, the interplay between sexuality (specifically its erotic dimension) and spirituality needed to be explored. The researcher thus henceforth affirmed and appealed to the need for a broader and more inclusive view of spirituality which deliberately makes space for the erotic dimension of embodiment.

The last subdivision of this chapter then attempted to meaningfully reconnect spirituality and sexuality by making space for the erotic. The Bible indeed affirms erotic passion, both *eros*

between humans and *eros* between God and humans, and therefore it is imperative that human passion and erotic connection be embraced and nurtured, not denied. The researcher concluded that human beings (especially men) need to embrace the intimate connection of a this-worldly spirituality and adopt a *sarcophylic* attitude towards themselves as embodied souls, in order to experience life-giving intimacy with God as well as a liberated human sexuality (personhood).

The overall implicit argument was hereafter put forward more directly: that theology as a source of healing and change cannot ignore the importance of the interconnectedness between ensoulment and embodiment. For the healing dimension of theology, spiritual healing, the researcher argued that pastoral care as a theological endeavour should shift from an incarnational paradigm to an inhabitational paradigm to apply a hermeneutics of human embodiment - i.e. a mature approach to interpreting male (and female) identity from a spiritual perspective. This chapter attempted to start this shift.

It was envisioned that the remaining two challenges for this dissertation seems to be: 1.) To immerse itself in the exploration of images of God (“masculine” and “feminine”) that will facilitate an authentic, life-giving spirituality and lead men toward the most intimate depths of their being, while imparting meaning, vitality and wholeness. This will also necessitate a re-interpretation of God’s power; and 2.) in this regard, it was hypothesized that the theological notions of vulnerability and courage can play a vital role within a pastoral assessment of men which wants to reframe the ideology of power and re-interpret masculinity meaningfully. A spirituality of vulnerable courage is thus crucial for this transformation in order to take place.

## **6. CHAPTER 6 – REVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS**

The researcher asserted – in this sixth chapter – that by creating a theological field of language one can possibly deconstruct and re-interpret masculinity in a very meaningful way. The process of deconstruction that was started in the previous two chapters was continued here in order to envisage some cues for a possible re-interpretation. Such a deconstruction – from an eschatological perspective - can bring a theological reframing/redefinition of manhood in terms of the power of God - wherein pastoral care works with the shift from the notion of power as

force (control) to power as love (vulnerability and woundedness). This is God's power as revealed in the suffering and resurrection of Christ (*Theologia Crucis* and *Theologia Resurrectionis*) – a source of power that fosters the experience of authentic intimacy and life-giving vitality (*shalom*).

In this regard the researcher demonstrated in this chapter that a *Theologia Crucis* and a *Theologia Resurrectionis* plays a fundamental role in re-interpreting masculinity. Such regeneration has already been related to an eschatological and pneumatological interpretation of the dynamics between theological and cultural schemata of interpretation. The re-evaluation of God's power as well as the relation between God and manhood - out of the perspective of the *cross* and *resurrection of Christ* - opened up new possibilities within a pastoral-hermeneutical assessment of male identity. Broadly speaking it was explicated in this chapter how men's power to change is therefore rather *spiritual* (i.e. relational) power, not patriarchal (i.e. unilateral) power, and should be cultivated through a feasible understanding of God's power – in other words implicitly by an applicable and *integrated spirituality of vulnerable courage*.

This type of spirituality can be facilitated only through an *appropriate theology of embodiment that promotes life-giving intimacy and vitality* (as was proposed in chapter five). It was indicated here how it could become an important contributing factor to prevent the perceived crisis of masculinity of impeding on the growth of spiritual well-being (i.e. a mature faith) in men. A theological understanding of vulnerability and power can indeed help pastoral care to address the problem of power abuse within male identity, so that holistic spiritual health in men is stimulated.

In the first part of the chapter (phallic and penile) power was viewed in terms of Christian spirituality. It was asserted that paradoxically: the male body remained men's spiritual battleground. It was found that the *Via Negativia* can serve as a viable option to affirm the "being" functions of men. The main assumption was that a pastoral assessment of masculinity, which is grounded in pneumatology and eschatology, implies a re-definition thereof (a new quality of being human and being man). It gives an indication of our human dignity through the Holy Spirit's inhabitation in us without our having to prove ourselves (achievement-ethic). God's faithfulness and unconditional "Yes" (in Christ) for our human-ness (1 Corinthians 1: 9)



makes us '(hu)man enough'. This also facilitated the possibility of exceeding a mere androgynous scheme of interpretation of masculinity and maleness. Within a pastoral-anthropological re-interpretation of masculinity the researcher's contention was therefore that there should be looked further than specific gender stereotypes (whether essentialist or androgynous, or socio-constructionist), in order to transcend the traditional cultural images of masculinity and maleness.

The next part of chapter six focused on the deconstruction and re-interpretation of notions of God's power. Men and their God-images were evaluated in terms of the gender (of God) issue. The question was asked if a masculine image of God is necessary for 'masculine' spirituality. The answer is: no. In fact it was argued convincingly that the notion of an utterly transcendent, absolute, perpetually active (i.e. omnipotent and omniscient) God legitimates the patterns of isolation and domination and the delusory attempts at invulnerability that produce in us much of our performance anxiety that is killing us, others, and our earth. Another key question in relation to this (and other) feminist critique was whether the biblical and traditional language for God *naturally* and *inevitably* leads to the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, or whether these admittedly appalling effects result from the *abuse* of biblical and traditional God-language.

It was asserted that a Reformed response also legitimately supports the mainline and evangelical feminist proposals to make God-language more inclusive, whether by using imagery that is overtly feminine or by diversifying imagery for God. The answer, it was contended is: since men are both active and vulnerable and women are both active and vulnerable, we need to distinguish maleness from distorted notions of masculinity and femaleness from distorted notions of femininity. Consequently, male images and female images can convey both transcendence and immanence, and we need to use both.

Some problematic issues connected to God as Father was addressed. It was found that when transcendence is taken seriously, masculine language (for God) in itself is not offensive. It was emphasized that language about God is always metaphorical, and that the change to the metaphor of mother will not solve the problem, which, for some women today, arises from the metaphor of

father. Divine fatherhood has nothing to do with the American idea of manliness or virility. It points to strength in weakness, to the power of love that lives in death and beyond death.

Men's (mis)conceptions of relational power within contemporary contexts were addressed next. Patriarchal power was again viewed as one of the central issues in the lives of men and their understanding of their manhood. Patriarchalism emphasises the presence of male power and control in intimate relationships as well as discrete acts of behaviour. It also influences their relationships with God in many fundamental ways. Implicitly, the effects of patriarchal power upon the development of an authentic spirituality for men (and women) were found to be profound. The important conclusion was later made that: when a man understands his sexuality in terms of (non-patriarchal) relational power, he has a better understanding of the real nature of power. When he thus truly understands power (i.e. re-interprets it), he will have a clearer understanding of his maleness (sexuality) and masculinity (gender identity), and can implicitly re-interpret his masculine identity and his understanding of God and God's power.

In the next section of this chapter the researcher was looking for other meaningful ways of understanding God and God's power. But what does such a re-interpretation of God's power look like, theologically speaking? It starts with a theology that takes God's *incarnation* (in Jesus Christ) - and even more so, primarily - God's *inhabitation* (through His Holy Spirit in human beings) seriously. God's power should be related with men's understanding of power and embodiment. The researcher argued in this chapter that the suggestion of the concept: "God as our Companion for Life / Friend / Life Partner" - which denotes God's fragile identification with our existential human predicament -can substantially contribute to an expanded understanding of God and (God's power), by men (and women) today, in a postmodernist context. It was also presented as a meaningful re-interpretation of, or as an expansion of/alternative to the traditional and misused "Almighty Father"-description? Subsequently, in the light of the above-mentioned, the broader pastoral-theological challenge in a globalising, postmodernist context was identified as to re-evaluate traditional, settled God-concepts.

Furthermore, an alternative proposition for a re-interpretation of God's power was made out of a *theologia crucis* and a *theologia resurrectionis*. The core of the theology of the cross revealed:

the final power of God over the human is deduced out of the self-imposed weakness of his love. Any “God-talk”, and the God-concepts of men should thus give expression to God’s “being-with-us” - which not only implicates God’s being-amongst-us, but also God’s being-in-us (through the inhabitation of God’s Holy Spirit). God’s identification, is settled in God’s faithfulness. God’s power was never meant to be a violent force, but a clear covenantal promise: “I will be your God. The implication thereof is that God’s power (almightiness) is revealed in God’s supposed weakness and God’s wisdom in “foolishness”. Therefore: an alternative understanding of God’s power – re-defined in terms of the self-imposed weakness of His love for all creation - can also include the transformation of our masculine (and feminine) identity and the assertion of our power within relational networks.

It was concluded in this section that the cross (representing God’s vulnerable identification) and the resurrection (representing God’s powerful transformation) affirm the authenticity of God’s faithfulness and the truth of the eschatological triumph within this reality. On the grounds thereof men’s manhood/masculinity acquire a new quality – a quality of manhood which is (amongst others) orientated towards spiritual health (vitality) and the promotion of human dignity and vulnerable courage (by means of empathic justice and a character of integrity).

Next, the researcher explored spiritual health seeing that health as a core cultural value is creating a new religiosity which has been typed ‘healthism’ (with its accompanying bodyism). Within a theological framework and pastorally speaking, one is healthy when one has a source of faith which enables you to impart meaning to life. Ultimately, spiritual health and healing is aimed at growth into health as maturity (in faith), i.e. direction and meaning as it emanates from the eschatological fullness of Christ, salvation. Furthermore, spiritual health (vitality) also implies an integratedness with God’s creation (nature), and this dimension will be attended to concisely in the next few paragraphs.

Furthermore, spiritual health (and vitality) also implies an integratedness with God’s creation - therefore it was investigated via an ecological orientation. Spiritual healing and salvation was perceived as the complete transformation of individuals in their personal and social lives – globally within all relationships. It must also bring back the balance, harmony (shalóm) and

fairness of that which was damaged and destroyed in the world. It was henceforth concluded that: We as human beings (especially men) need the re-creation of ourselves; as well as the re-creation of all our relationships - which can only emerge if we are receptive and open enough to celebrate and enjoy our organic interdependency with the natural world, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (*inhabitational perspective*). The development of an ecological awareness and an ethic of responsible nurturing practices and care are not only of essential importance for the termination of the rape of nature. Such an ecological sensitivity is simultaneously crucial for our own wholeness (i.e. our spiritual health and vitality) – especially for the wholeness and integration of ourselves as embodied souls and soulful bodies.

The implications of the cross and resurrection of Christ for the pastoral care of men, was evaluated next. It was identified that the primary category for a pastoral model which operates for the development of hope in faith, is the resurrection. This perspective generates authentic spiritual health and vitality, i.e. joy and gratitude for life and hope for the future to which maturity of faith is thus linked. Spiritual well-being then is the result of an empowerment by God: God empowers people with a living hope, which becomes a reality in the lives of Christian believers due to God's *inhabitational* presence within our bodies.

Next it was affirmed again: theology involves more than cross and suffering. Theology's task is also to install, support, transform and transfigure life as such. In short: to affirm the courage to be. A *Theologia crucis* reveals the passion and compassion of a suffering God. The cross also reveals our human predicament, i.e. our destitution, powerlessness, brutality, violent behaviour, irresponsible actions. A *theologia resurrectionis* reveals the overwhelming and victorious power of a living and faithful God. The resurrection is a divine protest and nihilation of all forms of death, rejection and destruction. Resurrection establishes and affirms life as the courage to be.

Subsequently it was finally concluded and contended: In terms of masculinity from a Christian perspective: the cross (representing God's vulnerable identification) and the resurrection (representing God's powerful transformation) form the core matrix for the embodiment of authentic manhood. Due to the resurrection we don't have a 'soul' or a 'body'. We are in our bodies our soul: ensoulment in and through embodiment. The power of the resurrection serves as

an empowerment of men (and women) in terms of their ‘being functions’ – affirming the courage to be. Therefore, pastoral care of men – aimed at facilitating spiritual health (i.e. growing a mature faith) – should use the liberating reality of Christ’s cross and resurrection as essential framework to counsel men with regards to embodied experiences of authentic power (courage) and vulnerability (suffering), so that authentic intimacy and integration (shalom) can be actualised through the work of the Holy Spirit (within the context of the whole creation).

In the last part of chapter six a hopeful re-interpretation of masculinity was envisioned out of an eschatological perspective. Eschatology views human beings from the perspective of who they already are in Christ. Eschatological thinking is “expectation-thinking” which corresponds to the Christian hope. Christian hope may never rest content with the status quo, but must be ferment in our thinking and an incentive for Christian action. This hope, an eschatological reality which is grounded in the resurrection of Christ, was thus identified as another core aspect of meaning in men’s lives. It can – through the work of the Holy Spirit - provide real and profound depth to manhood, by transcending the superficial briefness of illusory, idealistic, and empty images of ‘macho’ masculinity, which are tirelessly dished up by the mass media and popular culture.

Next, a spirituality of vulnerable courage was put forward to neutralise the cultural plea for performance. The researcher presupposed that the contemporary culture of production, performance and efficiency is not aware of the need for a spirituality of vulnerability and courage, but he indicated here that such a spirituality can indeed contribute to the assignment of “saving” masculinity and male identity from a commercial reduction. At its core such a spirituality implies that we accept our limitations and renounce our self-control by welcoming that God is the main authority in our lives.

The researcher also argued that the reframing of God’s power and the re-interpretation of who God is for us through Christ’s cross and resurrection - i.e. His vulnerable identification and faithful empowerment – has created an essential matrix that can help men to be redeemed from relying on the ethics of achievement, performance, power, and control. Instead, Christ self now - through the inhabitation of His Holy Spirit - motivates men to live life with hopeful vocation

toward God's destiny, i.e. sacrificial neighbourly love and service, in peace. The image of the crucified and risen Christ can indeed now serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the macho-image portrayed by most postmodern masculinities (with its dominating cultural messages many men presently experience as confusing).

The researcher contended that this image of Christ can transcend the abuse of power, the focus on performance and the commodification of male embodiment in men's lives. This counter-image can furthermore enhance men's experience of God as intimate Life Partner and Vital Life Force/Friend. Furthermore, the transformative counter-narrative of Christ promotes a spirituality of vulnerable courage which can empower men to live meaningfully and purposefully with spiritual maturity in the midst of our technocratic predicament. Our anxieties as men run deep into the social construction of our masculinities, but what is constructed is not fated. It can be transformed. This is the hope of Christ's resurrection for our being-functions as men today: we can change by being vulnerably courageous through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The researcher also proposed that men do not need another movement to reconnect with the so-called 'Zeus energy' that they have lost, but rather that they (we) are in dire need of an authentic spirituality (of vulnerable courage) that can facilitate life-giving intimacy and spiritual vitality via Christ's cross and resurrection. Again: the hope of Christ's resurrection reminds us that our being-functions as men today can indeed be transformed (through God's Holy Spirit).

In the very last section concerning "Restoring the intimacy void", the researcher concluded the study by contending that two of men's core struggles are: A relational "impotence" and loneliness. These two realities thus fundamentally seek for dignified self-affirmation and the recognition of existential identity. The researcher argued that the reality that opposes these two existential struggles in men is the reality of God's unconditional and complete love which creates authentic intimacy. The real and most fundamental healing of the human "soul" occurs when a person experiences intimacy, i.e. to be accepted unconditionally for who you are, without the fear to be rejected (1 John 4). Thus: the unconditional love of God provides the healing dimension and therapy of intimacy by granting men a safe space without any anxieties about being confined or maybe not measuring up and being deemed 'not good enough' / 'not man enough'. In the end,

*Jesus Christ is our ultimate model for male intimacy – through Him the images of false masculinity have to die, because indeed, without death there is no resurrection.*

## **7. PIVOTAL INSIGHTS AND BALANCE**

*The main aim of this dissertation was not to explicate a direct, normative blueprint for men to adhere to by making use of archetypal ‘stunts’. But instead, it was to give an honest, in-depth assessment of current schemata of interpretation (on the issue of masculinity) within different cultural contexts, aiming to hermeneutically put this into dialogue with a pastoral-anthropological view on masculinity. This dialogue was initiated in order to gain deeper insight into diverse masculinities and the challenges they face in their search for meaning, intimacy and vitality. The point of the dialogue was rather to describe than to prescribe.*

The dissertation analysed ‘masculinities as experienced and enacted’ in life and ‘masculinities as represented’ in fashion, cinema, magazines, as well as other forms of pop culture, through a multidisciplinary perspective. A core motivation for this study was to try and establish what the present meaningful connections are between: (on the one hand) the dominant socio-cultural perceptions and (on the other hand) some critical-theological reflections, on the issue of masculinity and images of men globally and locally (within South Africa). The researcher intentionally focused on a pastoral-hermeneutical analysis diverse of cultural images of masculinity, as it is projected and maintained globally primarily via the mass media. He furthermore aimed at the contextual, pastoral-anthropological deconstruction of these cultural representations and the establishment and furthering of meaningful connections between male identity, human dignity and Christian spirituality – all within the context of escalating globalisation.

The focus in contemporary (sociological and psychological) research on masculinity is on enactment of masculinities or ‘doing’ masculinities rather than ‘being’ masculine. The dominant cultural images of masculinity within a globalising life-order suggest and promote materialistic values such as efficiency, performance, mechanisation and functionality. Functionalism, materialism and production have indeed become benchmarks for the quality of life. Thus, goods

and profit become more important than people and being functions. These images were assessed out of a pastoral-anthropological perspective and the interplay between it (the cultural images) and experiences/ conceptualisations of God (God-images) was explored.

The researcher explicated that men's identity, self-understanding and spirituality is shaped in many ways by these images, but that the image of the crucified and risen Christ can indeed serve as a meaningful and normative-critical counter-image to the macho-images portrayed by most postmodern masculinities (with its dominating cultural messages many men presently experience as confusing). This image of Christ can transcend the abuse of power, the focus on performance and the commodification of male embodiment, in men's lives. This counter-image can furthermore enhance men's experience of God as intimate Life Partner and Vital Life Force/Friend, as they engage in a spirituality of vulnerable courage.

It was also found – through a thorough cultural-hermeneutical analysis of certain mass-media representations - that the influence of essentialist schemata of interpretation on male sexual and gender identity is mainly corrosive. A pastoral-anthropological perspective was employed in order to shift the emphasis on male identity in terms of gender and sexuality, towards a spiritual understanding of male identity in terms of human dignity and human destiny (meaning). For the healing dimension of theology, spiritual healing, the researcher argued that pastoral care as a theological endeavour should shift from an incarnational paradigm to an inhabitational paradigm to apply a hermeneutics of human embodiment - i.e. a mature approach to interpreting male (and female) identity from a spiritual perspective.

Furthermore, the important question of the relationship between power, masculinity and male embodiment was consequently addressed. Essentialist ideas about masculinity were deconstructed, and a re-interpretation thereof was introduced within a view of reality that affirms and embraces an integrated, earth-centred and embodied spirituality. It was indicated how the question of masculinity in a globalising culture is primarily connected to sexuality, and how it is related to the influence of the media and the exploitation and stereotyping of male sexuality via the consumer-establishment. Masculinity and male identity have in that sense been “saved” from a commercial reduction by means of an eschatological perspective.



An *eschatological* and *pneumatological* re-interpretation of masculinity presented a critical factor on the cultural notion that manhood is something that must be validated by means of performance (especially on the terrain of sexuality). The *eschatological* premise relativises masculinity, in the sense that it relates it to God's re-creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). It therefore implies a new quality of manhood (through the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit), and it introduces an indication of men's human dignity, the parameter within which they do not have to prove themselves (achievement-ethic). Men's being functions are sufficient. God's faithfulness and unconditional 'Yes' (in Christ) for their manhood, makes them man enough (1 Corinthians 1:9). Men must thus accept their position in Christ (the ontic 'yes' to our being functions) and take a spiritual decision in order to combat the abuse of power, so that they can realize the central purpose of human sexuality: responsible intimacy and sacrificial love (unconditional love).

Masculinity, viewed from an eschatological perspective, is thus *more than* virility that has to be manifested by doing functions. In the light of Christ's resurrection there is new hope for the re-interpretation of masculinity. Men's resurrection from the (perceived) crisis of masculinity is eschatologically based at its core. Men can consequently not just squarely be 'emasculated' when their 'tools' collapse. The culturally-determined understanding of masculinity - in terms of brutal power and control - was in this sense 'emasculated' in this dissertation.

A *pneumatological* view of reality implies the interpenetration of God's inhabiting Holy Spirit which transforms the being qualities of men. The researcher believes that solely an understanding of God's almighty presence and power in terms of vulnerable faithfulness and overwhelming pathos can truly provide men with authentic intimacy and vitality (i.e. an integrated male identity). The postmodern man's resurrection is therefore not guaranteed by the "Viagra-magic blue pill", but in actual fact by the resurrection of Christ who daily unleashes new meaningful dimensions of hope in the globalised life-matrix.

In the researcher's opinion: to be a "real man" is to trust God with your whole life and consequently to live out God's values. It implies desiring *shalom* (i.e. vitality, freedom, creativity, fragility, joy, healing and integration in all relational networks etc.), the quality of the new human life before God (i.e. a mature faith). But this depends on whether one is asking the

right questions. What am I ultimately living for (ultimates)? What do I give my time, energy and money to (values)? What have I done with my life and what will I do with the remaining years (vocation)? Questions like this will expose one's reality, one's self-understanding and who or what one really worships. This is critical for the spiritual journey into masculinity.

Our identity as humans is a mystery that must be revealed. Only in meeting our Maker we encounter our selves. Our true identity forms part of an eschatological new creation (1 Corinthians 13:12), and is located outside ourselves: *in Christ crucified and raised from death*. Therefore Theron (2006: 122) states (quoting W.E. Henley): "I am not 'the master of my fate...the captain of my soul'" - 1 Corinthians 6:19f: 'You are not your own; you were bought at a price.'

Thus, our identity as men must be found in God as we pursue His purposes by serving others as male body-selves. The power of masculinity lies in embodying vulnerability and mutual relationality, contesting unilateral and hierarchical relations. From our participation in Christ and through the Spirit (in the triune life), we can give all people human dignity through our loving hospitality, and we can receive harmony and joy from participating vulnerably dependent within all human relations. Within this context powerful manhood is not equal to the size of achievement or success, nor performances or penetration, but the capacity for relationships, the measure of the soul's depth of character, of authentic masculinity.

Therefore, a "real man" is a man who is real (in God's eyes). This is "masculine spirituality" in Jesus' name, and not in the name of another ultimate or god, like sex or success, performance or power or status. Therefore Christians (specifically men) should maintain a concept of God and an understanding of providence which does not satisfy our need for development, achievement and power, but rather a God-concept that addresses our deepest need for life-giving intimacy and vitality, and eventually discloses new horizons of hope.

Pastoral care for men is henceforth about the question how the perspective of the resurrection in Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Spirit, can contribute to the empowerment of

masculinity. A paradigm shift is needed in care giving from a predominant focus on our knowing and doing functions to our being functions - a transformation from the ethics of performance and achievement to the sacrificial ethics of unconditional love. One can only really experience authentic intimacy by merely being (hu)man, and not by constantly trying to achieve or perform humanity (masculinity) by doing something significant. To experience intimacy is to be empowered by God's Holy Spirit (inhabitational perspective) in a most deep-seated way. Therefore, the essential dimension of vitality is re-inforced into masculinity in this way: *men are resurrected to and affirmed in a new quality of manhood.*

It follows logically that any attempt to re-interpret masculinity needs to creatively dialogue with women and not only men. We are relational and (inter)dependent beings as males and females; our "becoming" as men depends on the quality of our relating. Men are challenged not to become inward looking and narcissistic, but to purposefully engage with women and society in general. A critical part of this process of relating, listening and serving, is to learn from women what hurts them most, both personally and structurally, and then to commit ourselves as men to change unjust gender-based structures both within the church and society. Here men must begin at home, to become available, responsible and caring partners, husbands and fathers. Through facing their own pain and exploring ways to heal wounds men can discover and reconstruct new, life-giving and intimate forms of masculinity. This is a life-long and arduous journey, and many men are just at its genesis.

Constructive and integrated masculinity must also make room for non-violent aggression and vital life lust. Power (phallus) must take its place, but simultaneously, there must be space for frailness and care. Also the ability to be cared for (penile), i.e. dependence, loss of control – in a humanly dignified way, – must be developed. Ultimately, men do not need another movement to reconnect with the so-called 'wildman within' that they have lost, but they (we) are rather in dire need of an authentic spirituality (of vulnerable courage) that can facilitate life-giving intimacy and spiritual vitality via Christ's cross and resurrection.

It was explicated convincingly: the picture of men's health is not very favourable. Underneath the shell of manliness is a person who often lives in pain: men are hurting several ways.

Therefore - in accordance with James Dittes (1985: x), who tried “to give voice to the restlessness of yearnings long buried and muted, to the stress and weariness of bearing the heavy armour of manliness and of pretending to wear it nonchalantly and unimpeded” – this study is for those men for whom the shell of manliness is cracking or never did fit comfortably, for those men who are discovering that manhood is far richer than the charade of manliness.

Evelyn, a character in Angela Carter’s book, *The Passion of New Eve* states, “to be a *man* is not a given condition but a continuous effort” (Carter 1982: 63). This contention still feeds an uncomfortable intensity in many men’s lives - seeing that they feel endangered by a sense of incompetence, feeling that they are not good enough, but must prove that they are “man enough”.

***We may even ask:***

Has anything changed since Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) wrote more than a century and a half ago: “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation”?

Or do most men still bleed silently on the inside?

...searching deeply for the affirmation of the **COURAGE (JUST) TO BE.**

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## ADDENDA

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### ADDENDUM A: ANALYSIS OF 60 MONTHLY SOUTH-AFRICAN *MEN'S HEALTH*<sup>476</sup> MAGAZINE (MHM) COVER-PAGES COVERING THE PERIOD FROM APRIL 2001 TO SEPTEMBER 2006<sup>477</sup>

#### 1. MHM FRONT COVER PAGES in 2001

##### 1.1 April 2001

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size<sup>478</sup>:**

“Turn her sexual thoughts to your advantage” (F<sup>479</sup>)

“Get a better body at home – The living room workouts” (B<sup>480</sup>)

##### 1.2 June 2001

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured with only shoulders and face

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<sup>476</sup> Men's Health magazine was launched in the USA in 1986, and internationally (in Latin America first) in 1994. In the USA in 1990 it claimed 250,000 subscribers and by 2006 that number had risen to 1.2 million. Currently 3.5 million issues of Men's Health are distributed every month in 36 different countries worldwide, namely: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Central America, Chile, China, Columbia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Puerto Rico, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, US Hispanic, Venezuela. Most of the 36 versions are different (each with a distinct cover), but the USA carries the licence, in other words, each different version has to be approved by the USA, in order to contain certain editorial columns similar to that of the main USA version. Thus, all the magazine's publishing countries have access to overseas material and have to use some of it in their country's Men's Health edition. (See Barna 2006; and Jennings 2006 – under Other Internet Resources)

<sup>477</sup> The publisher of *Men's Health* magazine in South-Africa only had 60 out of the possible 66 months (within the range from April 2001 to September 2006) available electronically for use and analysis by the researcher; and therefore the amount of 60 Men's Health magazine issues were used in the analysis. The issues that were not available are: May 2001, August 2001, October 2001, November 2001, June 2002, July 2002.

<sup>478</sup> The main cover text is normally highlighted in different ways in order to catch the reader's eye immediately, e.g: by using capital letters or a bold typeface or by appearing in the middle or the top-left corner in a bright color.

<sup>479</sup> The letter “F” indicates the FIRST text which appears (normally) in the top-left position on the cover page. If it does not appear first, it is indicated as an additional text/feature or described as appearing second or somewhere else on the cover page.

<sup>480</sup> The letter “B” indicates the text which appears in BOLD (normally) in a prominent position of the cover page.

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Get a body you want – Start today, page 57” (F)

“Seduce her in seconds – Devilish new tricks” (B)

**1.3 July 2001**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“31 best places to have sex” (F)

“Increase your Muscle power in 10 easy moves” (B)

**1.4 September 2001**

**Photographic cover image:** White male with light vest pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Push her **lust** buttons” (F)

“Get back in shape – some out of hibernation, start now” (B)

**1.5 December 2001**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt (crouching in a water setting presumably by the ocean) pictured in a full-body fashion with sand-grains covering parts of his body

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“‘Oops!...The condom broke – 24 fast fixes for real life disasters” (F)

“50th awesome issue – more sex, style, energy and fun than a man deserves” (B)

“ Guaranteed! Sex so hot she’ll speak in tongues” (bottom line script)

**2. MHM FRONT COVER PAGES in 2002**

## 2.1 January 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“11 New tricks to fuel her sex drive” (second)

“Lose your gut – Belly off, abs on” (B)

## 2.2 February 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (in an unidentifiable water setting) from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Strip away fat, See results in two weeks” (F)

“The perfect plan for All night sex” (B)

## 2.3 March 2002

**Photographic cover image:** Black male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“The amazing sex trick – More size! More sighs!” (F)

“Your new body is here – Gain muscle in just 15 minutes a day” (B)

## 2.4 April 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Make good sex **great**” (F)

“Bulk up, burn fat – The best exercise tool ever” (B)

## 2.5 May 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“The one sex quiz you *must* take, pg45” (F)

“Pack on muscle, Anywhere everywhere” (B)

## 2.6 August 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Bed-breaking sex – We dare you to try it” (F)

“How **tough** are you? Take our test on page 136” (B)

Additional text features: “Skinny guys bulk up now”; “Body electric – turn her on without trying”

## 2.7 September 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Press her for more sex – Page 66” (F)

“Get fit in four weeks – The cover model workout” (B)

## 2.8 October 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Sex magic – Presto! She’s naked” (F)

“4 weeks to More muscle” (B)

## 2.9 November 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured sitting (presumably by the ocean wearing swimming pants), with water drops on his body in a full-body fashion

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“29 sex thrills she’ll want you to try” (F)

“Get a Beach body In a month or less” (B)

## 2.10 December 2002

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt (standing in a setting presumably by the ocean) pictured from just below the waist up with sand-grains covering parts of his torso

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Three all-new workouts: Muscle, Fat-loss, Strength – choose the result you want” (F)

“A summer of sex: Get ready for action, p50” (B)

Additional text feature: VOTED SA’S BEST MEN’S MAGAZINE 2002

## 3. MHM FRONT COVER PAGES in 2003

### 3.1 January 2003

**Photographic cover image:** Black male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“THE BETTER-SEX DIET PLAN – Eat up! Drive her wild” (F)

“ULTIMATE ABS – lose you gut for good” (B)

### 3.2 February 2003

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (in an unidentifiable water setting) from partly above the knees up



**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SEXPLOSION! 27 signs she secretly wants you, tonight” (F)

“Hard body plan: 21 exercises for...bigger arms, a thinner waist, amazing sex, a sharper mind”(B)

**3.3 March 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male pictured showing just his face and part of his neck

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SHOWER SEX! Yes, it can happen to you” (third)

“Build the perfect body: the ultimate V-shape workout plan” (B)

**3.4 April 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SEX SECRETS from the girl nextdoor” (F)

“The fertility report: pass the ultimate health test” (second)

“BURN FAT & GET FIT” (B)

**3.5 May 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Hard muscle made easy – The Total Body Workout” (F)

“Pop her sex cork!” (second)

**3.6 June 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Sculpt your body in just 15 minutes a day” (B + F)

“The AMAZING SEX issue! 97 ways to pick up a woman; The ultimate sex quiz; What women really want; The better sex workout” (second text feature)

**3.7 July 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“29 SECRET SEX SPOTS – Touch her here! And here! And...” (F)

“MUSCLE UP! SPORT OR POWER...get the result you want” (B)

**3.8 August 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Unleash your SEXUAL SUPERPOWERS pg52” (second)

“HARD BODY BASICS – The 20-minute home workout” (B)

**3.9 September 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from (the side and) just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“More Sex, More Often. Rush to page 72” (F)

“BURN OFF THE BELLY – A FIRM, FLAT STOMACH IN 4 WEEKS. START TODAY” (B)

**3.10 October 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“>WARNING! ADULTS ONLY – SEX TRICKS FROM PORN FLICKS” (F)

“GET BACK IN SHAPE – LEAN AND MEAN IN 4 WEEKS” (B)

**3.11 November 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male with loose button shirt (accentuating exposed abdominen and pectoral muscles) pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“PULL HER SEX TRIGGER PG69” (F)

“TAKE YOUR SHIRT OFF! A SUMMER BODY IN 30 DAYS” (B)

“Foods that GROW MUSCLE And shrink your gut, fast” (text feature directly under B)

**3.12 December 2003**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (in an unidentifiable water setting) from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“MORE SEX! BETTER SEX! GET WHAT YOU WANT IN BED” (F)

“FIGHT FAT AND WIN: MUSCLE SECRETS FROM SA’S ELITE NAVY DIVERS” (B)

Additional text feature: “VOTED SA’S BEST MEN’S MAGAZINE, AGAIN”

**4. MHM FRONT COVER PAGES in 2004**

**4.1 January 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up (showing only a partial face shot – up to his nose)

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Anniversary 75th edition” (F)

“THE COMEBACK ISSUE – MAKE 2004 YOUR BEST YEAR EVER!” (B)

#### **4.2 February 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt pictured from just below the waist up, whilst lifting up his shirt and looking down at his “rock hard abs” (see cover text below)

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“ROCK STAR SEX: 7 WAYS TO TURN A GOOD GIRL BAD” (F)

“ROCK HARD ABS: 14 WAYS TO LOSE YOUR GUT” (B)

#### **4.3 March 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt, wearing swimming pants pictured (in a water setting by the ocean) in a full-body fashion

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“THE AMAZING NEW SEX TEST: SHE GRADES, YOU SCORE!” (F)

“LEAN FOR LIFE: A FLAT STOMACH IN 4 WEEKS” (B)

#### **4.4 April 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** Black male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“30 RED-HOT SEX CONFESSIONS – Her Secret Lust List” (F)

“GET MATCH FIT! MUSCLE UP IN 4 WEEKS” (B)

**Highlighted text feature:** “HAVE IT ALL! BIGGER BICEPS, p109. AWESOME ABS, p57”

#### **4.5 May 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt (wearing jean trousers) pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SEXPOSED! 25 NEW WAYS TO DRIVE HER WILD” (F)

“BUILD YOUR BEST BODY: THE 4-WEEK MUSCLE PLAN” (B)

**Additional text feature in bottom corner:** “BONUS! THE SEX PILL SOLUTION”

#### 4.6 June 2004

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“FIGHT FAT AND WIN! EAT MORE, WEIGH LESS” (F)

“FANTASY SEX EVERY NIGHT” (B)

#### 4.7 July 2004

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“MORE SEX – LESS BEGGING” (F)

“PACK ON MUSCLE! IN JUST 30 DAYS” (B)

#### 4.8 August 2004

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just above the knees up, with a women (in a bikini) in a playful fashion on his back

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“AMAZING SEX! 17 Seduction Strategies; What She Really Wants; The One Move You Must Learn” (F)

“BURN OFF THE BELLY: SCULPT NEW MUSCLE IN 30 DAYS” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “BUILD BIG ARMS FAST! Page 141”

#### **4.9 September 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“33 SEX SECRETS: WHAT SHE WISHES YOU KNEW” (F)

“GET BACK IN SHAPE: FROM FAT TO FLAT IN JUST 4 WEEKS” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “MH INVESTIGATES: CAN YOU DOUBLE YOUR MANHOOD? p122”

#### **4.10 October 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SEX SPY! WHAT REALLY TURNS HER ON, p62” (F)

“YOUR NEW BODY IS HERE: MORE MUSCLE, LESS FAT” (B)

**Additional text feature:** “THE ABS DIET: See Your Six Pack In Days”

#### **4.11 November 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (in an unidentifiable water setting) from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SIZZLING HOT SUMMER SEX, p62” (F)

“LOSE YOUR GUT: THE COMPLETE BELLY-OFF PROGRAMME” (B)

#### **4.12 December 2004**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (in a water setting presumably by the ocean) from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“THE ULTIMATE SEX FANTASY, p74” (F)

“TAKE YOUR SHIRT OFF: FROM FAT TO FLAT IN 4 WEEKS” (B)

## **5. MHM FRONT COVER PAGES in 2005**

### **5.1 January 2005**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“JUMPSTART YOUR LIFE: YOUR COMPLETE PLAN STARTS HERE” (B + F)

“VOTED SA’S BEST MEN’S MAGAZINE – 5TH YEAR RUNNING”

### **5.2 February 2005**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“TURN FAT INTO MUSCLE: GET THE BODY YOU WANT” (F)

“THE SEX OF YOUR DREAMS: Drive Her Wild – TONIGHT!” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “PLUS: The Ultimate Power Workout; Foods That Fuel Sex”

### **5.3 March 2005**

**Photographic cover image:** Black male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“EAT MORE! WEIGH LESS! 18 FOODS THAT FIGHT FAT” (F)

“33 AMAZING NEW SEX TRICKS: TRY NO.7 TONIGHT” (B)

#### 5.4 April 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“RED-HOT SEX SECRETS – CHARGE TO PAGE 60” (F)

“FIGHT FAT AND WIN – YOUR COMPLETE PLAN” (B)

#### 5.5 May 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (on grey background) from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“The Art of Sex – Get into her head, then her bed” (F)

“GET FIT & BURN FAT – THE ULTIMATE OUTDOOR WORKOUT” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “MORE ENERGY, MORE POWER, MORE PASSION – YOUR NEW LOOK ISSUE”

#### 5.6 June 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt (and jean trousers) pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“30 SCORCHING SEX TIPS – UNLEASH THEM IN BED TONIGHT” (F)

“BUILD YOUR BEST BODY>47 FAT BURNING MEALS>MORE MUSCLE, LESS TIME”  
(B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “CORE WORKOUT: Sculpt Your Abs in 6 Easy Moves”



### 5.7 July 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt pictured from (the side and) just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SEX SO GOOD, She’ll Beg For More!” (F)

“PACK ON MUSCLE IN 7 SIMPLE MOVES” (B)

“FLAT-BELLY FOODS – THE BUSY MAN’S MEAL PLAN” (B)

### 5.8 August 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt pictured from the breast/shoulders upwards

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“THE EASY WAY TO HARD ABS” (B)

“YOUR ULTIMATE SEX FANTASY, TONIGHT! p158” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “1-MINUTE MUSCLE MAKERS”

### 5.9 September 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up, with a women (seemingly without a shirt) hiding enticingly behind his back

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“Your Best Body Ever! IF YOU BUILD IT, SHE WILL COME” (F)

“BIG ARMS IN NO TIME” (B)

“SPECIAL SEX ISSUE! 11 SEDUCTION STRATEGIES / 7 FOODS THAT FUELSEX /

**Additional (highlighted) text feature at bottom of page:** “TURN YOUR GOOD GIRL BAD”

### 5.10 October 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“LOSE YOUR GUT! 4 EASY WORKOUTS” (F)

“SIZZLING SEX SECRETS – 5 NEW WAYS TO PLAY” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “Muscle Foods For Men, p96”

### 5.11 November 2005

**Photographic cover image:** Black male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“GET FIT FAST! >Maximum Muscle >Usher’s Six-Pack Secrets >Fat-Busting Foods” (F)

“SEX CONFESSIONS – She Speaks, You Score! (B)

### 5.12 December 2005

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (from the side in a water setting presumably by the ocean) from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“YOUR BEACH BODY IS HERE p245” (F)

“SEX-SOAKED SUMMER! 300 PAGES OF RED-HOT SUN, SURF AND STYLE” (B)

“EASY ABS IN JUST 7 STEPS” (B)

## 6. MHM FRONT COVER PAGES in 2006

### 6.1 January 2006

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“GET BACK IN SHAPE! FAST FIXES TO: Lose Weight, Build Muscle, Gain Strength” (F)

“Sexplosion! How to Programme Her Dirty Mind, p122” (B)

## 6.2 February 2006

**Photographic cover image:** Three males (one black and two white) without shirts pictured (in an unidentifiable water setting) from just below the waist up (with a red background)

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“100TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE: OUR BEST ADVICE EVER...KILLER ABS \* KINKY SEX \* LESS FAT \* BIGGER MUSCLES \* EXTRA ENERGY \* INSTANT CURES \* SMARTER STYLE... AND 321 MORE LIFE-CHANGING TIPS” (this is the only cover script)

## 6.3 March 2006

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt pictured with head and shoulders (whilst embracing a dog)

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“GET A FLAT BELLY FAST! IN 15 MINUTES A DAY” (F + B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature:** “MH EXCLUSIVE: THE BETTER SEX WORKOUT – Build The Body She’ll Beg For”

## 6.4 April 2006

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“PACK ON MUSCLE IN 3 WEEKS!” (F)

“MORE SEX THAN YOU CAN HANDLE!” (B)

## 6.5 May 2006

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“EASY ABS! IN 4 SIMPLE MOVES” (F)

“20 SEX SECRETS SHE’LL NEVER REVEAL” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature at top of page:** “MORE SEX, BETTER SEX, p150”

### 6.6 June 2006

**Photographic cover image:** White male with tight shirt (and wearing jean trousers) pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“SEX: HER HOTTEST HOT SPOTS REVEALED” (F)

“BUILD YOUR BEST BODY – SEE RESULTS IN JUST 4 WEEKS” (B)

### 6.7 July 2006

**Photographic cover image:** Black male with open loose shirt (and wearing jean trousers), pictured from just below the waist up

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“MORE MUSCLE – LESS FAT!” (B)

“MORE SEX – LESS BEGGING!” (B)

**Additional text feature at bottom of page:** “15 FLAT-BELLY FOODS”

### 6.8 August 2006

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured from just above the waist up (at the top of the cover there is a small picture of a white female in her lingerie lying enticingly on a bed)

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“BUILD BIG ARMS FAST” (B)

“LOOK YOUR BEST EVER! 100 Instant Upgrades” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature at top of page:** “SEX: THE TOUCH SHE CRAVES”

**6.9 September 2006 (see illustration below)**

**Photographic cover image:** White male without shirt pictured (from the front) in full-body fashion running hand-in-hand (in an unidentifiable water setting, presumably by the ocean), with a white female in her bikini. At the top of the cover there is a small picture of another white female in her bikini posing invitingly

**Main cover text in large typeface-size:**

“HARD MUSCLE MADE EASY: IN JUST MINUTES A DAY” (B)

**Additional (highlighted) text feature at top of page:** “SPECIAL SEX ISSUE! THE GIRL WANTS YOU – TAKE HER HOME TONIGHT...” (B)



Illustration (nr.3) courtesy of Touchline media<sup>481</sup>

<sup>481</sup> Permission given by Touchline Media (representative Christopher Lee Jones - Art director for Men's Health SA) - see Jones 2006 – under Other Internet Resources.

**ADDENDUM B: MEDIA ARTICLE – Wasserman (2006)****GEVRY NA PIENK RAND KRUIP NIE MEER WEG IN DIE GAY MEDIA**

10 June 2006, *SAKE-RAPPORT*, HELENA WASSERMAN

*Die stryd om die pienk rand het uit die kas geklim met 'n nuwe advertensie vir Nedbank-huislenings.*

Die stryd om die pienk rand het uit die kas geklim met 'n nuwe advertensie vir Nedbank-huislenings. Die televisie-advertensie beeld 'n diverse groep Suid-Afrikaanse huiseienaars uit - onder wie 'n jong manlike paartjie. Dit is die eerste ernstige en onomwonde afbeelding van gays in 'n hoofstroom-advertensie in Suid-Afrika, volgens mnr. Andy Rice van Yellowwood Brand Architects. Die enigste plaaslike hoofstroom-advertensies met verwysings na gaywees het tot dusver net die draak gestee met dié groep. Só byvoorbeeld is daar in 1998 in 'n Nando's-advertensies verwys na gays as "tailgunners".

"Die veldtog is 'n mylpaal deurdat Nedbank openlik die gay mark deur die hoofstroom-media teiken en nie alleenlik fokus op media wat as gay ge-identifiseer word nie," sê mnr. Glenn de Swardt, bestuurder: navorsing van die Triangle Project, die oudste diensorganisasie vir die gay en lesbiese gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika. Volgens hom is die reaksie uit die gay gemeenskap op die veldtog gunstig, veral omdat dit nie gay mense stereotipies uitbeeld nie.

Gay paartjies is 'n belangrike deel van Nedbank se mark, sê me. Nina Wellsted, senior bemarkingsbestuurder van Nedbank. Sy sê die veldtog het gefokus op mense en hul huise met 'n Suid-Afrikaanse gevoel. "Die gay paartjie in die veldtog is net so deel van 'n lewendige Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap as die *mamas* van Soweto."

Die idee agter die nuwe advertensieveldtog is om te toon dat die bank verstaan hoe gediversifiseer die Suid-Afrikaanse verbruikers is, sê Rice, wat as konsultant vir Nedbank werk. Die advertensie beeld mense van verskillende agtergronde uit en moet wys dat Nedbank nie net na die boonste deel van die mark mik nie. "Daar is gepoog om met die stereotipe van Nedbank as 'n elitistiese bank te breek."

Hoewel die advertensie nie spesifiek gays teiken nie - die gay paartjie word gelyk gestel aan die ander en nie verhef nie - sal dit verwelkom word as die plaaslike gay gemeenskap gunstig daarop reageer, sê Rice. Die groep se koopkrag is aansienlik, veral omdat hulle meestal nie kinders het

nie. Volgens sommige berekeninge kan daar tussen 1,5 miljoen tot 3 miljoen gay en lesbiese mense in Suid-Afrika wees.

Nedbank kan verwag dat dié groep daar rekeninge gaan oopmaak ná die advertensie, sê mnr. Luiz Debarros, redakteur van [mambaonline.co.za](http://mambaonline.co.za), die grootste leefstyl-webtuiste vir gays in Suid-Afrika. Gay mense wil weet dat as hulle in 'n bank instap hulle dieselfde gehanteer sal word as heteroseksuele mense en dat wenkbroue nie gelig sal word as hulle sê dat hulle 'n maat van dieselfde geslag het nie, sê Debarros.

"Nedbank behoort geluk gewens te word." Dit het 'n lang tyd geneem vir Suid-Afrikaanse maatskappye om te breek met die land se konserwatiewe verlede en vir maatskappye om die gay mark te teiken. Baie maatskappye was ook oor die jare versigtig om nie ander verbruikers te vervreem nie. Wêreldwyd het Unilever, Ikea en Levi Strauss hoofstroom-veldtogte wat gay verhoudings uitbeeld. Sommige maatskappye - soos Volkswagen - het veldtogte in die buiteland gehad wat twee mense van dieselfde geslag uitbeeld, maar dit word aan die gehoor oorgelaat om te besluit of hulle gay is. In 'n artikel in die *Harvard Business Review* word dié neiging "gay vague" genoem.

Gay beelde in advertensies het skerp toegeneem ná gewilde televisieprogramme soos *Will and Grace* en *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, wat gaywees na die hoofstroom gebring het. Dit is egter aansienlik meer algemeen vir maatskappye om in die gay media, veral tydskrifte, te adverteer - eerder as in die hoofstroom. Meer as 'n derde van die 100 grootste Amerikaanse maatskappye adverteer in die gay media. Advertensies in die gay mark het in 2004 met 28% gegroei. IBM, wat sy gay werkers in 'n advertensie uitgebeeld het, is een van die grootste adverteerders in die gay media. Volvo en JP Morgan is ook groot adverteerders en die motorvervaardiger Subaru teiken veral die lesbiese gehoor. Martina Navratilova is woordvoerder van dié maatskappy.

Ford het egter sy rieme styfgeloop nadat hy sy Jaguar en Land Rover-motors in 2003 in die gay media bemark het. 'n Groot Amerikaanse Christelike organisasie het met 'n boikot van sy produkte begin en Ford het ingegee onder die druk. Rice verwag nie 'n negatiewe reaksie op die advertensies, wat volgens hom gaywees normaliseer, nie. "Jy moet darem regtig bevooroordeelde wees om daarop te wil reageer. Nando's se advertensies was in elk geval baie meer waaghalsig," sê hy. Ook Debarros verwag nie 'n groot reaksie daarop nie - "buiten miskien vir 'n paar uitgesproke ekstremiste".



**ADDENDUM C: MEDIA ARTICLE – Reuters (2004)****FANCY A NIGHT IN A LOVE HOTEL?**

Tokyo - Women in miniskirts hand out pamphlets as delegates in business suits mill around the convention floor, dropping in on lectures, checking out the latest engineering marvels and squinting at product videos.

It sounds like the Tokyo Motor Show. Except that the video is showing how to use a mat designed for sex in the bath, and a typical piece of equipment on display is a two-person contraption with handles, straps and built-in vibrators known as the "love chair". Welcome to the 10th annual Leisure Hotel Fair, where operators and investors get updated on the most profitable niche of Japan's property market - 17 000 "love hotels" serving a population of 99 million adults.

"It's such a tough industry you have to be on top of the trends," said Etsuko Tasaki, manager of the Ring Bell love hotel and one of about 7 000 people who attended the first day of the two-day conference, which is not open to the public. Love hotels, which rent out rooms by the hour, rake in at least \$37-billion yearly. This makes them attractive propositions for investors.

Overseas private equity firm MHS Capital Partners set up a \$10-million pilot fund in April to invest in love hotels by revamping undervalued properties with a view to increasing cash flows. Fair participants include Shinsei Bank, which specialises in bundling assets such as land and buildings into a tradable investment. "The industry is basically all about investing new money to bring in more customers," said Dai Okumura, a spokesperson for the event's organiser, Unicom, an industry publisher.

Okumura said the number of participants had risen by about 1 000 every year, but some vendors say the industry has hit a rough patch. "The industry is overheating right now," said Yoshihiko Kunishima, a sales representative for France Bed, which supplies hotels with beds, including the revolving round classic. "Everyone's slashing prices to stay in the market. There's not much room for big-ticket items like revolving beds." - Reuters

This article was originally published on page 2 of [The Cape Times](#) on July 01, 2004

**CAPE TIMES**

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**ADDENDUM D: MEDIA ARTICLE – Viall (2005)****SHAPING UP TO A DIFFERENT VIEW OF MASCULINITY FOR BOYS**

By Jeanne Viall

Our boys are at high risk of violence, both of being hurt and hurting others. It's time we paid attention to their emotional lives, says psychologist Michael Thompson, and start modelling for them that there are many other ways of being a man. Features Writer Jeanne Viall reports.

Many fathers think they need to do something to make their sons into men. And so they criticise them and hit them more, and harder, than their daughters. They bully them and they withhold affection. For some reason, unsupported by any research, fathers believe that being affectionate to boys means they will unravel their sons' masculinity. It's just not true, says psychologist, author and consultant Dr Michael Thompson. The fact is that boys don't become men because they're harassed - they become men because they are destined to become men. But we shape what kind of men they become, and in the process, many are brutalised. Thompson was a keynote speaker at last week's international conference of principals held in Cape Town, where he spoke on protecting the emotional lives of boys. He's also author of *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*, which was co-incidentally published a week before the shootings at Columbine High School, which left 15 schoolchildren dead. "Suddenly people were asking - what are we doing wrong, these boys had everything?" This was not inner city violence, which was easier to understand - the violence had moved into well-off suburbia, to boys who supposedly had everything. South Africa shares with the United States the epidemic of violence among young men. The signs are everywhere: turned inward, it manifests as suicide; outwardly in violent behaviour, killing and rape - sometimes in boys as young as 12.

What are we doing wrong? What boys want is to grow up masculine, says Thompson, and they're looking for ways to do it. What we give them is a narrow definition of masculinity - the image of the violent, tough man. And we treat them in ways that brutalise them, damaging their emotional wellbeing. There are clear gender differences between girls and boys, physiologically. But, he says, the creation of feminine and masculine identities is in our hands. It starts early, as early as in utero, and continues at home and then at school.

What's important is that boys are not born killers, they are made killers; they are not born violent, they are taught to be violent. First off, the widely held assumption that boys will be boys, and be aggressive because of their hormones, needs to be challenged. Until the age of 10, girls and boys have similar testosterone levels, says Thompson. Secondly, a study done on boys after puberty found that "high fighters" had lower testosterone levels than the "social success" group. "Boys who are criticised and bullied by their fathers bring their behaviour to school," says Thompson. "This is the way the men they love treat them, and they step into the cycle of aggressive masculine training." These patterns are set early - a study found that, under the age of five, French boys receive 100% more affectionate gestures than American boys. American boys experience 50% more aggressive meetings with adults.

While mothers play their part in shaping boys' identities, they are the minor villains of gender amplification, he says. The major villains are dads. "They are warmer with their girls; with their sons they are critical and goal-oriented. They hit them more, and harder." "Men believe their sons must be turned into men; men are afraid, they are worried their sons will be gay, and not be strong." "By the age of nine a boy is evaluating along one dimension only - from weak to strong. And he won't show anything unless it looks strong. He's afraid of disappointing his father." His advice: "Fathers need to touch more, criticise less." Boys are neither braver than girls, nor more aggressive, he says. Boys and girls are much more similar than they are different - their need for attachment and guidance, mastery and inspiration is mostly the same, says Thompson.

However, the average girl and the average boy differ in three areas: activity levels; language ability and dominance. And schools may not be catering to the needs of boys. "Until primary school, boys are much more active. Then they come to school and activity is not so desirable; talking and reading - words - are valued. And girls have the advantage here." "Boys get to school and think: 'we're in trouble'. One boy told me: 'you can't do anything in school'. "School doesn't fall into the definition of masculinity; football and other activities do. "It's crucial we engage boys. The primary school curriculum is four-fifths language-based - their interests don't have a place. We don't like the stories they tell of fighting and dominance." "But we need to let them write these stories. We think they can't tell the difference between play and real violence - they can, and we must let them."

Many boys come to the conclusion that their destiny as a man is not to be found at school, and that they'll start life after they leave. Boys drop out of school more, they have lower grades, are expelled more often. "We say boys are a problem, they don't fit us. But we don't always fit them." "I'm horrified at schools that are so focused on academics that they're cutting recess (break). It's a favourite time for boys." In South Africa, physical education is being cut back at schools - another key outlet. His advice is for men to model care: "If fathers don't model care, something critical is lost." "There are four factors which predict a child being an empathic adult: the mother loved being a mother; inhibiting aggression; being able to come back to touch home base; and did the father participate in the son's care?" This last one is critical: "Did he show you that being a man was to take care?" "Boys put on the mask of masculinity, but are every bit as scared, anxious and bewildered as girls. But we have to honour their desire to be strong and powerful and masculine." It is up to fathers, teachers and coaches to show boys that there are many ways to be a man. "It is men who make it possible for boys to share their feelings," says Thompson.

"Popular images give a very narrow and violent view of what it is to be a man; we can show that coaches can be stoical, teachers can love poetry and writing; men can be gay. And it's okay to do ceramics, theatre, musicals." Where there are few male role models, as in most primary schools or in single-parent homes, Thompson advises: "Every woman has men in her life she respects - all she has to do is convey this to boys: 'I know you're going to be man like this ... I know what a good man is and I see it in you.'" To men he says: "Share their struggle and what scares them. It's not necessary to posture. Teach boys that emotional courage is courage; and appreciate their efforts." "If you want your son to be okay, love him and show you love him." - Features Writer.

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Published on the web by Cape Argus on July 25, 2005.

## **ADDENDUM E: MEDIA ARTICLE – Davis (2005)**

### **ODE TO THE LOST MAN**

Are men misunderstood and misrepresented by the media? Yes, argues Christine Davis.

I MISS the Marlboro man. I miss his swagger, his tight jeans, the self-assured grin on his face, and his dusty cowboy hat. He exists in a world of power, passion - if only for his horses and cigarettes - and protective strength (if you ignore that he was a cancer pimp). He was the icon of his time: the kind of man surrounded by smells of warm dust, sunlight and testosterone. I miss the rightness, and manliness of him. And, apparently, I'm not the only one. Men miss him too. They miss the man they wished they could be. The man, by smoking his cigarettes, they strove to be.

His loss must serve as a sad cautionary tale for all media specialists and producers. You see, the findings of the recent Gender and Media Audience Study undertaken by Gender Links show that men and women would like to see men in non-traditional roles such as caregivers, parents and home makers. In other words, there is a desire for men to see themselves reflected in more diverse ways in the media. They have watched the same carbon copy archetypes and are no longer convinced that those are the types of man they want to or should be. The study indicates the deconstruction of western entertainment and news media.

In a world where the majority of media characters, writers, directors and producers are men and stories mostly focus on situations that highlight the best and most courageous characteristics of men, deconstruction of media is vital for further social evolution of men and women. The media has a number of roles - sometimes a watchdog of political processes, sometimes a reporter on events or issues, but also, a tool of reflection and guidance. In essence, TV, radio and the print media, are tools of reflections, validation and choice. But what is being reflected and validated by the media today?

Are enough options presented for consumers to have enough choices? The normalisation of maleness in the media has led to an almost obliviousness of it. This has resulted in conceptions

of new roles for men and new constructions of masculinity not being sought or imagined. The problem then is imagination, or rather, the lack of it. Women have long fought their roles as business women, leaders, passionate and unashamedly sexual sensual creatures.

If we are to believe what is presented to us in and through media, the unintentional result of this is that men have almost been emasculated in their media roles. The media's focus on conflict - because conflict is interesting and entertaining - has highlighted the conflict between men and women's desires, instead of showing any negotiation and sharing of power. It seems that power cannot be shared in relationships, but can only exist in one individual. If that is true, then women, through empowerment, are emasculating men. This argument is flawed and shows very little imagination. Real relationships are about negotiation of power, not the transfer from one to another in any given situation.

The media have also left black men with few options outside of perpetual idealisations of abuse and aggression. Whereas I might say I miss the Marlboro man, many Africans and African Americans could say they feel the same about Muhammad Ali. They miss his confidence, his strength and power, his charm and wit, and mostly, the courage and foresight he expressed by saying "I'm so pretty" every chance he got. Seldom do black characters today reflect the complex and intelligent choices made by Ali, and therefore, few come close to reflecting the options he presented. Ali allowed black men to be sexual, but the media made them sexualised. Today, black men in the media are still shown with the most aggressive characteristics and are presented with fewer positive role models than their white counterparts. They are almost always the perpetrators of violence in films and the news, almost always shown to be the causes and instigators of sexual violence.

Of course, social conditions like poverty, unemployment and poor education do lead to an increase in violence, but when you see the solution to your social problems always presented in glamourised violent lifestyles in the media, alternative decisions seem boring, unrealistic and unattainable. Again, the problem is not that men have been emasculated by women in the media, but instead, the lack of imagination on the part of media producers themselves. Little effort is made to establish whether or not the notion of masculinity is accurate; whether or not that point

of view is really reflective of what men want and need. There is a need to have a fully representative and diverse media.

Men and women themselves are best placed to demand a media that best serves all its viewers', readers' and listeners' interests. But this can not be done without an acknowledgement and removal of the messages we have inherited and incorporated. Or the media will become its own self-fulfilling prophesy; without imagination or future.

- Christine Davis is the Writing Programme Coordinator at Agenda. This article is part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service. The Gender and Media Audience Study, undertaken in 13 Southern African countries, explored how women and men interact with the news.

Daily Dispatch – 26 August 2005

**ADDENDUM F: MEDIA ARTICLE - Joubert (2007)****‘MEESTE SA MANS WIL NOU MOOI LYK’**

LIEZEL JOUBERT 16/04/2007 01:02:35 AM - (SA)

JOHANNESBURG. – Suid-Afrikaanse mans is nie meer skaam om dit te sê nie: Hulle hou óók daarvan om mooi lyk. Onlangse navorsing deur die Nielsen Company het aan die lig gebring dat 94% van Suid-Afrikaanse respondente saamgestem het dat mans meer belangstel in persoonlike versorging as in die verlede.

Die akteur Neels van Jaarsveld, wat tans in M-Net se sepie Binnelanders gesien word, is ’n bewys daarvan. “Omdat ons op stel grimering moet dra, is dit lekker om elke nou en dan vir ’n facial of ’n massering te gaan,” erken hy. Luidens Nielsen se navorsing, wat 25 408 internet-respondente van 46 verbruikersmarkte betrek het, het meer as 90% van Suid-Afrikaanse respondente gesê dis aanvaarbaar vir mans om meer geld en tyd aan hul voorkoms te bestee.

Marcus Brewster, reklamegheoeroe van Marcus Brewster Publicities, sê ’n moontlike rede hiervoor is dat versorging onder mans aangemoedig word. “Met velsorgprodukte spesifiek vir mans en manstydskrifte wat ruimte afstaan aan artikels oor versorging en aan die bemerking van dié produkte, ondersteun die media dit. Dis nie meer iets waarvoor mans hoef skaam te wees nie.” Vir Van Jaarsveld gaan dit daaroor om jouself op te pas en jou voorkoms vir so lank as moontlik in stand te hou. “Die stigma dat net verfynde ouens na hulself kyk, is afgebreek met die skepping van die metro-man. Deesdae word mans nie daaraan geoordeel nie en met die beskikbaarheid van produkte hoef jy nie meer skelmpies jou meisie se room te gebruik nie.” Hoewel sowat twee derdes van die respondente van ander lande beweer het dat hulle nie meer geld aan skoonheidsprodukte en -behandelings bestee as in die verlede nie, het die Nielsen-verslag egter gewys dat 41% van Suid-Afrikaners nou meer bestee.

“Dít kan wees as gevolg van ons groeiende middelklas en verbruikersmark. Daar is ’n toenemende aantal professionele jong mense met geld en ambisie. Hulle het die motor, die huis en wil ook die voorkoms hê. Baie Suid-Afrikaners het nou eers finansiële toegang daartoe,” sê Brewster. Hy sê dit gaan ook nie net oor ydelheid nie, maar oor ekonomiese oorlewing. “Versorging is net een van die maniere om jouself te laat uitstaan in die mededingende sakewêreld.”



**ADDENDUM G: MEDIA ARTICLE – Cox (2005)****NOTHING MACHO**

*A spanner in the works of the metrosexual male. If men become more feminised, they risk dying out altogether, says an American magazine, so New Man **Tom Cox** in London decides it's time to swop moisturiser for engine oil and get back in touch with his masculinity.*

You would be forgiven for thinking that these are good times to be a man. There's no immediate prospect of enlistment – the only way we're going to do National Service is if we sign up for a popular reality TV show – and our relationship with the opposite sex has, in many ways, never been better. Where once we grunted sexist remarks and failed to show our emotional side, now we chip in with the housework and talk about our feelings.

I can't speak for everyone, but I think I can speak for a certain generation of middle-class men who have rejected laddish tendencies, learnt to moisturise, and would appear to be more than happy shuffling around the supermarket with our other halves (although, of course, we call them our "partners," not our "other halves"). WE are a generation of Toms, Sams, Wills and Matts – even our names sound gentle and unthreatening – and we shy away from blokey banter and timber yards. People like us have been called over the past few years, "metrosexuals" and "new men", and we shrug off such nauseating labels in our easy-going way – but don't let that fool you. Inside, we're not so relaxed about how things have turned out. We're burning with manly rage. Or gently simmering, anyway.

The backlash against metrosexuals is well under way in the United States, home of the "Iron John" movement, which advocated a return of stronger, more masculine men. American Maxim magazine last month warned that if men become more feminised, they are in danger of dying out altogether. Increasing numbers of metrosexual males, the magazine said, are suffering from a deadly condition called "mantropy", a "silent killer which strikes men in the prime of life", the symptoms include having pedicures and drinking fruit smoothies – and which is propelling us towards extinction.

If we don't re-engage with our macho sides, the magazine cautioned, we're history. Meanwhile, a recent survey found that men and women are growing tired of media images of well-groomed, feminine-looking men. Personally, I can't quite recall when I stopped becoming the man that I always thought I'd be. One moment I was nine years old, with an extensive collection of toy cars and a conviction that I would one day turn into Tom Selleck; the next, I was a floppy-haired 20-year-old with a feminist girlfriend and inability to change a tyre.

These days, I leave the DIY and the linking up of electrical equipment to my wife. Any feelings of inadequacy are usually assuaged by the fact that I can cook a decent meal and intuitively pick out her favourite handbag from a selection of 30 in a women's magazine.

But every so often the reality of the situation kicks in: a feeling of redundancy. What kind of man am I? I mean, I can grow a decent beard and I am pretty good at most sports, but what, precisely, am I contributing to the future of my gender? Sure, it's nice to be sensitive and to sit down one evening to watch the BBC TV programme *What Not To Wear*, but why am I left increasingly contemplating the plight of the cuttlefish, a creature that adopts female characteristics as a survival technique. Is all hope lost? What would life be like if I had a stab at being a proper man – a man's man – just for a while? Last week, I decided to find out. I was going to get in touch with my masculinity.

Unfortunately, there were practical considerations to take into account. I've recently put my back out, so the *Queensbury Rules* was out. There were financial restraints, too. I couldn't afford to trade in my Toyota Yaris, which seems to have been designed with diminutive, middle-aged female clerical workers in mind, for a Dodge Challenger, since I've drained my bank account buying clothes. Nevertheless, none of this was going to stop me cultivating an intrinsic aura of manliness. There are, of course, many ways to be a proper man. I decide that a good place to start is at the workshop of my golfing mate, Don.

Don, whose dog remains proudly uncastrated, is one of the most unreconstructed men I know, but also one of the nicest. One of my worries about proper manliness is that it would lead me to be a bit of a git, possible with a tendency towards sexism, but Don seems to have found a way to combine a tough, taciturn manner with an overall good nature. He is also very good at mending cars. I remember my granddad once showing me how a car engine worked, back when I was in

my teens, but I think I was checking my hair in the wing mirror at the time and not really concentrating. Since then, I've found it surprisingly easy to get by on the road, despite knowing nothing about the machine that carries me.

Sure, I kick tyres in garage forecourts in a way that suggests I know what I'm doing, but it's only a front. I can just about check the oil, but if even the smallest thing goes wrong I call in help, just like my mates. Within an hour of being with Don, though, I have dismantled a faulty radiator on a 1984 Mercedes convertible. More importantly, I have survived in a world of greasy, leathery smells, where men shout cheerful insults at one another over engine noises, and I haven't a) burst into tears, b) tried to discuss the last novel I read, or c) talked about how all this makes me feel. The further I get into my masculine experiment, the more I notice that the real men I meet can go for hours speaking to one another without saying anything.

As someone who's always preferred female company, clearly I need to learn to operate in these environments. As Don and his mates tease one another about their sex lives, or the builder working on my house joshes about "the old ball and chain", the best I can manage is the odd slightly hollow giggle. But a combination of the grease on my hands and the testosterone flowing through my system gives me a small masculine buzz that I carry with me into the next day, when I attempt to re-arrange my tool shed. Or, rather, the shed where my wife keeps her tools and I keep my badminton racket. Strangely, it's at home that I find being a real man most rewarding. Having decided to abandon my lifelong love of cats and be a "dog person" for a week, I am able to worm my way out of all sorts of vomit-clearing and mouse-disposing duties. For the first time in two years, I leave the dishes to fester and "forget" to put the rubbish out, leaving my wife looking confused and disappointed. But while the old Tom might have felt guilty, the new Tom – Iron Tom – merely responds by saying "Sorry – I can't help it, I'm a bloke!" He then cracks open a beer and goes out to the garage to read a book about sailing.

Could life always be this easy?

Conversely, many of my experiments with manliness in the outside world are less successful. A trip to Jewson results in an embarrassing mix-up, where my lack of knowledge regarding the

difference between sealant and varnish is exposed. Initially, I feel proud, strutting about in the open air, but by the fourth or fifth day I'm feeling self-conscious. It quickly becomes clear that my new way of walking – a poor imitation of Lee Marvin's swagger in *Point Blank* – isn't working, so I drop it and return to my "trundling librarian" style. I experiment with smoking Panatellas, but I am left feeling less like Clint Eastwood than I'd hoped, and fumbling with the packet almost results in a nasty accident on the road, so I give that up, too.

Then there are hygiene matters. Because my new-found masculinity regime involves the outlawing of fancy soaps, moisturisers and conditioners, my hair is displaying a sort of "straw mushroom" effect and I am experiencing the worst outbreak of spots I've had since I was 16. These become a true liability later when I decide to visit one of Norfolk's oldest barber shops and have my first cut-throat shave: an experience that, while satisfying, ultimately leave me feeling like an extra in *The Godfather*.

Will I ever feel like a real man? Will adopting old-fashioned manly attributes always make me feel like a nine-year-old playing at being a grown-up? Maybe it's just a matter of getting used to it. Whatever the case, during the final hours of my masculine experiment I find myself asking: "Do I need any of this, really?" Convenience begins to triumph over ego. I have a perfectly good wet razor at home with a neat little battery in the back that gets me as clean-shaven as I could wish. I made a decision not to smoke cigars years ago, and I have no real wish to change that. I can't kid myself that I like watching professional darts as much as I like watching *Big Brother*, so I change channels. I like being able to talk to female friends about their feelings. I like fruit smoothies.

Society has made me like this, and let's face it: it's not so bad. Maybe the cuttlefish has the right idea. With that said, when my time as Iron Tom is up, I do find myself logging on to Amazon and having a browse through some Haynes car manuals. I'm pleased to find one for my Yaris, so perhaps it's not so much a girly car after all. – *The Daily Telegraph*.

This article was posted in the *Daily News*, August 8, 2005, p. 10.

## **ADDENDUM H: MEDIA ARTICLE – SAPA (2006)**

### **‘WONDERBRA’ VIR MANS LIG EN VERGROOT HUL BATES**

SAPA-AFP 01/11/2006 08:05:46 PM - (SA)

SYDNEY. – ’n Australiese maatskappy het gesê hy het die manlike weergawe van die Wonderbra ontwerp. Dié reeks onderbroeke vir mans is spesiaal ontwerp om die oënskynlike grootte van die inhoud te vergroot. “Basies lig, verdeel en vergroot dit,” het die man agter aussieBum, Sean Ashby, gesê. “Die onderbroek gebruik al die natuurlike bates van die persoon, of hulle nou groot, klein of middelmatig is.”

Binne-in die onderbroek is ’n wonderkeël wat “verdeel en ’n samedrukking voorkom”.

Ashby het gesê die onderbroek, wat verlede week bekend gestel is, het baie aandag in Amerika en Europa getrek. Volgens die bemarkingsveldtog sal dié nuwe wonderkeël jou baie groter laat lyk en wonderlik laat voel. Dit word wêreldwyd in groot afdelingswinkels verkoop en is in meer as 70 lande oor die internet beskikbaar.

**ADDENDUM I: INFORMATION REGARDING CBMW AND CBE**

Both the “*The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*”(CBMW) and “*Christians for Biblical Equality*” (CBE) issued statements about gender relations (in 1989) that it claimed was based on a high view and a close reading of the Bible, but the two groups came to very different conclusions.

1. CBMW deplores “the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism” and asserts that “Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the fall, and was not a result of sin.” Although affirming that “both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, equal before God as persons,” and that “in the church, redemption given by Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation,” CBMW’s founders assert that “nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.” The theory of gender complementarity is propagated by the theological presuppositions of most theologians in CBMW.

See: “The Danvers Statement” (1989), also available at <http://www.cbmw.org/about/danvers.php>

2. On the other hand, CBE has taken a different exegetical stance. In its reading of the Bible, women and men were created for full and equal partnership. Further, Adam’s rule over Eve occurred only as a result of the fall, and “through faith in Jesus Christ we all become children of God ... heirs to the blessings of salvation without reference to racial, social or gender distinctives.” Consequently, for the adherents of CBE, in marriage “neither spouse is to seek to dominate the other, but each is to act as a servant of the other ... [sharing] responsibilities of leadership and the basis of gifts, expertise and availability.” And in the church, “spiritual gifts of women and men are to be recognized, developed and used ... at all levels of involvement.”

See: “Men, Women and Biblical Equality” (1989), available at <http://www.cbeinternational.org>