

**“It’s hard work to be a girl”: Adolescent girls’ experiences of
girlhood in three low-income communities in South Africa.**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Gender plays a pivotal role in every aspect of our lives. It influences our behaviour and how we are treated, and is a critical driver of development, mental health and well-being. Since 1994, South Africa has taken great strides in establishing a society built on a culture of human rights that are enshrined in its Constitution and Bill of Rights. It has envisioned that in this “new” South Africa there would be a better life for all. Despite the gains since 1994 and the commitment to build a society based on human rights, equality and freedom, traditional notions of gender and gender discrimination tenaciously persist in both the private and public spheres of South African society, which tend to have a profound influence in the lives of women and girls. Hence, the aim of this study was to explore, with a group of adolescent girls from three low-income communities in the Winelands area of the Western Cape, what it is like to be a girl in their contexts. Further aims were to explore their constructions of femininities and masculinities; their experiences of gender; and how they negotiated their positions as girls in their communities.

In this qualitative study, I used social constructionism and, feminist and objectification theory to conceptualise and understand the participants’ experiences. The data were collected by means of focus group discussions and individual interviews. Sixty-one adolescent girls, between the ages of 13 and 15, participated in seven focus group discussions. Each focus group met for four consecutive weeks at a school in the three communities. Individual interviews were also conducted with four participants, one principal and two teachers at the different schools. I managed all the transcribed data with ATLAS.ti, a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programme, which supported a thematic analysis of the data.

Three key themes were identified in this study: (1) About being a girl; (2) Menarche: Becoming a woman; and (3) Gender relationships at home and with peers. The findings of this study suggest that girlhood is a complex and dynamic process, and girls often straddle ambivalent and

contradictory positions in their subjectification and embodiment of girlhood. The findings further suggest that girlhood, as experienced by these girls, is marked by high levels of gender inequity and surveillance. Thus, despite commitments to gender equity in South Africa, these girls were still socialised to know their place. Intense levels of surveillance were used to regulate normative femininity and the respectability of these girls, thereby keeping the “good” girl intact. It is recommended that a range of interventions should be initiated and implemented on multiple levels to promote gender equity and gender consciousness with parents, teachers, boy and girls.

Keywords: adolescent girls, emphasised femininities, gender inequity, girlhood, low-income, objectification, respectability, surveillance, womanhood

OPSOMMING

Gender speel 'n deurslaggewende rol in alle aspekte van ons lewens. Dit beïnvloed ons gedrag, hoe ons behandel word, en dien as 'n kritieke dryfveer vir ontwikkeling, geestesgesondheid en welstand. Sedert 1994 het Suid-Afrika groot vordering gemaak in die totstandkoming van 'n samelewing wat op 'n kultuur van menseregte gebou is, soos in die Grondwet en die Handves van Menseregte vervat. Dit het 'n beter lewe vir almal in hierdie "nuwe" Suid-Afrika in die vooruitsig gestel. Ondanks die vordering sedert 1994 en die verbintenis om 'n samelewing, gegrond op menseregte, gelykheid en vryheid te bou, het tradisionele opvattinge van gender en gender diskriminasie in die privaat en publieke sferes van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing, hardnekkig bly voortbestaan. Dit het die geneigdheid om 'n diepgaande invloed op die lewens van vroue en meisies te hê.

Vandaar die doel van hierdie studie, om met 'n groep adolessente meisies uit drie lae-inkomste gemeenskappe in die Wynlandstreek van die Wes-Kaap, verkennend te bepaal wat dit beteken om binne hulle konteks 'n meisie te wees. Verdere doelwitte was om die meisies se konstruksies van vroulikheid en manlikheid; hulle ervarings van gender; en hoe hulle hul posisie as meisie binne hulle gemeenskap beding, te verken.

In hierdie kwalitatiewe studie het ek gebruik gemaak van sosiale konstruksionisme en feministiese- en objektiveringsteorie om die deelnemers se ervarings te konseptualiseer en te verstaan. Die data is deur middel van fokusgroepsbesprekings en individuele onderhoude ingesamel. Een-en-sestig adolessente meisies, tussen die ouderdomme 13 en 15 jaar, het aan sewe fokusgroepsbesprekings deelgeneem. Elke fokusgroep het vir vier agtereenvolgende weke in 'n skool, in die drie gemeenskappe, ontmoet. Individuele onderhoude is ook met vier deelnemers, een skoolhoof, en twee onderwysers by die verskillende skole gevoer. Ek het die getranskribeerde data met behulp van ATLAS.ti, 'n rekenaarondersteunde kwalitatiewe sagtewareprogram, verwerk. Die program het 'n tematiese ontleding van die data ondersteun.

Drie temas het in hierdie studie na vore gekom: (1) Die ervaring van meisiewees; (2) Menarg: Om 'n vrou te word; en (3) Genderverhoudings in die huis en met portuurgroepe. Bevindinge van hierdie studie suggereer dat om 'n meisie te wees, 'n komplekse en dinamiese proses is, en dat meisies dikwels ambivalente en teenstrydige posisies in hulle subjektivering en verpersoonliking van hoe dit is om 'n meisie te wees, huldig. Die bevindinge suggereer verder dat om 'n meisie te wees, soos deur hierdie meisies ervaar, deur hoë vlakke van genderonbillikheid en polisiëring (“surveillance”) gekenmerk word.

Derhalwe, ondanks die verbintenis tot gendergelykheid in Suid-Afrika, is hierdie meisies steeds gesosialiseer om hulle plek te ken. Intense vlakke van polisiëring is gebruik om normatiewe vroulikheid en ordentlikheid by hierdie meisies te reguleer om sodoende die sogenaamde “goeie” meisie in toom te hou. Daar word aanbeveel dat 'n reeks intervensies op verskeie vlakke van stapel gestuur en geïmplementeer word om gendergelykheid en genderbewustheid met ouers, onderwysers, seuns en meisies te bevorder.

Trefwoorde: adolessente meisies, gendergelykheid, oordrewe vroulikheid, meisiewees, lae-inkomste, objektivering, ordentlikheid, polisiëring, vroulikheid

STATEMENT REGARDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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DEDICATION

To Liesl, Robin, Adrian and Jemma

Thank you for all the lessons you taught me about mothering and about myself

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Caged bird

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou

Chapter 1: Introduction

Gender plays a pivotal role in every aspect of our lives. It influences our behaviour, how we are treated, and is a critical driver of development, mental health and well-being (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2003). Gender equality is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (UN), and to realise this, the UN developed various instruments, charters and treaties, which governments across the world ratified and are contractually obliged to implement (WHO, 2003). Despite all these instruments, the UN states it has been unsuccessful in promoting and protecting the rights of women and failed to address discrimination against women in a comprehensive manner (United Nations, 2014).

In 1979, the General Assembly of the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 2008). Further, in response to the magnitude and effects of gender discrimination and violence against women, the United Nations in 1993 classified violence against women as a public health problem (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005). However, violence against women is more than a public health problem; it is “one of the most [universal] violations of human rights” (UNIFEM, 2005, p. 1). In September 2000, world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Declaration yet again envisioned a future world where countries work in a global partnership to provide a better life for all the people of the world. This vision, collectively known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), they concretised in eight goals (see WHO, 2003 for a list of the MDGs). These leaders made a commitment to apply resources and make concerted efforts to address poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women in their various countries (Ocampo, 2006).

The third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3), promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, demonstrates the international community’s recognition that

gender is a critical driver for health and development, and that these issues are closely intertwined (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). A scrutiny of all the MDGs also illustrates how all the MDGs integrate gender into all its targets (WHO, 2003). To provide new impetus to the Platform for Action, the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 adopted the mainstreaming of gender issues in society. Gender mainstreaming, the process of creating awareness and imparting knowledge of how gender influences overall growth and development, is a global strategy adopted by governments to address persisting structural gender inequalities on all levels in society to promote equality between men and women (Mehra & Rao Gupta, 2006; WHO, 2008). Although the MDG Gap Task Force report that many of the MDG targets, such as poverty reduction, access to clean drinking water and sanitation, and gender parity in primary school, have been reached, they state that there is still much "unfinished business" regarding gender equity and empowerment (United Nations, 2014). Hence, with the conclusion of the MDGs at the end of 2015, world leaders have yet again called for a renewed commitment for global partnerships post-2015 to realize the sustainable development goals to improve the lives for all people across the world (Magar, 2015).

The democratic government of South Africa (S.A.) is a signatory to the treaties and instruments instituted by the United Nations to address gender discrimination and promote gender equality. To achieve this vision of a "better life for all" and to promote a culture of human rights, non-sexism, a caring and socially just society, the South African government instituted comprehensive policies and frameworks that are enshrined in the South African Constitution. Despite the gains since 1994, gender inequality persists in S.A. as borne out by the high rates of poverty among women, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS (Institute of Security Studies, 2014; Shefer, 2014; Statistics South Africa, 2012).

Children born post-1994 are the first generation to grow up in a democratic South Africa. This generation is sometimes also referred to as Mandela's Children or the Born Frees, and many in

South Africa and further afield hoped that the children of a new democracy would have a better life, opportunities and material conditions that their parents were denied by the legislated inequity of apartheid South Africa. Although S.A. succeeded in providing universal access to primary school education and health care for children, a number of risk factors still compromise their optimal development.

Recent reports indicate that approximately 11 million children in S.A. are living in conditions of poverty and are at an increased risk for negative outcomes (Narayan & Mahajan, 2013; South African Human Rights Commission [SAHRC] & UNICEF, 2014). According to the World Bank (2012) varying determinants, such as circumstances at birth, whether a child is orphaned, or lives in a rural area, an informal settlement or in a township; the education levels of their parents/caregivers and poor access to social services, persist to shape the levels of opportunities for children in South Africa. In addition, the variable levels of quality of education and the failure to complete primary school education on time, high levels of school dropout, lack of access to early childhood development programmes, water and sanitation, and the failure to provide safe neighbourhoods continue to have long-term impacts on the development and well-being of children. Thus, inequalities and disadvantage at birth tend to be self-perpetuating and trap children in a cycle of poverty, which tend to re-emerge in adulthood and is transmitted from one generation to the next (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014; World Bank, 2012).

Growing up in a patriarchal society could also negatively influence the mental health of both girls and boys. Various studies indicate that girls in South Africa are at an increased risk for gender inequities, sexual abuse, rape and HIV/AIDS (Abrahams, Loots, Sikweyiya, & Jewkes, 2012; Gaganakis, 2003; Moyo, Levandowski, Mac Phail, Rees, & Pettifor, 2008; Shisana et al., 2014). Thus, French Gates (2014) states that gender inequities undermine the well-being of women and girls and “no society can achieve its potential with half of its population marginalized and disempowered” (p. 1273).

1.1 Background, aims and rationale of the study

Since 2002, I have been involved in a community intervention that aims to provide adolescent girls a safe space where they can discuss issues that affect them as girls in their communities. It also endeavours to enhance Grade 7 adolescent girls' social competencies to facilitate their transition from primary to secondary school. The programme addresses some developmental tasks regarded as necessary for positive psychosocial development and covers issues such as positive self-esteem, sexual and reproductive health, future educational and career aspirations and establishing healthy intimate and interpersonal relationships. The girls in the project, born post-1990, are of the first generation to grow up in a democratic South Africa. However, despite growing up in a democratic South Africa, the stories that the girls were telling me during the weekly sessions were reminiscent of my own childhood under apartheid. Among others, stories of gender inequality, poverty, violence and substance abuse were the most salient. Particularly, the girls' experiences of gender inequality, their seeming acceptance of traditional notions of gender and male privilege, evoked a curiosity in me to understand their experiences and underlying explanations of these phenomena, and the meanings that they ascribe to gender.

According to Bruner (1990), each society constructs "canonical narratives", its own stories about how its members should live in that society. Rappaport (2000) refers to these stories as community narratives, which "tell [its] members important information about themselves" (p. 4). Hence, when girls talk about themselves they describe "a web of other relationships, with other people, [and] with the social world in which they live" (Tolman, 1994, p. 254). How girls tell the stories of their lives, the connections they make and language they use, reveal to us "the world they see and in which they act" (Gilligan, 1993, p. 2). However, Lawler (2000) states that we do not only situate ourselves in relation to these narratives and "forge our identities in relation to them" (p. 4), but these narratives "are also produced and reproduced through social practices" (p. 1).

Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore with a group of adolescent girls, from three low-income communities in the Western Cape, what it is like to be a girl in their contexts. Further aims were to explore their constructions of femininities and masculinities; their experiences of gender; and how they negotiated their positions as girls in their communities.

Although the current literature on adolescent girls in South Africa seems to focus on their risk for gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS and other risk-taking behaviours (Mathews, Jamieson, Lake, & Smith, 2014; Reddy et al., 2010; Shisana et al., 2014), there seems to be a paucity of studies exploring early adolescent girls' experiences of girlhood and gender. I envisaged that by speaking and listening to these girls, I could develop a study which could provide us with local knowledge of early adolescent girls' experiences of girlhood, their constructions and experiences of gender, and how this influences their interpersonal relationships and their aspirations. This information could also inform community interventions on multiple levels to facilitate adolescent girls' development and well-being.

1.2 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. In the next chapter, I provide the theoretical framework and constructs that informed this study. Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature with a particular focus on gender as a determinant of well-being in South Africa. Chapter 4 describes the methodology and methods used in this study. I discuss the findings of this study according to three dominant themes in separate chapters. Chapter 5 presents the girls' experiences of being a girl, Chapter 6 their experiences of menarche and becoming a woman, and, in Chapter 7, I discuss participants' gender relationships at home and with their peers. I offer some concluding thoughts about the findings and their implications for theory, practice and future research in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

In this study, I used social constructionism and feminist and objectification theory to conceptualise and understand the participants' experiences. I also looked at adolescent girls' development through an ecological lens. These theories are pertinent to this study as they offer an understanding of how these girls are embedded in, and interact with, the different discourses and power relations in their contexts, and how these discourses influence their experiences as girls. Given the breadth of these theoretical frameworks, this section is not exhaustive, as a comprehensive discussion of these frameworks is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, in this chapter I discuss some of the basic theoretical constructs and assumptions of the afore-mentioned frameworks, which I deemed relevant for this study. For comprehensive discussions about social constructionism and feminism see Burr (2003), K. Gergen (1985, 1999a), Nicholson (1990) and W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001). For an overview of the development of feminism and the women's movement in South Africa, see De La Rey (1997), Fester (1997), Gouws (2012), Hassim, (2005), Meer (2013), and Shefer and Ratele (2006). First, I present a selective overview of social constructionism as the overarching framework for this study as well as some of the critiques of social constructionism. Thereafter I briefly discuss feminism, objectification theory and adolescent development, and conclude the chapter with the relevance of these frameworks for this study.

2.2 Social constructionism

According to W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001), from about the 1970s there was "a climate of perturbation" (p. 91) when social scientists were sceptical and rebelled against modernism's taken-for-granted assumptions and methodologies about the nature of social reality. They suggest that this "disquiet and cynicism towards the dominant order" (p. 92) had its roots in

the political and human rights movements of the 1960s in the United States of America (USA) and Europe. K. Gergen, Lightfoot and Sydow (2004) concur that this scepticism that “universalized conceptions of truth, objectivity, rationality, and moral principle[s]” (p. 389) can explain human experiences and the nature of reality, brought about a revolution regarding assumptions about the nature of social reality. K. Gergen et al. (2004) suggest this revolution or “shared consciousness” is known by various terms such as, “*postfoundationalism, postempiricism, poststructuralism, postEnlightenment, and postmodernism . . .* [while] some speak of a ‘linguistic turn,’ others [speak] of a ‘cultural turn’ or an ‘interpretive turn’” (K. Gergen et al., 2004, p. 389, italics authors’ emphasis).

W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001) note that Berger and Luckmann played a seminal role in introducing social constructionism to the social sciences. Berger and Luckmann (as cited in W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001), posit that social reality is constructed through three defining moments, namely, externalisation, objectification and internalisation. Externalisation refers to the constructs and institutions that societies and groups construct in their attempts to make sense of their social realities. Objectification refers to the process whereby “those constructed realities are made to seem really real – as if they occur naturally, are ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered” (W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001, p. 167). Internalisation is the process whereby the social reality becomes known and experienced through socialisation and enculturation. Although we internalise the taken-for-granted knowledge of our societies through social interaction, social constructionists posit that internalisation is ongoing and the acquired knowledge is fluid and changing.

K. Gergen (1985) posits that social constructionism does not have a unified definition or theory and Burr (2003) refers to it as a “broad family”. Social constructionists have influenced psychological theories and methodologies about our understanding social phenomena and our

selves, and they unite around four key assumptions (Burr, 2003; K. Gergen, 1985, 1999a, 1999b; K. Gergen et al., 2004):

1. Social constructionists are critical of and resist the positivist-empiricist taken-for-granted assumption or “truth” that we can understand the nature of reality and ourselves through unbiased and objective observations. Constructionists posit that there can be no objective “truth” about the world or people, but that there are multiple “truths” or versions of reality. Bohan (1997) states that what we perceive as truth “is a construction, a best understanding, based upon and inextricably intertwined with the contexts within which it is created” (p. 38). Durrheim (1997) concurs that these “truths and facts are always perspectival interpretations which can only emerge against the backdrop of socially shared understandings” (p. 177).
2. Constructionists posit that “the process of understanding [the world] is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship” (K. Gergen, 1985, p. 267). Hence, constructionists argue that the terms and constructs we use to understand the nature of reality are social artefacts, which are historically and culturally situated.
3. Social constructionists contend that our knowledge is not derived from an objective reality “out there”, nor does it reside in the minds of individuals (K. Gergen, 1985). Rather, these meanings are social constructions, negotiated through language and social interaction among people.
4. Constructionists state that there is a symbiosis between knowledge and social action. The negotiated meanings allow for the plurality of voices and a multiplicity of social constructions about the world. Burr (2003) suggests these multiple constructions of reality privilege some behaviours over others and “are therefore bound up with power relations

because they have implications for what actions are permissible for different people, and for how they may treat others” (p. 5).

Given the social nature of reality, it follows that constructionism challenges the essentialist assumptions of traditional psychology that the world or people have certain defining inherent essences, which we can discover or know (K. Gergen et al., 2004). For example, Foucault’s position that sexuality is a consequence of historical discourses and power relations and not an innate aspect of the body or the person, has provided feminists a valuable framework to understand how the body and women’s sexuality are culturally constructed and produced. K. Gergen et al. (2004) further suggest that constructionists challenge traditional psychology’s foregrounding the primacy of an “individual knower,” who is a self-directing, rational and moral agent, but rather posit that knowledge, emotion, morality and reason are constructed in social relationships. Thus, Burr (2003) also states that social reality comes into existence through language and discourse.

2.2.1 Discourses

According to Burr (2003), we are born into contexts with pre-existing categories and frameworks. By acquiring language and using these categories and concepts, we not only make sense of our worlds but, with others, also reproduce and co-construct the world. Hence, she argues that language is more than a form of expression. Rather, it is a form of social action through which “all the objects of our consciousness, every ‘thing’ we think of or talk about, including our identities, our selves, is constructed [and] manufactured out of discourses” (Burr, 2003, p. 105). She defines discourse as:

A set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a

particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light. (Burr, 2003, p. 64)

Hollway (1983) further highlights how discourses are a communal “system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values . . . [that] are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual’s set of ideas” (p. 124). Hence, Gavey (1997) concludes that discourse broadly refers to how different groups constitute meaning within their particular contexts, at specific times. Discourses, which we enact on a daily basis, are connected to the various structures and practices in our societies. Some discourses are more privileged than others, and they have rules and obligations that tell us what are acceptable or inappropriate behaviours in our contexts (Burr, 2003; Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009; Phillips, 2000). Hence, discourses serve as frames of reference on which we draw to construct our subjectivities and to make meaning of the world. For instance, from a social constructionist perspective, girls’ subjectivities and identity-making practices are socially embedded and they draw on different threads (e.g., threads of age, class, race, and gender) in their contexts to weave their identities (Burr, 2003). Currie et al. (2009) suggest that although subjectivity seems a rather individualistic construct, it is a social action, constituted through language and discourse. Hence, girls’ descriptions of their subjectivities not only tell us how they “think and feel about their worlds, what they value, and what they believe to be true” (Currie et al., 2009, p. xvii), but also what society expects them to be in the world.

However, Foucault (1972) states that discourses are not only “groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but [they also include] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). For example, in making sense of their place in the world, girls not only construct subjectivities through their talk, but they also bring their subjectivities into existence through their actions. Hall (1996) conceptualised this fusion between talk and actions as the construction of identity, which he suggests is:

A meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to “interpellate,” speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken. (p. 5)

Gonick (2003) also refers to this “meeting point” as a “double movement” – that is, when we position ourselves in the discourses available to us and the moment of doing so, we are “also subjecting [ourselves] to the constitutive force and regulative norms of those discourses” (p. 10). Thus Currie et al. (2009) argue that we have to go beyond simply capturing the individual meanings of girls’ experiences; we have to grasp the social nature of their experiences and actions, as well as the influence of, what Foucault (1976) termed, the “disciplinary power of discourses” on their subjectivities.

As mentioned above, certain discourses are more privileged than others are because “it is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of truth” (Burr, 2003, p. 76). Hence, Crawford and Unger (2004) state such dominant discourses are usually seen as normative and natural, which tend to exert disciplinary power in the lives of those marginalised by such discourses. Foucault (1976) suggests that people unwittingly become self-policing subjects by monitoring and controlling their behaviour in terms of the regulatory standards of such dominant discourses. However, he also suggests that marginalised discourses and voices constantly contest and resist dominant discourses, and this sets the table for strategies of resistance. Consequently, we often embed ourselves in contradictory and competing discourses or discourses that are in flux. Given that our identities are constructed and circumscribed by the rights and obligations of discourses, constructionists posit, “identity is never fixed but always in a process, always open to change” (Burr, 2003, p. 124). From their work with adolescent girls, Currie et al. (2009) found that when navigating competing

discourses, such discourses jointly limited the girls' self-expression, yet each offered the girls a "unique 'way of being'" (p. 70).

Thus, social constructionism challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions of mainstream psychology that there is an objective reality, which can be known via objective and unbiased means of investigation. Rather, they posit, reality is constituted through social interaction and does not reside in individuals, but it is something that we co-construct through language. Hence, social constructionism highlights the multiplicity of "truths" – which are culturally and historically located and constantly shifting. Constructionists also reject the primacy of traditional science and regard it as just another discourse among a plurality of discourses. Bohan (1997) suggests the anti-essentialist stance of social constructionism illustrates how, through social interaction, power is activated and reproduced. Bohan posits that constructionist assumptions lay bare the broader power relations that are intimately connected to social structures. Thus, constructionism foregrounds the reciprocal nature of the construction of reality, the relationship between knowledge and power, shifting the focus from the individual to the contextual, locating the burden for change not on the individual but on the prevailing discourses in society (Bohan, 1997).

2.2.2 The social construction of gender

According to Lather (1991), the social construction of gender not only plays a pivotal role in shaping the material condition of our lives, but it is also central "in shaping our consciousness, skills and institutions as well . . . [our experiences of the] distribution of power and privilege" (p. 70) in our contexts. Since the 1970s, theorists started using gender as an analytical category to differentiate between the concepts sex and gender (Oakley, 1998). Flax (1990) notes that "gender, both as an analytic category and a social process, is relational" (p. 44). Flax contends that as an analytical category, gender helps us to make sense of our social worlds and the meanings related to the concrete practices associated with being male or female. The process of gender

construction, Lorber (1993) posits, starts with sex categorisation at birth, based on the physical and biological differences between males and females. According to this essentialist categorisation, Clarke and Braun (2009) state, gender is “*what you are*” and refers to the biological and reproductive sex differences between men and women.

Contrary to the notion that gender is an essence or trait inherent in individuals, De Beauvoir (1972) states that “one is not born, but rather becomes feminine [or masculine]” (p. 295). Similarly, Bohan (1997) states that gender “is not an actual, free-standing phenomenon that exists inside individuals, to be discovered and measured by social scientists. Rather, ‘gender’ is an agreement that resides in social interchange; it is precisely what we agree it to be” (p. 39).

Kimmel (2000) further asserts that gender is imbued with much complexity, and concurs that gender refers to the “cultural and social meanings, experiences, and institutional structures that are defined as appropriate for males and females” (p. 2). He maintains that these masculinities or femininities are not monolithic, but vary in time and location and could differ among individuals in a particular context at a given time. From this socially constructed perspective, “gender is *what you do*, rather than something you *have* or *are*” (Clarke & Braun, 2009, p. 232). Hence, West and Zimmerman (1987) suggest that through constantly “doing gender”, we tend to maintain, reproduce and legitimise prevailing gender ideologies in our particular social contexts.

Crawford and Unger (2004) further refer to gender as “a classification system that shapes the relations among men and women [that] influences access to power and resources” (p. 21). The gender system, they further state, influences the nature of gender roles, responsibilities, opportunities and interactions for females and males in different societies. Gender role attitudes, according to King and King (as cited by Berkel, 2004), are “beliefs about appropriate roles for men and women, [which can be] conceptualized on a continuum that range from traditional to egalitarian” (p. 737).

Gender roles, and gender role attitudes have been examined extensively given their influence in shaping the life paths of individuals (Ahrens & O'Brien, 1996; Berkel, 2004; Galambos, Petersen, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985). Adolescence in particular is the developmental phase where there is a heightened awareness of gender roles and their differentiation, as it is during this phase when young people start exercising choices that could influence their futures. Galambos et al. (1985) suggest that gender stereotypes are more pronounced among adolescents compared to any other age group.

Various studies have found significant relationships between gender role attitudes and the self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-concept, and career aspirations of young women (Ahrens & O'Brien, 1996; Galambos et al., 1985). Ahrens and O'Brien (1996) and Galambos et al. (1985) found that participants who espoused less traditional gender-role attitudes displayed higher levels of self-esteem and were positive about their ability to pursue career-related goals. Galambos et al. (1985) suggest that adolescent girls who hold gender roles that are more traditional could limit their educational and career options and pursue more gender-stereotypical careers. Similarly, Foshee and Bauman (1992) argue that traditional gender stereotypes do not only undermine one's prospects for more prestigious careers, but also perpetuate lower levels of income for women.

Lorber (1993) maintains that in most societies, rankings of gender are entrenched according to the power and prestige invested in gender statuses. Kimmel (2000) concurs that almost all societies are structured according to a gender hierarchy. In patriarchal societies, for example, men and masculinities are more highly prized than women and femininities are, men hold the positions of power and there is an unequal division of labour between women and men. The social function of these gendered practices, Lorber (1993) maintains, is "to construct women as a group to be the subordinates of men" (p. 53) and the internalisation of traditional notions of gender tend to influence opportunities in life. Consequently, gender based discrimination against women promotes conditions of gender inequality that limits their access to resources and

opportunities, and perpetuates the privilege and power of men. Thus, gender is a system of power relations, which intersects with class, race and ability that significantly influences the well-being of women and girls (Crawford & Unger, 2004).

2.2.3 Some criticism of social constructionism

Burr (2003) states that social constructionism has radically influenced our thinking of “not only what psychology as a discipline should be, but of what it means to do social science and what kinds of research questions can and should be asked” (p. 198). Similarly, McNay (1992) posits that feminists have drawn extensively on social constructionism to explain, for example, how subjectivity or femininity is constituted socially and culturally, compared to essentialist notions that these are innate essences. However, some of the critiques levelled against social constructionism suggest that its emphases, for example, on relativism, plurality and the primacy of discourse rather than human agency, fail to explain the differences among individuals and why people exercise choices that are often detrimental to their well-being (Burr, 2003; Fisher, 1999; McNay, 1992).

According to Bohan (1997), relativism plagues social constructionism and tends to cast it as apolitical. She posits that if there is no absolute “truth” and all versions of reality are equally valid, then “truths” such as misogyny could be equally valid as “feminist consciousness”. Hartsock (1990) similarly criticises the relativism of postmodern theories, stating that “for those of us who want to understand the world systematically in order to change it, postmodern theories at their best give little guidance” (p. 159). K. Gergen (1985) concedes that the constructionist position may seem relativistic because it offers “no foundational rules of warrant” (p. 273). However, he maintains that this position does not mean “anything goes” and states any form of scientific enquiry should be evaluated in terms of the normative rules of contexts. Bohan (1997) similarly notes constructionists invoke an “ethical responsibility” regarding scientific theory and

practice, and suggests that all “truths” should be evaluated in terms of its values and whether it makes a meaningful contribution to society.

Bohan (1997) also posits that social constructionists’ emphases on the plurality of experiences, and the influence of diverse factors such as race, class and/or ability, could result in the fragmentation of women’s experiences. Bohan cautions that constructionists’ emphases on heterogeneity could result in “extreme identity politics that particularizes the experience of each woman” (p. 41). This, she argues, could undermine the solidarity of shared experiences among women and fragment “collective political action” to address women’s oppression. Similarly, Bordo (1990) contends that

most of our institutions have barely begun to absorb the message of modernist social criticism; surely, it is too soon to let them off the hook via postmodern heterogeneity and instability. This is not to say that the struggle for institutional transformation will be served by univocal, fixed conceptions of social identity and location. (p. 153)

Bordo rather calls for pragmatic theoretical approaches to understand the nuances and complexity of social issues and to transform the social institutions in our society. Oakley (1998) similarly states, “if we took the admonitions of the postmodernist . . . theorists seriously, we would abandon altogether the interest a practical feminism must have in establishing how peoples’ material resources, life chances, and experiences are affected by their gender” (p. 143). Despite the fluidity of social constructionism and the critiques against it amongst some feminists, Burr (2003) states it provides feminists a framework to understand gender and power relations related to sexuality, the body and the oppression of women.

2.3 Feminisms

The history of Western feminism is commonly divided into three key eras or waves, which W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001) suggest should not be seen as “historical

progression[s], but as different *sorts* of feminism[s] . . . which are [still] active today” (p. 123). According to W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers, when attempting to understand the history of feminism, it “depends on what you take feminism to be [and] it also depends on where you look [or stand]” (p. 123). Enns and Sinacore (2001) assert that feminist theory is evolving and the boundaries between the different strands of feminist theory are porous. Given its heterogeneity and the lack of a unified definition, it seems apt to speak of “feminisms” (Crawford & Unger, 2004). M. Gergen (2008) refers to the differences within feminism as tensions, while W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001) suggest feminism has “different dialects . . . which vary in their origins, concerns and priorities, and the theories that inform them” (p. 139). Below follows a brief discussion of the different waves in feminism and some feminist schools of thought (see Enns & Sinacore, 2001; Meer, 2013; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001 for more in-depth discussions about the history of feminism and different feminist theories).

2.3.1 First wave feminism

Historical events from about the 17th to 19th century such as the French Revolution, the abolition of slavery, industrialisation in Britain and the start of World War I significantly influenced first wave feminism (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001). As a global political movement, it focused on the advancement of women’s civil, economic, legal and political rights and social justice across the world. The principal focus of first wave feminism was to work within existing systems for the rights of women to participate in society and to improve the material conditions of their lives, changing discriminatory legislation, equal work and pay, voting and civil rights for women (Kemp & Squires, 1997; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001). Crawford and Unger (2004) state that first wave feminism “lost momentum in the 1920s” (p. 4). In Britain, Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) maintain ideological differences within feminism, and the escalation of anti-feminist attempts to persuade women to

return to their traditional roles in the home and give up the jobs they acquired during the war years, played a significant role in feminism's decline during this period.

2.3.2 Second wave feminism

Second wave feminism, spanning the 1960s to the 1980s, gained impetus from the civil rights and liberation movements across the world that challenged the prevailing oppressive social and political systems during the 1960s (Meer, 2013). Meer notes how across Africa, Latin America and Asia, liberation movements challenged colonialism and imperialism. Similarly, in the USA civil rights movements protested against the Vietnam War, racism and capitalism, while in Britain and Western Europe workers and students demonstrated against capitalism and exploitative class relations. Despite the dividends from the first wave, where some women were granted the vote and were more privileged than other women, the focus of the second wave was on how women as a group continued to experience oppression and were subordinate to men. In addition, issues that were previously regarded as private, such as the household division of labour, domestic violence, rape and the lack of reproductive and sexual rights, were now located in the public domain. While the first wave is associated with the enfranchisement and civil rights for women, during the second wave there was a shift towards interpersonal politics as captured in the dictum "the personal is political" (Meer, 2013; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001). Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) note that during this era the "key site of struggle was the female body itself – its representation and the meanings attached to the bald fact of biological difference" (p. 144). W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001) concur that the second wave focused on issues of women's reproductive rights, their right to enjoy sexual desire, sexual and domestic violence, sexual and gender discrimination and the objectification of women's bodies.

During the second wave, various strands of feminism produced theoretical frameworks to conceptualise gender inequality and power relations, as well as strategies to promote social

justice and the empowerment of women. According to Enns and Sinacore (2001), liberal, radical, cultural, and socialist feminisms are four major schools of thought usually associated with second wave feminism. W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001) though, refer to liberal feminism as a “first wave dialect” as its primary focus is the transformation of society and the emancipation of women through voting rights and changing societal attitudes towards women. Radical feminism, on the other hand, posits that gender oppression and patriarchal control is ubiquitous and dominates every facet of women’s lives and the human experience (Enns & Sinacore, 2001). Radical feminists contend that patriarchy affords men power over women and that the social relations between men and women must be radically restructured. They advocate for a new social order, which is organised according to non-gendered categories, where there is a sharing of power and an end to the subservience of women (Enns & Sinacore, 2001; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001).

Contrary to radical feminism, cultural feminism celebrates and affirms women’s relational caring and nurturing qualities, which they assert industrial patriarchal societies devalue. Cultural feminism, Enns and Sinacore (2001) state, is embedded in the values proposed by 19th century feminists. It maintains that the social transformation of androcentric cultures will demand a renegotiation of gender relationships and the integration of values such as altruism, care and connectedness (Enns & Sinacore, 2001; Worell & Remer, 2003). Socialist feminism, grounded in Marxist ideology, has its roots in the 19th century feminist thinking and was revitalised by the left wing politics of the 1960s (Enns & Sinacore, 2001; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001). Socialist feminists share radical feminists’ views on the centrality of gender oppression, but offer a more complex analysis of how the intersectionality of class, economics, race and history shape women’s oppression. Consistent with Marxist ideology, socialist feminists posit that women are alienated from the products and processes of their work and, unlike liberal feminists, do not believe that individual rights will transform women’s lives. They further

postulate that the structures of capitalist societies trap women in the nurturing and caretaking roles in both the private and public spheres of society, which perpetuate their oppression. Hence, through building alliances and coalitions with other critics of capitalism, they contend the capitalist system should be structurally reformed through activism (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Enns & Sinacore, 2001; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001).

The lack of consensus regarding feminism's definition has been the source of much dissension within feminism. Black and Third World feminists have criticised the movement for its exclusive, White, middle class and heterosexual bias. Further criticisms levelled were around the discomfort with the notion that womanhood was a universal experience, the presumption that gender oppression was the central form of oppression, the dominance of White leadership in the movement and the hegemony of White feminist theories (Enns & Sinacore, 2001; Collins, 1997; hooks, 1997; W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 2001). According to hooks (1997), feminism's failure to acknowledge the intersectionality of gender, race and class, obscured how these forces and the lack of choices impact oppressed ethnic groups, as well as the differences among women. Consequently, she argues, many women could not identify with feminism because it did not speak for or about them. Similar debates also featured among feminists in the South African context, where Black feminists challenged the leadership and prominence of White feminists in the movement and placed the primacy of difference and the intersectionality of gender, race and class on the agenda (see De la Rey, 1997; Shefer & Ratele, 2006). Hence, Black feminism, also known as womanism/women of color feminisms, focuses on the different experiences of oppression of Black women and women from minority groups. Black feminists propose, among others, that theories grounded in the experiences and values of Black women should address the multiple layers of oppression, analyse access to privilege and power, and employ social activism to promote social justice.

2.3.3 Third wave feminism

According to Pilcher and Whelehan (2004), third wave feminism also has no unified definition, but suggest it could be described “as the feminism of a younger generation of women” (p. 169). W. Stainton Rogers and R. Stainton Rogers (2001) contend that feminism is now no longer restricted to the academy or to some political activists, but that young women are using popular culture, particularly music, as a site for feminist activism. Although third wave feminists acknowledge the legacy of second wave feminism, they are also critical of its limitations. Third wavers critique second wave feminism’s White, middle class exclusivity and assert it evokes guilt among ordinary women and alienates them, because they enjoy wearing fashion and cosmetics. Further, they contend that the historical and political conditions are significantly different compared to the era of the second wave, hence third wavers assert that the goals of second wave feminism do not resonate with them (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004).

Third wave feminists tend to be young university-educated women who have grown up with feminism, studied postmodern theories and gender studies, and seem to resist labelling themselves as feminists (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Although most of them refrain from calling themselves feminists, researchers found that third wavers still tend to draw on feminist ideals in constructing their subjectivities, but seem to emphasise personal choice and individualism (Budgeon, 2001; Sharpe, 2001). Sharpe (2001) argues, “the ideas and values they express are still feminist, but by not labelling them as such they miss out on the power and pleasure of shared identification” (p. 177). The manner in which young feminists do their feminist work has elicited much criticism from second wavers, often resulting in a “generational split” (Aapola et al., 2005). Greer (as cited in Aapola et al., 2005) has criticised younger feminists for depoliticising and undermining the feminist project by espousing a “ladette” culture, “girlish” and commercialised styles of feminism. Young feminists challenge these criticisms and, while they seem to embrace

some of the key tenets of the second wave, they assert that they have a more global and diverse perspective of feminism and focus more on the material circumstances of people's lives (Aapola et al., 2005).

According to hooks (1997) the lack of consensus about what feminism is, is a barrier to establishing a sound foundation to address the diverse social and political realities of women. She asserts that the slogan "the personal is political" has been subverted to such an extent that "anything goes". She notes, "what is meant by 'anything goes' is usually that any woman who wants social equality with men regardless of her political perspective (she can be a conservative right-winger or a nationalist communist) can label herself feminist" (hooks, 1997, p. 24). Meer (2013) concurs that within the current climate of neo-liberalism and the primacy of the individual, the gains of feminism and feminist constructs have been depoliticised and subverted since the 1990s. She contends that:

Gender as a concept was depoliticised - stripped of notions of power, privilege and subordination - and taken to mean women and men as though these groups were equally affected and had the same relation to systems of inequalities. Depoliticised notions of gender masked that women are oppressed and that men are privileged in relation to women of their race and class by the gender system. That men's gender interests may tend in the direction of maintaining male privilege, was ignored as gender translated into simply men and women. (Meer, 2013, p. 95)

Thus, both hooks (1997) and Meer (2013) call for a re-politicisation of feminism and the restructuring of society on multiple levels. hooks (2000) further asserts that although men as a group are the main beneficiaries of patriarchy, feminism is not anti-male, but seeks to eradicate sexism among both men and women. Hence, she advocates for the renewal of feminism and states:

Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates . . . [society] on various levels as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desires. (hooks, 1997, p. 25)

Likewise, Meer (2013) calls for the restructuring of the economic, cultural and political systems and suggests the struggle for equality needs “to focus, at the same time, on redistribution of both power and resources within all institutional sites – including the household, community, market and state and they need to focus on questions of political representation” (p. 98). Thus, the aims of feminism are to eradicate oppression, sexism, sexist exploitation and the objectification of girls/women, and to establish a society where we can be free “to be whom we are” (hooks, 2000, p. 118).

2.4 Objectification theory

For decades feminists have highlighted how growing up and living in a society that objectifies women and girls, could negatively affect their mental health and well-being (Bartky, 1990; De Beauvoir, 1972; Rich, 1983). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) proposed objectification theory as a framework for understanding the dynamics of objectification, the associated negative psychological outcomes, and how it limits the opportunities for the optimal development and quality of life of women and girls.

Objectification theory posits that female bodies are social constructions, located within socio-historical contexts, where female bodies are discursively constructed by local discourses and sociocultural practices. In objectifying social contexts, women and girls are expected to conform to narrowly defined standards of beauty and are primarily valued for their physical appearance and not for their competencies. Their bodies are also constantly gazed at, sexualised, exploited

and evaluated for their sexual functions by others for their own pleasure. This sexualisation foists unwanted or inappropriate sexuality on women and girls and shapes their lived experiences (APA, 2007; Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

According to Thompson (1992), “puberty, like pregnancy, is a secret the body cannot keep forever” (p. 350). Drawing on the work of Bordo, and of Gilligan, Tolman (1994) concurs that during adolescence,

as the unmistakable contours of a female body emerge, a girl’s body becomes defined in cultural terms as an object of men’s fantasies and desires. When breasts grow and hips form, girls’ bodies are rendered sexual, and the relationship between internal and external, the subjective experience of desire and the objective experience of finding oneself objectified, is essentially confusing and problematic for girls. (p. 251)

Hence, with the onset of puberty “girls learn that this new body belongs less to them and more to others [and] in a sense becomes public domain” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 193). Consistent with the tenets of objectification theory, empirical research has shown that adolescent girls’ bodies are gazed at, commented on and assessed by others, and often girls are the target for sexual abuse and harassment (APA, 2007; Bartky, 1990; Fine, 1988; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hammer, 1989; Martin, 1996; Ward, 2002). In the light of this, Fredrickson and Roberts state that during adolescence the adolescent girl “becomes more fully initiated into the culture of sexual objectification” (p. 194).

2.4.1 Sexual objectification

According to Bartky (1990) sexual objectification

occurs when a woman’s sexual parts or functions are separated out from her person, reduced to status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of

representing her. To be dealt with in this way is to have one's entire being identified with the body. (p. 35)

Hence, when sexually objectified, women and girls are not treated as whole, competent persons with integrity, who have the capacity to think, act and behave independently. Rather, the focus is on their bodies or its parts, which are gazed at, evaluated or exploited by others for their own pleasure (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Given the heterogeneity of women as a group, Fredrickson and Roberts acknowledge, women do not have uniform experiences of sexual objectification. Hence, they argue that the intersectionality of class, race, age, ability and sexual orientation could influence a particular woman's experiences and varying levels of objectification. Despite such possible diverse experiences of sexual objectification, they contend, that "having a reproductively mature female body may create a shared social experience, a vulnerability to sexual objectification, which in turn may create a shared set of psychological consequences" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; p. 175).

Sexual objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) state, is ubiquitous in society and manifests on a macro and micro-interpersonal level. On a macro level, feminists contend that heterosexuality is entrenched in all institutions in a patriarchal society, where the objectification of women and girls is socially sanctioned and perceived as part of the natural order (Bartky, 1990; Rich, 1983; Tolman, 2002). These cultural messages of how women and girls should look, behave and be treated, are transmitted in numerous ways, such as popular culture, the print and electronic media (APA, 2007; McRobbie, 2000). Empirical studies have shown the insidious nature of sexual objectification and how it occurs in a number of arenas, such as schools, the workplace, in advertisements, television shows, magazines, films, video games and music videos (see reviews by APA, 2007; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Szymanski,

Moffitt, & Carr, 2011). Added to this, the proliferation and easier access to information and communications technologies, such as the internet, social networks, chat rooms, MXit and cell phones, is currently contributing to the exacerbation of the sexual objectification of women and girls and the concomitant negative psychological and behavioural outcomes (Samuels, Brown, Leoschut, Jantjies, & Burton, 2013; Hendry & Kloep, 2012).

On a micro-interpersonal level, research has consistently found that women are more scrutinised and gazed at than men, and the masculine, objectifying gaze usually goes with sexually, evaluative comments (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008). Further, on the micro level, studies found that parents, peers and teachers also contribute towards the sexualisation of girls through their subtle or overt support for objectifying societal messages (APA, 2007; Crawford & Unger, 2004). Thus, sexual objectification, on a continuum, can range from less extreme forms of sexual evaluation, for example looking at someone in a sexually evaluative manner, to extreme forms of dehumanising sexual objectification and exploitation, such as rape, incest, sexual harassment or trafficking (APA, 2007). The pervasiveness of sexual objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) maintain, heightens the risk that, over time, women and girls could be coaxed to adopt and internalise the perspectives of others and consequently engage in self-objectification.

2.4.2 Self-objectification

According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), self-objectification is the psychological process where

girls and women . . . may to some degree come to view themselves as objects or “sights” to be appreciated by others. This is a peculiar perspective on self, one that can lead to a form of self-consciousness characterized by habitual monitoring of the body’s outward appearance. (p. 180)

Self-objectification is what Simone de Beauvoir (1972) also referred to as the internalisation of the “masculine gaze”, namely internalising the perspective of outsiders and constantly evaluating one’s body according to their standards. In this dialogical relationship between the self and objectifying external environments, women and girls learn that there are tangible or social rewards when one is physically attractive. For example, they learn that physical appearance often influences how others will treat them. Consequently, they spend an inordinate amount of time habitually monitoring their bodies to ensure that they maintain looking good and being physically attractive. Often this results in women and girls being desired by men and/or being envied by other women and girls. This imbues them with power, providing opportunities and social currency for popularity and upward mobility, and often sets up hierarchies among women and girls. However, the constant monitoring and self-policing to live up to the demands of idealised, conventional beauty, not only disconnects women from each other, but it also disconnects them from the voices of their own bodies (Bartky, 1990; Rich, 1983). Further, self-objectification also has direct negative consequences for the physical and mental health of women and girls.

2.4.3 Consequences of objectification

According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), constant self-surveillance and internalisation of the outsider’s perspectives on the self is associated with higher levels of body shame and anxiety and lower levels of bodily awareness. The constant evaluation of one’s body against the internalised cultural standards of beauty, Fredrickson and Roberts contend, creates an environment for shame to thrive among girls and women. Shame, they argue, is not merely the consequence of the negative appraisal of not being good enough or measuring up to the normative beauty standards, but it also relates to our cognitions of how others are evaluating us and what they might be thinking of us. Although shame is regarded as a moral emotion, they contend that it also has an adaptive function, as it becomes a catalyst that obligates us to conform to the normative beauty standards. Consequently, women and girls tend to focus all their energies on changing their

bodies and appearance through dieting, fashion, exercise or cosmetic surgery. Thus, when we feel ashamed of our bodies, this shame creates the need to be invisible and fuels “an intense desire to hide, to escape the painful gaze of others, or to disappear, alongside feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 181).

Objectifying contexts are also threatening and anxiety provoking and compel women and girls to maintain ongoing vigilance regarding their physical appearance and safety. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) posit that appearance anxiety and safety anxiety are direct outcomes of such dehumanising and demeaning contexts. Appearance anxiety, they argue, is the consequence of the constant threat and fear that one’s body and appearance will be negatively evaluated. This consequently manifests in chronic checking whether one is appropriately dressed and adjusting one’s appearance to conform to the expected standards of respectability. Allied to appearance anxiety, is the constant threat to women and girls’ physical safety. In hostile contexts, wearing revealing clothing, or if the appearance of women/girls is judged to be too provocative, results in blame for provoking men and causing the sexual violence. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) contend that this chronic monitoring and vigilance threaten women and girls’ opportunities for optimal well-being and experiencing flow.

Csikszentmihalyi (as cited by Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) postulates that when we are physically and mentally fully engaged in an activity, we experience peak motivational states of flow that are enjoyable and provide us intense pleasure. In such moments he argues, we feel fully alive, free from self-consciousness and external control, and these “rare moments” should be maximised to enhance our quality of life. On the other hand, when we live in contexts where we feel under constant threat and which demand ongoing vigilance, this can consume our energies, deprive us of the optimal experiences of flow and diminish opportunities for positive mental health outcomes. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) contend that objectifying environments diminish the opportunities for women and girls to have such optimal experiences, because they

are constantly disrupted by outsiders' comments about their bodies and appearance. Another way in which women's opportunities for flow could be thwarted is by being in a state of "double-consciousness". Double-consciousness is the constant appraisal of the self through the eyes of others and the simultaneous monitoring of the self and one's body. This pre-occupation to evaluate the self to outsider's standards and to conform to conventional demands of beauty and femininity, could limit opportunities for women and girls to thrive and develop optimally.

Another negative outcome of self-objectification is the disconnection that women experience from their bodies and the internal sensations of their bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Habitual body-monitoring diminishes women/girls' perceptual resources to attend to the internal cues of their bodies. Tolman (2002) further argues that when girls grow up in sexually objectifying contexts, they tend to silence their embodied cues as they learn that it is unacceptable and inappropriate to heed to their embodied sensations. When women and girls are disconnected from their bodies and their bodies' internal states, empirical studies found that their sexual health could be compromised and that they could be at risk for risky sexual behaviours (APA, 2007; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hirschman, Impett, & Schooler, 2006; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Szymanski et al., 2011).

Various studies have reported findings supporting objectification theory and extended Fredrickson and Robert's framework (Moradi & Huang, 2008; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005; Szymanski et al., 2011). Strelan and Hargreaves (2005) found women who engaged in high levels of self-objectification were more likely to project their internalised preoccupation with appearance and looking good onto other women, and high objectifiers also tend to objectify other women more than they objectified themselves. Moffitt and Szymanski (2010) similarly found that women who experienced high levels of objectification tend to objectify each other. They engaged in habitual monitoring and vigilance of themselves and each other, resorted to "indirect aggression (i.e., gossiping), direct aggression, distancing and disconnection, and using

traditionally patriarchal (i.e., stereotypical) criticisms of the other women” (Moffitt & Szymanski, 2010, p. 92). Moffitt and Szymanski (2010) report that their participants frequently used negative terms, such as “bitchy, rude, immoral, conniving, gossipy, trashy, shallow, catty, etc.” (p. 93), when they spoke about their female colleagues.

In sum, objectification theory posits that being female in sexually objectifying contexts has profound implications for the mental health of women/girls and could compromise mental health along two pathways (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). First, self-objectification is the more insidious, indirect means, which include the internalisation of sexually objectifying experiences and messages. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) postulate that “sexual objectification fosters a duplicity of self, accompanied by recurrent and perhaps uncontrollable shame and anxiety” (p. 189). The second pathway is the direct and more overt forms of sexual objectification, such as various types of sexual exploitation where women and girls are treated as mere objects. These direct and indirect forms of sexual objectification could manifest in mental health problems such as depression, eating disorders and sexual dysfunction, thus negatively affecting the quality of life of women and girls (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Although findings from empirical studies support the basic tenets of objectification theory, research regarding the internalisation of sexual objectification has mainly been conducted with White, middle class American and Australian undergraduate women and girls (Moradi & Huang, 2008), which limits the empirical generalisability of the theory. Therefore recommendations have been made that research should be conducted with more samples of women and girls, who differ in terms of racial/ethnic identity, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ability and other variables, to test the utility of objectification theory (see Moradi & Huang, 2008; Szymanski et al., 2011 for more comprehensive critical reviews).

2.5 Adolescent development and well-being

Generally, adolescence is socially constructed as a period of rapid biological growth, increasing self-awareness and the need to establish a unique sense of identity. Although the precise definition of adolescence, its onset and the demands of this phase may vary among different cultures, it is complex, multi-dimensional and generally refers to the transitions and transformations from childhood and adulthood (Geldard & Geldard, 2001; Hendry & Kloep, 2012). A wide range of developmental theories generally characterises adolescence as a progression from early, middle to late adolescence, which varies from one individual to the next. During this transition, adolescents confront developmental tasks across a number of domains, namely, biological, psychological, social and others (Geldard & Geldard, 2001; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Louw & Louw, 2014).

For example, traditional stage developmental theories posit human development is a lifelong process, which takes place in stages and culminates in an individuated, autonomous self (Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Taylor, 1994). According to Erikson (1968), development consists of eight sequential stages during which an individual has to achieve certain personal and social tasks to ensure optimal growth. The primary task for adolescents, according to Erikson, is to establish an identity and to answer questions such as “Who am I?” and “Who would I want to be?” Failing to resolve these questions could result in identity confusion for the individual, which could have implications for the further developmental stages (Hendry & Kloep, 2012). While adolescents are discovering and establishing who they are, they are simultaneously searching for their defined place in society and driven by a need for a sense of belonging (Erikson, 1968). The need to belong and the expectations of parents, family, peers and society could influence how they negotiate these developmental challenges and their well-being in general.

Although traditional stage theories of development have been criticised for their ethnocentricity (Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Taylor, 1994) and male bias and gendered constructions of adolescence

(Gilligan, 1993; Macleod, 2006), Erikson's theory still facilitates our conceptualisation of the developmental demands and psychological process of adolescence; how adolescents make sense of the self, the search for identity and adolescents' sense of obligation to and relationships with others. Further, Erikson's theory also helps us to understand how interaction with the social environment influences human development, which is aligned with ecological approaches to understanding development in diverse and changing contexts.

Ecological/contextual theories share some ontological assumptions with social constructionists as these theories similarly maintain that people are relational beings who are contextually embedded, and their development is influenced by socio-cultural, economic, political and historical forces (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Louw & Louw, 2014; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010 for in-depth discussions). Bronfenbrenner (1993) states that "human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment" (p. 38). Briefly, Bronfenbrenner (1993) posits, individuals are situated in four mutually influencing and interrelated social systems, which are characterised by either proximal or distal relationships. The micro- and meso-systems consist of the persons and institutions in the individual's immediate environment, which the person interacts with on a daily basis (e.g., for a child it is the family, peer group, school, etc.). The reciprocal relationships between these various micro-systems constitute the meso-system and influence each other and the child's development. These relationships are proximal because they are ongoing and in the child's immediate environment. The exo- and macro-systems, characterised by more distal processes and relationships, significantly influence the child's development. The exo-system includes those social settings of which the child is not a direct member but indirectly affects his/her well-being (e.g., the parent's work or the media). The macro-system is the overarching social context in which the micro-, meso- and exo-systems are

embedded and could “be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 40). This refers to the “belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 40) that are embedded on the macro-system and manifest in each of these different systems. For example, ideologies such as racism, capitalism, patriarchy and conditions of poverty are macro-systemic factors that significantly influence children’s development on all the different systems in which they are embedded. Bronfenbrenner further posits that social environments are not static, but they are dynamic and change over time; this he referred to as the chrono-system. Unlike Erikson’s (1968) position that human development unfolds according to “inner laws of development” (p. 93), the defining feature of ecological/contextual theories is that it considers how broader prevailing societal forces play a significant role in human development. Individuals are not only located in and affected by mutually influencing systems, but they could also influence these systems. Thus, “development is not something that just ‘happens’ to the individual, but [is] an interactive dynamic process that involves all the system levels of a society” (Hendry & Kloep, 2012, p. 24).

2.6 Summary and the relevance of the theoretical framework for this study

The aims of this study were to explore a group of adolescent girls’ experiences of girlhood, their constructions and experiences of gender and how they negotiate their positions as girls in their contexts. Hence, I deemed the aforementioned theoretical frameworks appropriate to understand the girls’ experiences. First, given social constructionists’ focus on our cultural, historical and relational situatedness, it helps us to understand how the girls construct and reproduce, for example, girlhood, femininities and gender relations. It also facilitates our understanding of how social interaction and various discourses in their contexts constitute their experiences. Further, how the girls position themselves in the various discourses in their contexts could inform us how discourses influence the girls’ experiences.

Second, feminist theory provides a theoretical framework to conceptualise the centrality of gender and power relations in the lives of both men and women, and to understand the consequences of sexism and gender oppression in our society (Creswell, 1997; hooks, 2000). Hence, in this study, feminist theory was also deemed appropriate to understanding the nature of the girls' gender relations and what statuses they occupy in their context. It could also facilitate our understanding of how male power and privilege influence the girls' lives, and how resources are distributed within their communities.

Third, objectification theory posits that in patriarchal societies, women and girls are evaluated and gazed at as sexual objects by others and objectification could negatively influence girls' well-being. In South Africa, girls are at risk for experiencing high levels of gender violence due to the persistence of patriarchy (Bhana, 2012; POWA, 2014). Therefore, I deemed objectification theory appropriate to conceptualise how girls are at risk for objectification and possibly self-objectification, as well as the associated negative psychological outcomes.

Lastly, in this thesis I view adolescent girls' development as a multi-systemic process, influenced not only by their unique biological givens but also by the dynamics of all the social systems in which they are embedded and social discourses such as race, class and gender. Further, ecological theories posit adolescents are active agents in their development; they influence and are influenced by their social systems.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss gender as a determinant of well-being of women/girls in South Africa. Given that the factors that influence adolescent girls' development and well-being are vast, an in-depth discussion of all these factors is beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence, in this chapter I will first discuss gender as a determinant of well-being in the South African context. Thereafter I will focus on some key factors that the current literature suggests are influential in adolescent girls' well-being.

3.2 Gender as a determinant of well-being in South Africa

Since the transition to democracy, S.A. has been lauded for its progressive constitution to promote a culture of human rights. Post-1994 various legal, constitutional frameworks, Acts and bodies were promulgated and established to address gender inequity, violence against women and women's oppression (Hicks, 2010; Sangweni, 2006). The democratic government of S.A. is also a signatory to the treaties and instruments, such as the MDGs, instituted by the United Nations to address poverty, gender discrimination and promote gender equality. Despite the wide-ranging reforms on the political level, there is still a lack of co-ordination between the policies and their implementation (Chopra et al., 2009; Hicks, 2010; Shefer et al., 2008).

Since 1994, the national policy of the South African government has been the redistribution of wealth and social redress. Yet, S.A. is one of the countries with the highest levels of inequality in the world and income inequality and unemployment (approximately 25% and 33% when including discouraged workers) have escalated. Further, there is also a low life expectancy of approximately 57 years and poor people continue to have limited access to basic opportunities and services (Narayan & Mahajan, 2013; Statistics South Africa, 2012). Despite the government's attempts to alleviate poverty by extending social grants to almost a quarter of the

population, the majority of the population still experiences the triple burden of poverty, unemployment and inequality daily (Chopra et al., 2009; Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009). The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and UNICEF (2014) state that inequality and poverty in S.A. is

all the more glaring because it coexists with striking affluence and retains racial dimensions. While some children in South Africa live in relative luxury and have access to world class education and health services, others face threats to their development. (p. 17)

According to the Commission for Gender Equality in S.A., “gender inequality, discrimination and oppression continue to shape new and old forms of inequality in our society” (Hicks, 2010, p. 1). Hence, the complex intersectionality of race, class and gender, influence heterosexual gender relations and still shape the lived experiences of women and girls. In a profile of vulnerable groups in S.A., Statistics South Africa (2012) report that women are disproportionately more likely than men to be poor and, due to entrenched patriarchal attitudes, are responsible for unpaid care work and supporting family members. Because of historical and continuing institutionalised racism and oppression, women are also more likely to be unemployed or trapped in low-skilled and low paying jobs. Particularly Black¹ women in S.A. are extremely poor and their political/material power is still relatively limited. According to Statistics South Africa (2012), compared to 32% of male-headed households, approximately 54% of female-headed households were consistently found to be poor, more vulnerable to hunger and dependent on social grants for their livelihoods. Similarly, even when women have tertiary education, they are more likely to have unequal access to opportunities, experience higher unemployment, do more unpaid work and earn about 82% of what their male peers might earn (Statistics South Africa, 2013).

¹ The apartheid government imposed racial categories Black, Coloured, Indian and White persist to be significant markers in South Africa. Currently the post-apartheid government employs these categories for redress.

Despite the positive gains since 1994, patriarchal ideologies and gender discrimination seem to persist both in the private and public spheres of South African society (Abrahams, Jewkes, & Laubsher, 1999; Bower, 2014; Strebel et al., 2006). Patriarchal ideologies clearly demarcate social life into the private sphere, which is associated with women, nurturing and caring for others, and the public/social sphere that is associated with men (Andersen & Taylor, 2006; Kearney, 2009). According to Hubbard (2005a), there are clear expectations and guidelines for what behaviours are appropriate in these different spheres, and often contradictions and double standards inhere in these normative codes. For example, Hubbard (2005a) suggests that men have the autonomy and freedom to roam the streets, but when women venture out alone in public spaces they are often regarded out of place and sanctioned for disrupting the gender order.

Moffett (2006) concurs that often such demonstrations of autonomy by women are interpreted as subversive and threatening the status quo. She reports how a group of South African young men justified using sexual violence against women to punish “the cheeky ones - the ones that walk around like they own the place, and look you in the eye” (p. 138). Similarly, in 2008 and 2012, the physical attacks and public humiliation of young women for wearing mini-skirts in Noord Street in Gauteng are also evidence of such violent attempts of men policing the gender norms and putting women, who “transgress” in their place (Molatlhwa, 2012; Staff Reporter, 2008). Hubbard (2005a) suggests that when feminine sexuality is uncontained, it tends to evoke “anxiety [for men and] this triggers attempts to reassert sexual order, and put women in ‘their place’” (p. 327). Thus, in patriarchal contexts women are not only “disciplined” to know their place or to maintain the boundaries between the private and public spheres, but patriarchy also enforces the power and privilege of men and traditional gender norms, and regulates women’s sexuality and their subordination to men.

3.2.1 Traditional gender roles

Numerous studies in S.A. have consistently found that both men and women tend to uphold traditional notions of gender in their intimate, interpersonal and other domains of social interaction (Dworkin, Colvin, Hatcher, & Peacock, 2012; Hargreaves, Vetten, Schneider, Malepe, & Fuller, 2006). Hargreaves et al. reported that most of their participants subscribe to traditional rules and roles that trap women in subservience. They found that the locus of authority over women, daughters and children is vested in the male head of the household who has the right to discipline his household as he deems fit. Similarly, the men and women in a study by Boonzaier and De La Rey (2004) drew on hegemonic masculinities and femininities, invoking successful masculinities with male authority, head of the household and provider narratives, while successful femininities were synonymous with passivity, care, nurturance and selflessness.

Likewise, Strebel et al. (2006) found that traditional gender role attitudes, regarding the division of labour in the home and men as the primary breadwinners, were dominant among men and women in their study. In cases where women were the primary breadwinners, the men experienced this disruption as a loss of their status and blamed the women for their disempowerment. In addition, when women as primary breadwinners earned more than their partners, men experienced this as a loss of self-esteem, power and control that was tantamount to victimhood and emasculation (Boonzaier, 2005; Dworkin et al., 2012). Both male and female participants in Boonzaier's study regarded violence against women as expressions of male authority and the males regarded it as a justification for their powerlessness. The statement, "I do not believe in democracy in the home" by a male participant in Abrahams et al.'s (1999) study, succinctly captures the climate of gender relations and the sustained violation of women's human rights in S.A.

Similar findings, mirroring traditional gender relationships across a range of contexts in S.A., attest to the prevailing patriarchal context, the control and subordination of women and the

violence endemic in heterosexual relationships (Abrahams et al., 1999; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2004; Gibson, Dinan, & Mc Call, 2006; Jewkes, Levin, & Penn-Kekana, 2003; Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, & Rose-Junius, 2005; Shefer et al., 2008).

3.2.2 Gender violence

For a country not at war, S.A. has one of the highest rates of violence against women and girls in the world, which cuts across race, class, religion and geographic areas. It is estimated that one in three women could be raped in their lifetime and one in four will be assaulted by an intimate partner. However, Black African women and girls are at an increased risk of rape compared to other racial groups (Jewkes et al., 2005; Moffett, 2009; Vetten et al., 2008). Despite the South African Police Services' (SAPS) report that there seems to be a declining trend in crime statistics in S.A., in 2013/2014 a total of 62 649 (118 per 100 000) sexual offences were committed, with approximately 46 253 reported cases of rape against adult females during this period (Institute of Security Studies, 2014; SAPS, 2014). Local social scientists caution that, due to the high levels of under-reporting of sexual assault and gender-based violence, these statistics are estimated to be nine times lower than the actual statistics (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2005; Seedat et al., 2009).

The barriers for reporting sexual offences are attributed to the high levels of distrust of the police and legal systems, low conviction rates, fear of secondary traumatisation, the shame and stigma associated with rape and fear of retaliation by perpetrators (Gouws, 2012; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Further, intimate partner violence and femicide mainly occur in the home at the hands of current or former male partners. In addition, women and girls who have experienced sexual assault or are in male-dominated relationships are also at higher risk of HIV/Aids, thus further fuelling the HIV/Aids pandemic (Kalichman et al., 2005; Shefer et al., 2008). Moffett (2009) contends that these levels of sexual violence are indicative of “an unacknowledged gender civil

war” (p. 155) in S.A., where justificatory narratives condone the use of rape and sexual violence as tools of social control to keep women and girls in their place.

3.3 Adolescent girls’ well-being

According to Levine, Lloyd, Greene, and Grown (2008), the position of young girls/women between the ages 10-24 years in developing countries is a cause for concern. They argue that gender, cultural practices and contextual factors seem to play a crucial role during girls’ transition to adulthood and these factors seem to determine diverging gender-based life paths for boys and girls. Although gender equality is a value grounded in the South African constitution, this has not yet translated into every facet of girls’/women’s lives as S.A. is still predominantly patriarchal and highly gendered society (Bower, 2014; Hicks, 2010). In the next section, I discuss some core themes, such as menarche, and some interpersonal and social factors, which the current literature suggests play a significant role in adolescent girls’ well-being.

3.3.1 Menarche: A key developmental factor

The existing literature suggests that the transition from puberty to adolescence, namely the development of secondary sexual characteristics and menarche, are salient markers in adolescent girls’ development (Crawford, 2006; Ussher, 1989). Menarche, the onset of menstruation, symbolises femininity, sexual maturation, and in patriarchal cultures, girls’ sexual availability, future reproductive capability and, in some contexts, a readiness for marriage (Golub, 1992; Lee, 1994; Mensch, Bruce, & Greene, 1998). However, Chrisler (2013a) is critical of this notion that menarche heralds the transition to womanhood. She states, “to conclude that puberty is what makes a girl a woman is to suggest that reproductive capacity is the essential aspect of womanhood” (p. 117). She argues that this notion is resonant with the Victorian assumption that all women should become or yearn to be mothers.

With the onset of menarche, girls also become acutely aware of the embodied nature of girlhood, how they and their bodies are under constant scrutiny and at times tend to experience their bodies as not always under their control (Fingerson, 2005). Britton (1996) suggests, at menarche a girl is simultaneously positioned as a child and an adult, and amid her experiencing “the physical changes and sensations of her body, she is also learning the restrictions that will be with her during her adult life” (p. 652). Thus, menarche could be regarded as a liminal space, fraught with much ambiguity, when girls try to make sense of their changing bodies and emotional experiences, as well as the cultural narratives about this process.

Various international studies report that when girls start menstruating, parents/caregivers seem to impart contradictory messages about menstruation to them (Britton, 1996; Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Chrisler, 2013a; Fingerson, 2005; Jarrah & Kamel, 2012). On the one hand, parents tell girls that it is part of the normal process of becoming a woman and they are now capable of childbearing, while on the other hand parents then expect girls to refrain from “unladylike” behaviours and that they are “not-yet-adult” enough to be sexually active. Hence, with the onset of menarche, girls seem to experience increased surveillance and curtailment of their freedom because parents fear they may face sexual threats or engage in sexual activity. Consequently, girls often feel ambivalent and anxious about menarche and their changing bodies (Chrisler, 2013a; Golub, 1992; Martin, 1996; Merskin, 1999).

Koff and Rierdan (1996) suggest that “it must seem paradoxical to be told that menstruation is normal and natural and something to be happy about” (p. 796) while experiencing increased restrictions and surveillance. Instead of celebrating the transition to womanhood, Ussher (1989) suggests that “the loss of freedom can feel like punishment for [becoming] a woman” (p. 25). Thus girls’ bodies are not only inscribed with the cultural menstrual narratives, but they tend to internalise these narratives from a young age, which influence their cognitions, affect, behaviour and social interactions in their contexts (Britton, 1996; Kissling, 1996; White, 2013). Although

some girls and women experience menarche and menstruation as a positive and public event, most girls and women tend to experience it as a personal and private event (Teitelman, 2004; Uskul, 2004). For example, in studies by Teitelman (2004) and Rembeck, Möller, and Gunnarsson (2006), girls felt their mothers violated their privacy when their mothers told other family members that the girls had started menstruating. Crawford and Unger (2004) suggest, at menarche, most societies initiate girls into a “conspiracy of silence” (p. 223). They are often taught that public discussions of menarche and menstruation are taboo, and tend to experience stigmatisation and social exclusion because of religious customs and cultural taboos (Ali & Rizvi, 2010; Dasgupta & Sarkar, 2008; Golub, 1992; Mensch et al., 1998).

Although studies from Western contexts suggest there seems to be more cultural openness to menarche, and that the negative discourses on menstruation and some of the “old” menstrual taboos are changing (Fingerson, 2005; Teitelman, 2004; Young, 2005), younger women from these contexts still report some menstrual myths and negativity (Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Teitelman, 2004). Various studies illustrate that young women still fear negative consequences when their menstruation becomes public (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013; Koff & Rierdan, 1996; Teitelman, 2004). In an Australian study, Moore (1995) found adolescent girls experienced menstruation as debilitating and shameful and held some negative myths due to inadequate menstrual knowledge. In an urban study in the United Kingdom, Burrows and Johnson (2005) still found girls constructed menstruation as an illness and embarrassing. Thus, Stubbs (2008) concludes that “in spite of the increased visibility of menstruation in the culture . . . girls still report mixed feelings about menstruation, including a good deal of negativity” (p. 61).

Similar to girls’ experiences from Western contexts, studies from resource-poor countries also report the persistence of negative socio-cultural narratives, practices and taboos that perpetuate the stigmatisation of menstruation, which are detrimental to adolescent girls’ development (Crichton, Okal, Kabiru, & Zulu, 2013; Mensch et al., 1998; Sommer, 2009). Besides negative

socio-cultural discourses around menstruation, girls living in poorer countries also confront conditions of structural poverty, such as the inability to afford sanitary materials and lack of access to hygienic toilets and water to manage their menstrual flow (Abrahams, Mathews, & Ramela, 2006; Impumelelo, 2014; Sommer, 2009). To capture girls' experiences from poorer contexts, Crichton et al. (2013) propose the concept "menstrual poverty" – which they define as "the combination of multiple practical and psychosocial deprivations experienced by menstruating girls and women in resource-poor settings" (p. 893). Crichton et al. (2013) categorise these deprivations as contextual factors, material and psychosocial deprivations and illustrate how, in conditions of structural poverty, the interaction between gender and deprivations at puberty can negatively affect girls' well-being.

According to Crichton et al. (2013), contextual factors refer to the prevailing cultural narratives, which include taboos about menstrual blood and discussing menstruation, the social expectations, norms, restrictions and gender insensitivity associated with menstruation. Deprivation associated with contextual factors has widely been reported in a number of countries in the Global South (Adinma & Adinma, 2008; Ali & Rizvi, 2009; Crichton et al., 2013; Impumelelo, 2014; McMahon et al., 2011; Sommer, 2009, 2010). For example, in a rural district in South Africa, girls reported that menstruation is still shrouded in secrecy and a taboo topic for discussion, and parents/caregivers or teachers did not talk to them about sexuality and menstruation. Fifty-six percent of the girls reported difficulty talking to a mature significant female relative about periods, 18% reported that they refrained from disclosing the onset of menarche to anyone and only three out of 489 learners spoke to their teachers about pubertal issues (Impumelelo, 2014). In an urban and rural Tanzanian sample, Sommer (2009) similarly found adolescent girls reported menstrual narratives of shame, secrecy and concealment, and a lack of knowledge about menstruation. Like the girls in the South African case, these girls also reported not disclosing the

onset of menarche to their mothers/caregivers because of the taboos around talking about menstruation and fears that they would be accused of sexual promiscuity.

Material deprivations, according to Crichton et al. (2013), are multiple material barriers that hamper girls' ability to manage menstrual flow and include lack of access to private and hygienic sanitation facilities, and the inability to purchase adequate sanitary materials. Findings from various studies illustrate how such structural barriers to managing menstruation heighten girls' risk for skin and urinary tract infections and other detrimental outcomes (Ali & Rizvi, 2010; McMahon et al., 2011; Sommer, 2010). In South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania, girls report they often avoid using toilets at school because these facilities are filthy, unsafe, lack running water and sanitary disposable bins (Abrahams et al., 2006; Impumelelo, 2014; McMahon et al., 2011). Because of the lack of privacy and poor sanitation facilities in these contexts, girls report heightened vigilance and constantly fear they will display signs of menstruating and having body odours. Hence, to avoid stigmatisation and embarrassment, girls tend to stay absent from school when they menstruate. According to UNICEF (2003), menstruating girls lose about 20% of the academic school year and are at heightened risk for school dropout with the onset of menarche.

According to Crichton et al. (2013), psychosocial deprivations include girls' experiences of lack of guidance, preparation, information and support prior to the onset of menarche and subsequent to menstruation. In their respective urban and rural Kenyan studies, Crichton et al. (2013) and McMahon et al. (2011) found girls lacked adequate information about the physiological and emotional aspects of menstruation. These findings are similar to studies in other poorer-resourced countries, where girls also reported limited accurate knowledge about menstruation and hygiene management (Ali & Rizvi, 2010; Sommer, 2009). Likewise, South African studies report how mothers are uncomfortable and unwilling to talk about menstruation with their daughters, and consequently do not prepare their daughters for menstruation (Lesch & Anthony, 2007; Shefer, 1999). With the onset of menarche, mothers also imparted restrictive messages that linked

menstruation with heterosexual intercourse and reproduction, and constructed their daughters as vulnerable, needing protection from men. Lesch and Anthony (2007) also found that mothers were resistant to their daughters' growing up and the loss of their innocence. In both these studies, mothers and grandmothers advised the girls to use contraception as a strategy to control the girls' sexuality and as a protective measure against unplanned pregnancies. Shefer (1999) reports how participants experienced this attempt to control their sexuality as an invasion of privacy and a form of sexual violation. According to Ussher (1989) such determined attempts to prevent early motherhood at menarche suggests an ideology of "woman ruled by her womb". This discourse suggests that "womanhood is synonymous with motherhood [and] reinforces the belief that the womb is the focal point of a woman's body, and the reproductive system the centre of her emotional life" (Ussher, 1989, p. 28).

Contrary to Brumberg's (1997) contention that in the American context "hygiene, not sexuality, is the focus of most maternal discussions with girls who have just started their periods" (p. 30), in the South African context it seems that sexuality and reproduction are foregrounded at menarche. However, it is not a narrative of reproductive health, sexual agency and desire, but one that signals danger, surveillance and control for girls at the onset of menarche.

Thus, studies from both Western and poorer-resourced contexts suggest that menstruation still tends to be shrouded in secrecy, is associated with shame and danger, and a "hygienic crisis" (Chrisler, 2011; Crawford & Unger, 2004; Golub, 1992; Impumelelo, 2014). These messages could negatively influence girls' attitudes towards menstruation, their menstrual experiences and practices. All these factors could not only significantly affect their general well-being, but also their human dignity. According to Dr. Jyoti Sanghera from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Stigma around menstruation and menstrual hygiene is a violation of several human rights, most importantly of the right to human dignity, but also the right to non-discrimination, equality, bodily integrity, health, privacy and the right to freedom from inhumane and degrading treatment, from abuse to violence. (WSSCC, 2014)

3.3.1.1 Girls' menstrual experiences and practices

Ambivalence: Girls from diverse contexts tend to experience menarche/menstruation both positively and negatively (Chrisler & Zittel, 1998; Koff & Rierdan, 1996; Lee, 2009; Martin, 1996). For example, in her diary Anne Frank (1958) captured both her eagerness for and the unpleasantness of menstruation

Each time I have a period – and that has only been three times – I have a feeling that in spite of all the pain, unpleasantness and nastiness, I have a sweet secret, and that is why, although it is nothing but a nuisance to me in a way, I always long for the time that I shall feel that secret within me again. (p. 116)

Various studies similarly report that some girls are excited about starting their periods because they regard it as a normal part of growing up, a sign of their future reproductive capabilities and becoming women (Martin, 1996; Orringer & Gahagan, 2010; Sommer, 2010; Teitelman, 2004).

Some girls and young women reported they were proud and relieved when they started their period because it signalled they were “normal” since they now belonged to the “club” of their menstruating friends (Britton, 1996; Lee, 2009; Martin, 1996). Crawford and Unger (2004) state that girls also engage in menarcheal competition among each other, because the onset of menarche suggests prestige, being grown-up and entitled to more privileges, such as going out and dating (Jackson & Falmagne, 2013; Lee, 2009). Fingerson (2005) also found that, despite their ambivalence about menstruation, girls were proud of how they coped with the challenge of menstruation and this imparted a sense of superiority to the girls over the boys.

However, several studies report that girls generally responded negatively to menstruation and seemed to embrace the negative menstrual narratives. Girls from diverse contexts framed menstruation as an illness, reporting various physical symptoms, distress and worry. Consequently, many girls curtailed their physical activities and isolated themselves socially (Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Moore, 1995; Santina, Wehbe, Ziade, & Nehme, 2013). Allied to the menstruation-as-illness narrative, girls who were unprepared for menstruation also experienced the event as frightening and a “curse” (Britton, 1996; Lovering, 1995; Martin, 1996). Researchers found that some girls were anxious about becoming women and being “forced out of childhood” (Lee, 2009; Martin, 1996; Uskul, 2004). These expressions to be childlike seem to stem from their fears that puberty is plucking them from fun, the innocence of childhood and “changing them into something they did not want to be” (Martin, 1996, p. 20). Parents also seem to exacerbate girls’ anxiety with their explicit warnings about the dangers at menarche and “these warnings help to make boys, sex, and girls’ own bodies seem ‘scary’ and dangerous to girls” (Martin, 1996, p. 33). Hence, at menarche the nature of girls’ relationships with boys seems to change irrevocably (Lee, 2009). Some girls reported feeling distressed because they could no longer play games with boys and that restrictions now replaced the camaraderie they had with boys (Lee, 2009; Martin, 1996). Thus, Lee (1994) contends, “menarche is an important time when young women become inserted and insert themselves into the dominant patterns of sexuality” (p. 346).

Contamination, concealment and shame: The cultural myths and taboos regarding menarche and menstruation are deeply entrenched in society. Historically, various cultures viewed menstrual blood as both magical and poisonous, and menstruating women were socially isolated and secluded because of fears that their polluted bodies could contaminate others or food (Golub, 1992; Thurén, 1994). As discussed earlier, sanitary product advertisers perpetuate messages of

secrecy and concealment to women to avoid embarrassment or humiliation. Weideger (as cited by Kowalski & Chapple, 2000) states:

When we are taught that something has to be hidden, we naturally believe that it contains an element that is not acceptable to other people . . . We are ashamed of menstruation and . . . we are taught to hide all evidence of its existence, and we come to believe that there is something in the experience that is “wrong”. (p. 75)

In patriarchal societies, menarche marks the heterosexualization of girls' bodies and, they often start engaging in self-policing strategies and employing “bodily repertoires” to control and conceal their menstrual status (Lee, 1994, 2008). Consequently, girls tend to be self-conscious about their bodies and hypervigilant, and resort to wearing many layers of clothing, or baggy and dark clothes and/or wrap a jersey or sweatshirt around their waists to hide any menstrual signs (Fingerson, 2006; Lee, 1994; Martin, 1996; McMahon et al., 2011; Oxley, 1998). Some girls also report not participating in physical exercise or sporting activities because of fears that they will show (Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013). Mc Mahon et al. (2011) also found that girls try to be the last to leave a classroom or they ask a friend to walk close behind them in case they had a stain on their clothing. These authors further report that, because the girls feared stigma and shame when showing stains, menstruation occupied their minds and they could not concentrate on their schoolwork.

In sum, menstruation is a complex, multidimensional process and a varied experience for girls/women across the world. Feminists contend that the negative representations of menarche and menstruation in society are a consequence of cultural attitudes and socio-historical processes that “actively subjugate female subjectivity through creating and reinforcing the notion of ‘woman’ as lack, as absence or as other to man” (Ussher, Hunter, & Browne, 2000, p. 85). Young (2005) suggests that the powerful cultural discourses, which construe menstruation as

dirty, disgusting and something to be concealed, confines women as menstruators to the “menstrual closet” (p. 107). Consequently many girls/women view menstruation as a “curse” and an inconvenient, shameful and “abject existence that is messy and disgusting” (Young, 2005, p. 109). Although some girls/women have positive experiences and actively resist the negative menstrual constructions, menstrual negativity persists that influence females’ beliefs and experiences. Given the duality of displaying a sanitised body and hiding our leaking bodies, Young (2005) suggests girls could “live through a split subjectivity” and could “experience [their] being as defiled and out of control” (p. 109). This could create feelings of low self-efficacy, poor body image and detachment from their bodies, which in turn could result in low self-esteem and diminished sexual agency among girls (McMahon et al., 2011; Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2005).

3.3.2 Adolescent girls’ interpersonal relationships

A country’s future is dependent on the mental health and well-being of its young people (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2014). Socially competent adolescents have the ability to establish healthy interpersonal relationships that are associated with successes later in adulthood. They also acquire coping skills to deal with the adaptive challenges of development. Across the life span, sound attachments and supportive, caring relationships serve as protective factors and are integral for mental health. At varying stages of girls’ development, these will include their relationships at home, with their peers, the school and social factors in the community (Bruene-Butler, Hampson, Elias, Clabby, & Schuyler, 1997; Worell, 2006).

3.3.2.1 Adolescent girls’ relationships at home

Sound familial relationships and supportive environments play a significant role in adolescents’ well-being and are associated with a range of positive outcomes, such as healthy self-esteem, better school achievement, and lower levels of behavioural and psychological problems (Hendry

& Kloep, 2012; Louw & Louw, 2014). Much of the earlier psychological literature though, focused on adolescence as a period of storm-and-stress, disengagement from and conflict with parents, the generation gap and strains associated with adolescents' quest for independence. Despite the prominence of relationships with peers during adolescence, current literature illustrates that most adolescents hold similar values and norms as their parents, value their attachment with their families and regard them as their main source of support (Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Louw & Louw, 2014). Despite this more balanced approach to adolescence, theorists indicate that adolescence is characterised by adjustment for adolescents and parents, and parent-adolescent conflict usually revolves around this readjustment to the developing adolescent within the family system (Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Louw & Louw, 2014).

According to Thorne (1982), relationships in the home are “structured around gender and age, [and] women, men, girls, and boys do not experience their families in the same way” (p. 2). Despite the gains of the feminist movement, women are still largely responsible for the burden of care in the home and doing a double shift (Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Travis, 2006). Travis (2006) states there is still the expectation that women would find fulfilment in the nurturing and caring tasks in the family. Crawford and Unger (2004) concur that motherhood ideologies propagate motherhood as integral to women's identities and caring the “natural” duty of women and girls. They state that this ideology has also been used to confine women to the home and keep them in their place. Hence, from a young age, parents prepare their daughters so that they are not “misfits” in the patriarchal system (Ussher, 1989). Travis (2006) maintains that parents socialise girls to assume traditional gender roles, consequently they learn that they are valued differently and have a marginal status in the family. This marginal status also limits their access to material and intangible resources. Thus, Kimmel (2000) contends it is in the mundane daily tasks that girls and boys learn about their place in the hierarchical gender system and how inequality is reproduced in the home.

In various South African studies, researchers similarly found the valorisation of motherhood and attaining accomplishment at household chores were integral in the socialisation of girls (Gaganakis, 2003; Hargreaves et al., 2006; Salo, 2003, 2009). Hargreaves et al. found that from childhood, parents groomed girls in passivity, diligence regarding household chores and obedience to their fathers and boyfriends. Although the adolescent girls in Gaganakis's (2003) study verbally resisted traditional notions of gender, in practice however, they were compliant and shouldered most of the household duties and cared for younger siblings. Salo (2003, 2009) also found that, under the trope of "good girlhood" mothers and women in the community evaluated how accomplished girls were at household chores and whether they behaved respectably outside the home.

Tolman and Porche (2000) and Impett, Schooler, and Tolman (2006) posit that in patriarchal contexts, which afford boys more privileges and power, girls are often silenced and they tend to internalise norms and values that regulate their subservience. For instance, Gaganakis (2003) found parents' patriarchal attitudes and authoritarian parenting styles tend to silence girls and limit their opportunities for development. In an American study, Williams (2002) similarly found girls in working class communities were allocated gender-traditional work early (from 10-12 years) and were silenced in the home. According to Gilligan (1993), adolescent girls, to preserve their relationships with others, refrain from voicing their discontent about the inequity in the home and consequently experience a loss of voice. Thus, Tolman and Porche (2000) state girls tend to bring an inauthentic self into their interpersonal relationships, and Jack (2011) posits that persistent self-silencing could be a risk for low self-esteem, depression and limit self-development.

3.3.2.2 Peer relationships and friendships

Research indicates that although peer relations and friendships are voluntary and self-initiated, issues such as age, gender, race, class and social contexts influence the nature of peer relations

and friendships (Crawford & Unger, 2004; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Kerr, Stattin, Biesecker, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2003). The explosion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and their integration into most societies are also influencing the nature of adolescent peer relationships (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2012; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2003; Samuels et al., 2013). Samuels et al. found that adolescents in South Africa are increasingly using mobile phones and the internet to establish new friendships, connect with and stay connected to existing friends.

According to Maccoby (1988), universally and across a range of cultural contexts, peer interactions and friendships are characterised by gender segregation. Maccoby states that this tends to increase significantly during the school-going years and reaches its pinnacle during middle childhood (Maccoby, 1988). This gender segregation has given rise to the “Two worlds theory” that suggest boys and girls develop in two separate and different worlds (Maccoby, 1988; Thorne, 1993; Underwood, 2007). However, Thorne reported that some cross-gender friendships do occur and when children cross the gender divide, they simultaneously police the gender boundaries. She further states cross-gender friendships often go underground in school settings and manifest outside in the community because children fear being teased by their peers in school. Similarly, McDougall and Hymel (2007), in a culturally and socio-economically diverse Canadian sample of learners across grades, found that most of the children and adolescents seemed to cross the gender divide and had at least one cross-gender friend. Contrary to suggestions that cross-gender friendships tend to take place outside school settings, McDougall and Hymel (2007) found that, despite peer teasing about possible love connections, nearly 50% percent of both grade 3 and 6 learners reported having cross-gender friendships at school. They further report that 69% of the grade 9 learners and 56% of grade 12 learners reported having cross-gender friendships at home or at school.

The reported gender differences suggest that, while boys tend to have bigger, age-heterogeneous friendship groups, girls on the other hand tend to have smaller, often dyadic and intense friendships (McDougall & Hymel, 2007; Thorne, 1993). Thorne contends that boys engage in more competitive, organised games, which have a hierarchical structure, characterised by dominance and independence. Girls on the other hand, have intimate friendships, where they tend to share secrets and disclose personal information (Brown, Way, & Duff, 1999; Frith, 2004; Oransky & Marecek, 2009). However, Thorne (1993) suggests that the “Two world theory” and the focus on gender differences limit our understanding childhood friendships.

To understand friendship patterns, and how these manifest among peers, Thorne (1993) contends that we have to shift our focus to broader social contextual factors. For example, Lamb (2001) posits that girls’ proclivity to establish close, intimate same-gender relationships are not due to some natural, essential trait or inclination. Rather, Hey (1997) states girls establish close intimate relationships because patriarchal societies expect girls to be caring, nurturing and “nice”. Hence, she argues, girls’ performance of friendship is actually a performance of femininity. Similarly, various studies found that boys constructed their friendships around assumptions of masculinities, and that displays of emotion, care and concern for other boys could be interpreted as signs of girlishness and unmanliness. Hence taunting and teasing were seen to facilitate toughness (Chu, 2005; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002; Oransky & Marecek, 2009), which supports the standpoint that social and political forces influence adolescent friendship patterns.

Adolescent friendships

Adolescent friendships are “powerful cultural forces, representing sites of collective meaning-making, and a necessary requirement in the multilayered process of making gendered identities” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 111). Other researchers concur that teenage friendships play an integral role in adolescent development and could promote positive psychosocial outcomes, while the inability to establish peer relationships may be associated with loneliness and depression (Hartup,

1996; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Hey, 1997). Hendry and Kloep (2012) state peer groups and close friendships provide youth with the opportunity to learn various social skills and display and receive empathy, and can satisfy their needs for intimacy, a sense of belonging, and to engage with other young people who share similar interests and activities. Way, Gingold, Rotenberg, and Kuriakose (2005) also found that peer friendships provided adolescents mutual protection. Adolescent boys in their study reported how they protect each other during fights or prevent each other from fighting. Other researchers similarly found adolescent girls also tend to provide mutual protection (support or joining in the fight) to each other when resolving peer conflicts (Bhana, 2008; Letendre & Smith, 2011).

During adolescence, youth develop more advanced cognitive and verbal abilities that influence how they view their peers, as well as their peer relationships. Consequently, peer relationships become more sophisticated and complex during this phase; they are able to appreciate other's views that enhance their understanding of the dynamics of their friendships. Friendships also provide adolescents spaces where they can experiment "with new identities and 'rehearse' styles of behaviour . . . away from the watchful eyes of adults" (Hendry & Kloep, 2012, p. 64). Further, Hendry and Kloep maintain that peer friendships empower youth and facilitate rehearsing social skills such as collaboration and co-operation, sharing and conflict management. Although research shows that friendships and peer relationships generally facilitate the psychological development, Way et al. (2005) also found that adolescents experienced losses, such as distrust in their peer friendships. Hence, they suggest adolescents also tend to gain a more realistic perception not only of their friendships, but also of themselves and the world.

Critiques of traditional perspectives of adolescent friendships

Theories of development contend that as children reach adolescence, peer relationships seem more important and influential for adolescents while there seems to be a decline in adolescent-parental bonds and influence (Hendry & Kloep, 2012). However, according to Kerr et al. (2003),

much of the early research explaining the influence of parents and peer groups on adolescent development drew on unidirectional models and regarded these influences on the adolescent as mutually exclusive. This research thus ignored the possibility that adolescents are active, self-reflexive agents, embedded in various social systems (e.g., parent-child, peer groups, local communities) and that these relationships are interrelated and mutually influencing. In their review, they illustrate how these relationships are bi-directional, namely, adolescents actively influence their parents and peers, exercise choices with whom they want to interact and evoke responses from them. Second, they contend that “parenting behaviours and peer relations do not just *produce* adjustment; they are also indicators and results of adjustment” (Kerr et al., 2003, p. 395). They further state that the nature and quality of parent-child relationships significantly tend to influence adolescents’ choices regarding their peer contexts, which in turn tend to influence the parent-child relationships. Hendry and Kloep (2012) concur that peer and parent relationships are not mutually exclusive but could be mutually enhancing. For example, social skills learned among peers could be used effectively in the family or vice versa. Thus, Kerr et al. (2003) argue that with adolescence comes relatively more freedom when adolescents can exercise choices, namely how, where and with whom they want to spend their leisure time. However, Kerr et al. contend, the nature of parent-child relationships and structural nature of social contexts could significantly influence adolescent choices of their peer relations (see Kerr et al., 2003 for an in-depth discussion).

A particular concern during adolescence is peer pressure (Hendry & Kloep, 2012). However, Hendry and Kloep suggest that “apart from the fact that the majority of young people remain relatively well-behaved across teenage years, recent research shows that peer-pressure is a wildly over-estimated factor in young people’s behaviour” (Hendry & Kloep, 2012, p. 64). These theorists argue that young people are reflexive and agentic, can exercise choices whether they

want to yield to peer-pressure. Further, they contend that not all youth are equally prone to negative peer-pressure and they could also positively influence their peer group.

Further critiques of these traditional models suggest that they do not consider differences in gender, race, culture and the varying types of families in society (Aapola et al., 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2012). For example, critics suggest that most of the research was survey-based, conducted among White, middle class American samples and that there is a dearth of research taking factors such as culture, class, sexual identity and ability into account (Brown et al., 1999; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Underwood, 2007; Way et al., 2005). Way et al. (2005) argue that data from White, American middle class samples cannot be generalised to other groups because adolescents from other contexts have to contend with different psychosocial forces. They further contend that the over-reliance on data from middle class contexts implicitly suggests that these findings become the norm against which to compare other groups' friendship patterns. This tends to obscure the diversity of experiences among adolescents from different groups. Despite the above-mentioned criticisms, current research suggests that similar to younger friendships, gender differences also seem salient in adolescent friendships (Aapola et al., 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Hey, 1997).

Adolescent girls' friendships

Aapola et al. (2005) posit that girlfriends tend to share similar characteristics such as socio-economic status, age, grades and common interests, and that "friendships and social groups form an important cultural space for girls and young women to explore different types of activities and subjectivities" (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 131). Hey (1997) concurs that "it is between and amongst girls as friends that identities are variously practised, appropriated, resisted and negotiated" (p. 30). Likewise, Thompson (1994) states that friends provide girls with an intimate audience where they can also discuss matters about family, sex and romance.

Savin-Williams and Berndt (as cited by Brown et al., 1999) define intimacy as “the ability to share one’s thoughts and feelings” (p. 209). Thompson (1994) suggests that intimate “friendships also take a share of the weight off love – make it more feasible to postpone the intimacy that sex is supposed to buy” (p. 228). Although girls also engage in activities, talking among girls seems a defining feature of their friendships (Gulbrandsen, 2003; Paechter, 2007). These authors suggest that talking about their experiences to a close friend provide girls an opportunity to gain clarity about their relationships and experiences in the world. Gulbrandsen (2003) notes, that talking among girls is a fluid phenomenon, an activity for “negotiating possible ways of being oneself as a girl among girls” (p. 119). Lees (1993) found girls constantly spoke about sexual reputations and talking among themselves provided them an outlet to deal with gossip and defend any aspersions against their reputations. However, Lees (1993) contends, friendships among girls “can lock [them] more securely into the private sphere where emotions and personal life are the focus” (p. 80).

Letendre and Smith (2011) state that friendships serve as a protective factor, which can enhance girls’ self-esteem, reinforce their identity, shield them from isolation and peer victimisation. Brown et al. (1999) further posit that as adolescent girls mature their friendships become more stable, intimacy intensifies and their friends’ values and beliefs become more important. Hence, Hey (1997) states that girls’ friendships are organised around “ethical rules of friendship” (p. 65), namely, reliability, loyalty, reciprocity, commitment, confidentiality, trust and sharing. Betrayal of these values by close friends tends to leave girls hurt, angry and often results in fighting (Letendre & Smith, 2011).

In their work with White, middle class American girls, researchers found that adolescent girls are socialised from a young age to be kind and to maintain their friendships (Brown, 1998; Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Lamb, 2001). However, Brown and Gilligan found that discourses of normative femininity, the “tyranny to be nice and kind” and the suppression of anger, compromise girls’

authenticity in their friendships. This results in girls metaphorically losing their voices and failing to develop the appropriate skills to manage peer conflict. In studies with ethnically diverse girls from low-income contexts, researchers found they had different friendship patterns compared to White, middle class, adolescent girls (Brown et al., 1999; Way et al., 2005). For example, with poor or working class girls, Way (1995) found, irrespective of race or academic ability, the majority of the girls spoke their minds in their friendships in and out of school. Similarly, Brown (1998) found rural, White working class girls resisted passivity and were vocal in expressing their opinions or disagreements. She also illustrated how working class girls had a sense of solidarity and cohesion in their friendships, while middle class girls struggled with the competing rewards of individual successes among their friends.

In a longitudinal study with low-income, ethnically diverse adolescents, Way et al. (2005) also found distrust prevalent in friendships. The girls in their study constructed other girls as deceitful, jealous, or gossiping “backstabbers”. Consequently girls often subjected their friends to “trust tests” by sharing some confidential information to test if their friends were trustworthy. Thompson (1994) similarly found that girls referred to their rivals as “two-faced backstabbers. You have to keep your eye on them all the time” (p. 228). In a study in Cape Town, Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses, and Seekings (2010) found that adolescents also mistrusted each other because friends could steal each other’s boyfriends.

Contrary to Brown’s (1998) findings above, Thompson (1994) found a lack of solidarity among her participants and suggests their intense displaced anger manifested as misogyny: girls fearing or hating other girls “instead of boys or men, for injuries inflicted by boys or men” (p. 245). Thompson (1994) and Way et al.’s (2005) findings support Frith’s (2004) contention that “girls’ friendships have often been romanticised as a haven of warmth and support, intimate self-disclosure and trust” (p. 357), which obscures the complexities of their relationships. Frith states that these relationships are often plagued with aggression where hierarchical cliques and “ever

shifting and re-negotiated processes of inclusion and exclusion and battles over power and status” (Frith, 2004, p. 357) manifest. Thus Aapola et al. (2005) contend that girls’ friendships can either help girls to assert themselves and collectively challenge the patriarchal gender order or it can support traditional notions of femininity.

Popularity, competition and meanness – the antithesis of friendship

According to Hendry and Kloep (2012), popularity is salient and valued during adolescence. Attributes that are usually associated with popularity include physical attractiveness, wearing the latest, fashionable clothes and shoes, following certain music trends or having sporting abilities. Cliques often form based on these similar interests. Merten (2004) states that popularity and friendships are grounded on divergent principles to such an extent that popularity comes at a great cost to girls. He states the power that popularity bestows on girls is so seductive that many girls are prepared to sacrifice their genuine friendships and themselves for it. He notes that popularity is “based on hierarchy, public recognition and self-interest, [while] friendship . . . [tends to be] based on equality, private exchange, and mutuality” (Merten, 2004, p. 363). Further, the promise of freedom accruing from popularity, Merten argues, is a mirage which places more restrictions on girls. The paradox of popularity, Merten (1997) states, is that it demands hard work and constant vigilance to police one’s public image. Being popular is tantamount to being on a stage, where adolescent girls constantly have to manage and protect their constructed public persona. Further, he argues it is rather tenuous; hence, girls police themselves because they risk being displaced by rivals.

According to Merten (1997), there is a complex relationship between competition, popularity and meanness; and at its core, each is a striving for power. He suggests there are two routes to popularity, such as the intense competition to attract the attention of high status boys or vying for the most sought after positions at schools. He argues that meanness is sometimes a by-product of competition, while it is also used to gain the competitive edge over other girls or to protect one’s

popularity. However, when a girl pursues popularity aggressively, she is easily labelled as mean, when she is overly nice she could be classified as phoney, or if she is too stuck-up she could be construed as acting as if she is superior to the other girls. Currie et al. (2009) also found that popular girls are envied, yet simultaneously feared and disliked. Hence, popular girls not only have to police the intragroup hierarchy and rivalry among themselves, they also have to contend with the envy and projections of the less popular girls, and the fear and contempt of backstabbers (Merten, 1997).

Merten (2004) states that “popularity is not only corrosive to friendship, but also reinforces a patriarchal worldview that encourages young girls to incorporate the male gaze into their image of themselves as successful” (p. 364). Consequently, girls could become disconnected from themselves and “give up or give over their version of reality to those who have the power to name or reconfigure their experience” (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p. 95). Thus, at early adolescence girls are often immersed in gendered heterosexual hierarchies and the allure of popularity draws them like a magnet, but at great cost to themselves and their friendships.

Aggression among girls and their friends

As discussed earlier, violence against women and girls is a grave human rights violation which compromises the well-being of the population, and its eradication is crucial. However, Bhana (2008) maintains that merely focusing on male violence tends to perpetuate binary notions of gender, obscures the prevalence of non-normative femininities and reproduces girls as passive, innocent victims. This also obscures girls’ complicity in the gender positioning and climate of violence in schools. Further, Bhana and Pillay (2011) contend that aggression among children has generally been categorised in developmental psychology as bullying, which typically refers to violence perpetrated against a victim. This rather simplistic conceptualisation attributes the causes of peer aggression to psychological problems and locates the pathology within the individual. Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Kaukialnen (1996) concur that

aggression among children is a social and group process. It is embedded within the social power relations and structural fabric of society and intersects with gender, race, sexuality and class (Bhana & Pillay, 2011).

According to Aapola et al. (2005), schools are important environments for the construction of friendships, but they are often also places where aggression against and among girls occur. Similarly, schools are also unsafe spaces for girls in South Africa, where physical fighting and bullying tend to be common phenomena, where they are also exposed to victimisation, more serious forms of physical and sexual violence, indirect harassment and aggression, and cyber violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Reddy et al., 2010).

Direct/overt aggression

Traditional theories of aggression posit that boys are innately prone to violence while girls only fight because of romantic jealousies (Thompson, 1994). However, various studies illustrate how girls engage in both direct and indirect aggression (Aapola et al., 2005; Bhana, 2008; Bright, 2005; Currie et al., 2009; Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). According to Grotper and Crick (1996), direct/overt aggression consists of intentional behaviours that aim to threaten or inflict physical harm on another peer (e.g., hitting, shoving/pushing, verbal attacks and threats to assault a peer), which was generally regarded as more prevalent among boys. Various international and local studies have reported the prevalence of aggression among girls (see Bhana, 2008; Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Brown, 2003; Brown & Tappan, 2008; Letendre & Smith, 2011; Owens et al., 2000; Sullivan, 2005; Willemse, 2008). These studies suggest that physical aggression could be reactive, when girls tend to fight over boys, racial slurs, gossiping, teasing about their appearance or bodies, or out of self-protection, revenge or retaliation, or to protect their friends. However, Thompson (1994) found that often girls did not understand their anger and that “a hard look or a bad feeling” (p. 232) could trigger aggression. Physical aggression could also be instrumental to attain something material or social (Grotper & Crick, 1996). For example, in a disadvantaged

context, Bhana (2008) found that girls also fought over lunch or when others were resistant to share some material goods.

In a study with low-income adolescents in a peri-urban area of the Western Cape, Sullivan (2005) found that there were no significant differences between boys' and girls' aggression. However, he found that there were significant differences regarding physical aggression and hostility; boys were more prone to engage in physical aggression while girls displayed more indirect hostile aggression. Boys and girls however displayed no significant differences regarding their expression of verbal aggression and anger. In a study comparing a group of rural and peri-urban adolescents in the Western Cape, Willemse (2008) similarly found that boys displayed more physical aggression and girls more indirect hostile aggression, while there were no differences between early and middle adolescents. Both Sullivan (2005) and Willemse (2008), drawing on social learning theories, argued that adolescents used aggression as self-protective strategies and that their self-reported, high levels of aggression were symptomatic of the endemic violence prevalent in South Africa.

In her work with African primary school girls in South Africa, Bhana (2008) also illustrated how, in contexts of material and social deprivation and endemic violence, girls used violence not only as a strategy of survival to gain material and social rewards, but also as a source of power among their peers. In their context, characterised by asymmetrical gender relations between boys and girls, the girls used power to construct transgressive femininities that defied the normative femininities of docility and niceness. They also used their power as a source of solidarity and protection for the "gentler" girls against the boys or other aggressive girls. Bhana further illustrates how some girls were able to cross the gender boundaries, claimed their power and hold their own against the boys by hitting back. Letendre and Smith (2011) similarly found that early adolescent girls, regarded as popular by their peers, used fighting to enhance their social status, which other girls often emulated.

In a study with a group of racially diverse middle adolescent girls, Bhana and Pillay (2011) similarly found that the girls asserted their power through physical and verbal aggression. These displays of non-normative femininities were instrumental in establishing hierarchies of power among the girls, securing them material and social rewards. They also illustrate how, through sexual objectification, the girls lived up to the demands of compulsory heterosexuality. The heterosexual competition and fighting among the girls for boys' attention or for stealing one another's boyfriends, illustrate how these girls have internalised the male gaze. This perpetuates gender hierarchies and disconnection among girls. Thompson (1994) also found that during adolescence, girls boasted that their attractiveness to boys was the source of jealousy among their peers and they regarded the jealousy and fighting as "part of the thrill of adolescence" (p. 235). Thus, these studies illustrate that fighting among girls is a complex problem, influenced by the intersection of factors such as age, gender norms, class and contextual factors.

Indirect/relational aggression

Underwood (2007) states that girls use a range of indirect aggressive strategies that are psychologically harmful for their well-being. In contrast to overt/direct aggression, Grotper and Crick (1996) define indirect/relational aggression as "behaviours that inflict harm on others by manipulating peer relationships (e.g., giving a peer the silent treatment; maliciously spreading lies and rumours about a peer to damage the peer's group status)" (p. 2329). Underwood (2007) also uses the term social aggression when referring to relational aggression (e.g., gossiping, social exclusion and manipulating friendships, glares of contempt, threatening stares, rolling the eyes, etc.), which is used to socially exclude a peer and diminish her self-esteem. Researchers state that indirect aggression, because of its covert nature, is usually conducted behind the victims' back, beyond the watchful gaze of adults, and tends to go undetected and unpunished (Murray-Close, Crick, & Galotti, 2006; Underwood, 2007).

According to Brown (2003), gossiping can be a strategy for girls to “resist and subvert unfairness and abuses of power; it can provide girls with a safe space, a sense of intimacy and belonging, a protective collectivity” (p. 158). Further, because of the high levels of intimacy and self-disclosure in girls’ relationships, she states non-verbal types of social exclusion could be a powerful force in girls’ relationships; hence, girls tend to experience social exclusion as threatening and painful because it can push girls to the margins of their peer group. For example, Owens et al. (2000) report how, as strategies of exclusion to hurt peers, girls used among others, dirty looks (“they give the deaths”) and indirect harassment (hostile notes or prank calls). Bhana and Pillay (2011) similarly found adolescent girls, when entangled in a competitive heterosexual matrix, used rumour mongering and gossip to protect their sexual turfs and policed the hierarchies of power. Brown (2003) concurs that gossip is a powerful force that can be used to marginalise other girls and it is often used against girls who are threatening, too outspoken or popular. Currie et al. (2009) also report how the demands of “emphasized femininities” and the dictates of a patriarchal appearance culture influenced girls’ behaviours and manifested in relational aggression. They illustrate how competition for popularity, being the best dressed and attention from boys, imparted girls social and sexual currency among their peers. Popularity also endowed girls with status and the “power to squash people” (Currie et al., 2009, p. 23). They illustrate how there is a dialogical relationship between popularity and meanness, which is both regulatory and productive in girls’ construction of their social identities and in reproducing hierarchical relationships and aggression among girls. Various studies found ongoing hostile forms of relational aggression tend to escalate from verbal altercations to physical attacks when girls fight back to save face and deal with the pain of relational aggression (Bhana, 2008; Brown, 2003; Brown & Tappan, 2008; Letendre & Smith, 2011; Owens et al., 2000).

Indirect aggression and cyberbullying

The different forms of indirect/social aggression, generally regarded as a school-based peer problem, have also expanded their reach into the cyber world with the onset of ICTs (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Menesini & Spiel, 2012; Mishna et al., 2012). Cyberbullying is the “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013, p. 711). This includes sending denigrating, harassing or threatening messages or posting a range of materials via the cell phone or internet, or posting it on various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook or YouTube) with the expressed intention to hurt, humiliate or embarrass someone (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Cyberbullying could also entail sexting, which Samuels et al. (2013) state entails “the taking of explicit photographs or videos (with or without the knowledge/permission of those photographed) and distributing them to a wider audience via cell phones. It can also involve engaging in online chats or conversations that are explicit or erotic in nature” (p. 13).

The online disinhibition effect, namely, the anonymity and the ease of typing words compared to the face-to-face verbal encounters, as well as the lack of consequences for cyberbullying, contributed to its growth in most contexts (Louw & Louw, 2014). Burton and Leoschut (2013) also suggest that young people who feel disempowered or lack control over their lives, could feel a sense of control and power to take revenge or settle scores. Online aggression can result in common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression or low self-esteem, poor peer relationships and in extreme cases, suicide and self harm (see Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Mishna et al., 2012; Samuels et al., 2013 for a comprehensive discussion of online violence).

In a national study conducted with 2,186 scholars in middle and high schools in Canada, Mishna et al. (2012) found that about 30% of their participants were involved in cyberbullying, either as a victim or perpetrator, and 26% reported involvement both as a bully and as a victim (bully-

victim). Mishna et al. (2012) report boys perpetrated bullying more than girls did, while girls reported being both victims and bully-victims. They found this to be interesting because in traditional bullying, boys were more prone to bullying as bully-victims than girls. They suggest that this is probably due to the anonymity of cyber space, which seems to give girls the liberty to perpetrate aggressive behaviours without being physical.

In South Africa, in a national study among 5,939 scholars, Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that approximately 21% of the learners had an online experience of violence, perpetrated mainly by their friends and acquaintances. Thirty-five percent of the violence included sending video clips or pictures, 27% via instant messaging platforms (e.g., Mxit, WhatsApp, Blackberry Messenger, etc.) and 15% sent via simple text messages to the victims' friends and acquaintances. Girls reported experiencing higher levels of online violence compared to boys and experienced similar levels of exposure to sexually explicit aggression as male learners. Perpetrators reported a range of reasons why they engaged in online aggression, which Burton and Leoschut (2013) suggest corresponds relatively strongly with the reasons for traditional, off-line bullying. Cyberbullying seems largely about the abuse of power, taking revenge, denigration or as punishment, while 49% reported they did it for fun. Given the negative experiences of victims from cyberbullying, Burton and Leoschut (2013) contend that online violence is but one manifestation of the high levels of violence affecting young people in South Africa that warrants urgent attention.

The dynamics of aggression among girls

Brown (2003) states aggression among girls is “often about keeping other girls – those who transgress or resist or defy categories – in line, it is fundamentally about maintaining the status quo” (p. 34), namely, entrenching girls' subordinate status and the power and privilege of boys. Hence, through direct and indirect aggression, girls engage in “psychological foot-binding” (Brown & Gilligan, 1993) and become disconnected from each other. Thus, feminists' state that

the seeds for horizontal violence among girls, sown from an early age, is a consequence of patriarchy.

Brown et al. (1999) suggest that early adolescence seems a particularly stressful stage for adolescent girls' friendships and is characterised by an increase in indirect/relational aggression (Grotperter & Crick, 1996; Underwood, 2007). According to Brown (1998), during early adolescence, girls become aware of their secondary status and she contends that there could be a connection between the rise in aggression among girls and the increased levels of control and surveillance that they experience at early adolescence. This argument is consistent with Lee's (1994) assertion that, at menarche, girls become inserted and insert themselves in the hierarchical gendered system. Thus Brown et al. (1999) contend that displays of aggression could be a

function of girls' attempts to negotiate or to resist culturally inscribed and socially sanctioned notions of femininity that specify the normal, the typical, the desirable, and the good. Because open conflict and competition are taboo for adolescent girls, especially in school settings, girls who do not openly resist such norms find creative ways to disguise their disagreements and conflicts. They may hide or downplay their accomplishments, competitiveness, or desire for personal and social power by relying on social manipulation or more subtle relational forms of controlling others. (p. 213)

Furthermore, to explain girls' intense anger and misogyny, Thompson (1994) drew on Paulo Freire's explanation of horizontal violence. Freire (1993) proposed that, in contexts of oppression, the oppressed are intra-psychically bound to the oppressor to such an extent that they identify with and internalise the oppressor. Hence, Freire (1993) contends, individuals

often manifest a type of horizontal violence, striking out at their own comrades for the pettiest reasons . . . It is possible that in this behaviour they are once more

manifesting their duality. Because the oppressor exists within their oppressed comrades, when they attack those comrades they are indirectly attacking the oppressor as well. (Freire, 1993, p. 44)

From the above discussion, it appears that girls do not only fight to secure the intimacy of their friendship with girls, but they also seem to fight for the monopoly of boys' attention, admiration, intimacy and love, which they assume will elevate their status and worth. Psycho-dynamically girls unconsciously fight to not only secure personal power and/or the most beloved position, but seemingly, their anger and fighting are also attempts to attack the oppressive patriarchal system. Brown (2003) states that girlfighting is a quest for power; hence, girls separate themselves from "an inferior, weak femininity so incapable of attaining real power and control – [and fighting] is the way to gain the power of maleness for themselves" (p. 31). Thus, in their alienation from other females and the devaluation of their friendships, girls could miss the benefits of other women's experiences and the solidarity among women (Rich, 1983).

Adolescent girls' relationships with boys

Relationships with boys play a significant role in adolescent girls' development. A comprehensive discussion of the different facets and dynamics of these relationships is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I will present a brief discussion of some salient aspects of adolescent girls' platonic and romantic relationships.

Platonic relationships: Contrary to the notion that during adolescence cross-gender relationships tend to be romantic, McDougall and Hymel (2007) report that girls also had platonic cross-gender relationships. These relationships lasted for about three years, were prevalent both at school and at home, and had a greater age-range for late (grade 12) adolescents. Among the early adolescents, McDougall and Hymel (2007) found that both boys and girls structured their cross-gender friendships around activities and preventing negative behaviours (e.g., fighting, hitting)

towards a friend, rather than talking. McDougall and Hymel (2007) further argue that cross-gender friendships seem to hold similar benefits as same-sex friendships, such as learning opportunities, self-understanding and validating one's self-worth. Furman (1999) similarly states that, given cross-gender peer friendships are relatively egalitarian, they provide adolescents with the space to co-construct their relationships where they learn mutuality, reciprocity, reciprocal altruism, collaboration and social play. He states that adolescents usually transfer such skills to future romantic relationships. However, adolescents also reported that when they had cross-gender friendships, they were prone to teasing because their peers assumed these were romantic relationships (McDougall & Hymel, 2007; Thorne, 1993). McDougall and Hymel's (2007) participants reported that often sexual attraction was also an obstacle in cross-gender friendships because one party often had a romantic interest and wanted to be more than a friend.

Way et al. (2005) also found that girls preferred being friends with boys because they could trust them and that they do not to spread rumours or gossip about the girls. Despite their idealisation of their male friendships, the girls still shared intimate secrets with their best girlfriends rather than their male friends. Brown (2003) heard a similar refrain among her participants: "most of my friends are guys" (p. 129). Consistent with Way et al.'s (2005) findings, her sample also preferred male friends because they also sought relief from girls' backstabbing and gossiping. The girls reported that cross-gender platonic friendships afforded them power: power from the freedom of distrust, regulation, competition, from the intensity of other girls' surveillance and judgement of their appearance.

Romantic relationships: During adolescence, adolescents seek out romantic relationships and tend to spend more time with romantic partners than with their parents, siblings or peers. Theorists state romantic relationships are integral for girls' well-being and can facilitate their development (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2010). However, research indicates that romantic relationships differ from individual

to individual, and personality, family and cultural factors tend to influence romantic relationships (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Tolman, Striepe, & Harmon, 2003). Furman and Wehner (1997) suggest that a romantic partner can “become a major figure in the attachment, caregiving, affiliative and sexual behavioural systems” (p. 22). This means that during times of distress, the partner serves as an attachment figure, providing support, caregiving, and friendship. Romantic relationships also meet reciprocity and sexual fulfilment needs.

Various studies found that romantic relationships tend to intensify with age across adolescence. For example, during early adolescence, Bouchey and Furman (2003) suggest, adolescents seem to focus more on the currency that a romantic relationship has for their status in their peer group. Martin (1996) similarly found that peers regarded “having a boyfriend as a sign of status and of accomplishment” (p. 65). Although the relationship meets some affiliative and sexual needs during this phase, Furman and Wehner (1997) suggest that the primary focus during this phase is about learning to engage on an intimate and sexual level with a partner. During middle adolescence, Furman and Wehner suggest that there is a shift to an exclusive relationship and there is less concern about the peer group. Furman and Wehner (1997) state that it is only during late adolescence, when the relationships with parents have been transformed, that “the attachment and caregiving systems are expected to become more significant” (p. 24). Although romantic relationships across adolescence offers support, intimacy, nurturance and sexual fulfilment, it is only from late adolescence and in relatively, long-term relationships that the full range of emotional needs are met (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Furman & Wehner, 1997; Hendry & Kloep, 2012).

According to Furman and Shaffer (2003), romantic relationships play a significant role in adolescents’ identity development, familial relationships, sexuality and scholastic achievement. During adolescence, establishing a secure sense of self is one of the primary tasks in identity development. Furman and Shaffer suggest that positive, intimate romantic relationships facilitate

adolescents' developing a positive sense of themselves in the romantic domain, namely, a romantic self-concept. This is distinctly different from their sense of self in their close peer relationships. Harter (as cited by Furman & Shaffer, 2003) found that there is a positive relationship between a positive romantic self-concept and an adolescents' global self-esteem. This positive development also tends to influence other facets of identity development such as gender development.

Romantic relationships also have a significant influence on familial relationships. Given the quest for more autonomy during this phase, parents and adolescents need to renegotiate the parent-child relationship. Research indicates that this period is often fraught with conflict as parents and children tend to have differing expectations during this phase (Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008). Conflict usually arises over matters such as monitoring and control. Parents often feel they want to exercise control over curfews, partying, school work, the intensity of the romantic relationship and sexual activity, while the adolescent regards these as personal matters she wants to control (Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Hendry & Kloep, 2012; Papalia et al., 2008). These researchers suggest that the nature of attachment and parenting styles play a significant role in this renegotiation phase and the transformation of the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, although romantic partners tend to become important attachment figures, parents remain important sources of attachment and support during this phase.

Romantic relationships and sexuality: Seeing and experiencing themselves as sexual beings is another developmental task that adolescents have to accomplish during this phase. According to Furman and Shaffer (2003), romantic relationships are integral to providing adolescents with opportunities to develop their sexuality. They argue that in romantic relationships adolescents learn about reciprocity and meeting mutual needs. Adolescents further learn to reconcile their own needs and sexual desires with their values and the needs of their romantic partners. Although

biology plays a significant role in sexual development, Papalia et al. (2008) contend that culture is also an important determinant in its expression.

Tolman, Striepe et al. (2003) concur that, “achieving sexual health requires the integration of psychological, physical, societal, cultural, educational, economic, and spiritual factors” (p. 4). They further argue that gender and the dominant gender relations in local contexts play a significant role in adolescents’ sexual health, which has implications for the development of sexuality and girls’ self-worth. Tolman (1994) further contends that the dominant narrative in patriarchal culture suggests that “girls do not want sex; what girls really want is intimacy and a relationship” (p. 250), which supports Fine’s (1988) contention that there is a silence in acknowledging girls’ sexual desire. Martin (1996) similarly found that romantic relationships were often laden with gendered meanings. For example, she found that girls were often “immersed in [a] romantic culture” (p. 61) espousing ideal notions of love and adoration, while boys seemingly were interested in a “blend of friendship and sex in relationships with their girlfriends” (p. 67). Various studies have shown how the contradictory messages and double standards in society compromise adolescent girls’ sexual development (Fine 1988; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1994; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 2000; Tolman, 1994). Thus, societal discourses about sexuality influence how sexuality should manifest in romantic relationships, namely who should have sex with whom, how and when. This can have a profound influence on the nature and quality of the romantic relationships for adolescent girls.

Coming of age in a culture that devalues females and objectifies women as sex objects, Tolman (1994) maintains could be confusing for adolescent girls. She contends that narratives of power and subordination tend to be reproduced in adolescent relationships. For example, Lees (1993) reported how, as a form of revenge or when boys were angry with girls/partners, boys had the power to label girls as sluts and damage their reputations in their peer groups. Likewise, Tolman, Striepe et al. (2003) found girls reported high levels of male aggression and dominance in their

dating relationships and that boys were primarily interested in sex. In South Africa, various studies similarly report high levels of male aggression and control and low levels of sexual agency and pleasure for young women in dating relationships (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Lesch & Kruger, 2004; Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1998). Negative experiences of victimisation, power and sexual abuse, and other forms of risk-taking in romantic relationships, can negatively affect an adolescent girl's identity development and well-being and could influence academic performance.

Romantic relationships and scholastic achievement: According to Furman and Shaffer (2003), romantic relationships could affect scholastic achievement positively or negatively. This, they suggest, is dependent on the characteristics of the partner and the nature of the relationship. Supportive partners can promote and encourage academic achievement, opportunities to discuss dreams and career aspirations. On the other hand, they contend that conflictual romantic relationships could be disruptive, time consuming and distract attention from schoolwork, which could result in poor academic outcomes. Adolescents in Cape Town similarly reported that their dating and romantic relationships were conflictual, a barrier to studying and were incompatible with educational goals (Bray et al., 2010). Furman and Shaffer (2003) also found that generally adolescent romantic relationships were associated with poor academic outcomes. However, the direction of this relationship is not clear. They argue that it could be that less academically oriented learners tend to develop romantic relationships or that romantic relationships could possibly have adverse effects on scholastic achievement. Further, various researchers have found that constructions of womanhood and socio-economic status could also play a role in academic achievement (Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Martin, 1996; Thompson, 1994; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001). For example, Thompson (1994), from her study with working class girls, concludes:

Teenage girls who do not race for love have something else drawing them forward, a counterpoise to the need for love – ambition or an expectation of fun or meaningfulness to come. These teenage girls, in contrast, did not have a vision of a pleasurable stage of fun and experimentation between childhood and adulthood or any professional or vocational goal that magnetized their interest. Learning might have excited them had they had the money . . . (p. 244)

Thus, romantic relationships are integral to adolescent girls' development. It can provide girls with opportunities to explore facets of themselves in an intimate, loving relationship where they could meet their needs for mutuality, reciprocity and care. However, these relationships could also have varying negative outcomes for their well-being.

In summary, research indicates that gender, class and culture influence relationships and friendships among peers. The nature of these friendships, platonic and romantic, also varies and develops in complexity as girls become older, and fulfil a range of needs such as intimacy, reciprocity, collaboration, reciprocal altruism and sexual fulfilment. It also provides girls with a context in which to learn and practice their identities and a range of skills. Besides these positive attributes, friendships can also have negative manifestations such as different types of aggression with negative outcomes for adolescent girls' well-being.

3.3.3 Social factors and adolescent girls' well-being

Children born post-1994 are the first generation to grow up in a democratic S.A. where children's rights are enshrined in the Constitution and the Children's Act. Furthermore, the S.A. government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and African Children's Charter. Although S.A. succeeded in providing universal access to health care for children below the age of six years and primary school education for children, there are still a number of challenges for children's optimal development. The World Bank (2012) report that varying determinants, such

as circumstances at birth, whether a child is orphaned, or lives in a rural area, a township or an informal settlement; poor access to social services and their parents'/caregivers' education levels, persist in shaping the levels of opportunity for children in S.A.

According to Statistics South Africa (2012), approximately 35% of children live in households where no members are employed, and children in female-headed households are three times more vulnerable to hunger than those in male-headed households. Further, UNICEF (2014) reports that approximately 11 million children in S.A. live in poverty, about two million in informal housing (backyard shacks with poor basic services such as sanitation and water), while more than two million children live in overcrowded homes with increased risk for sexual abuse.

In S.A., girls also face systematic disadvantage and social vulnerability due to the persistence of patriarchy and a range of negative, inter-related psychosocial factors on various levels. According to Meinck, Cluver, and Boyes (as cited by Mathews et al., 2014), approximately 50% of South African children experience physical abuse by caregivers, relatives or teachers at home or school. Research also shows that about 39% of girls report experiencing unwanted sexual advances and exploitation before the age of 18 years and most rapes of girls are perpetrated by boys or men known to them (Seedat et al., 2009; Vetten et al., 2008). In addition, schools are often dangerous places for girls where sexual bullying and harassment by boys are common and teachers often abuse their power and exploit girls sexually. Despite the girls' complaints, the lack of response from the school authorities tends to foster a climate of impunity and sexual entitlement (Abrahams et al., 2006; Bhana, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Reddy et al., 2010). Further, the South African Police Services (2014) report that during 2013/14, 45,230 contact crimes, including 22,781 sexual offences and 846 murders against children younger than 18 years were reported to the police. Given the ineffective surveillance and poor policing systems, the actual level of violence perpetrated against children or girls is unknown (Mathews et al., 2014; Vetten et al., 2008). Hence, the endemic levels of crime and sexual violence in S.A. significantly curtail the

freedom and movement of girls, and this pervasive threat of violence creates a climate of fear for their personal safety and negatively influences their development and well-being.

Regarding education, Statistics from the Department of Basic Education (2014) indicate that S.A. has reached the desired MDG3 target of access to education for girls. In 2012, approximately 99% of girls from all population groups aged 7 to 15 years, and 86% of males and females, aged 16 to 18 years, attended educational institutions. However, in 2012 approximately half a million learners aged 7 to 18 years were not attending any educational institution. In 2012, approximately 23% of Coloured learners aged 16 to 18 years, compared to the other population groups (African 13%, Indian 17% and White 14%), were out of school. A further worrying trend is that between 2002 and 2012, more than 20% of Coloured learners aged 16 to 18 years were not attending school annually. In addition, due to the legacy of apartheid, South Africa has a dual education system where schools that previously served White learners under the apartheid system are performing and functional schools. On the other hand, schools for predominantly Black and Coloured learners tend to be dysfunctional and fail to equip learners with the required numeracy and literacy skills (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014; Spaul, 2013; Van der Berg, 2008). Children's exposure to variable levels of quality of education, the failure to complete primary school education on time, lack of access to early childhood development programmes, and the failure to provide safe neighbourhoods, continue to have long-term impacts on the development and well-being of children (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014; World Bank, 2012). Thus, children who are born into poverty in S.A. are at risk for poor educational outcomes, do not acquire the appropriate skills to secure employment and are prone to "poverty traps" (Narayan & Mahajan, 2013; see SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014 for an in-depth discussion of the perpetuation and consequences of poverty traps).

Referring to the *Second National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008*, conducted among grade 8 to 11 scholars from all population groups, Reddy et al. (2010) report that scholars engaged in a

number of risky behaviours that could affect their well-being. For instance, nationally, 16% used alcohol and 14% used drugs before having sex. In the Western Cape though, 37% of the learners reported using alcohol before having sex. Fifty percent of the learners reported that they had consumed alcohol previously, 35% had consumed alcohol in the month prior to the survey and 29% had engaged in binge drinking in the past month. Compared to the national average (29%), 41% of Western Cape learners reported binge drinking in the month prior to the survey and 12% reported that they started drinking before the age of 13 years. Regarding sexual debut, 13% reported having sex before the age of 14 years and 38% reported ever having had sex. Forty-one percent further reported having had sex with more than one partner and 52 % had one or more partners in the three months preceding the survey. Although 45% reported that they mostly used and 31% consistently used contraception, 18% reported having unprotected sex, which could put them at risk for sexually transmitted infections.

According to Shisana et al. (2014), the national estimate for HIV prevalence is 12%, with more than six million people living with HIV. The national survey illustrates that age, gender, race and locality disproportionally influence HIV-risk in S.A. The data suggest that females have a higher prevalence (14%) for HIV compared to males (10%) and this occurring at an early age. For example, young men aged 15 to 19 years have a prevalence of less than 1% while their female counterparts have a prevalence of 6%. While males aged 20 to 24 years reach an HIV prevalence of 5%, by then the prevalence level for females (17%) has more than tripled compared to males (Shisana et al., 2014). Researchers suggest that young women aged 15 to 24 years in S.A. are at increased risk for HIV infection due to a lack of power in relationships in negotiating decision-making on condom use; coerced sexual debut; transgenerational sex; and gender inequities (Moyo et al., 2008; Levine et al., 2008; Shisana et al., 2014).

In sum, the findings from these national surveys suggest that the complex interaction between distal, proximal and intrapersonal factors, as well as one's location, could influence adolescents'

risk for HIV and various risky behaviours. According to Reddy et al. (2010), these risks, which manifest in adolescence, tend to persist into adulthood and could set adolescents on a negative life trajectory.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how gender is a driver of well-being in South Africa. Despite some of the most progressive human rights legislation in the world, traditional notions of gender and gender inequity persist to limit the optimal development of women and girls in South Africa. I also addressed some proximal and distal psychosocial factors that influence the lived experiences of girls in this context. In the next chapter I discuss the methodological framework of this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of the literature I reviewed for this study. In this chapter, I first present the aims of the study, thereafter I describe the methodology and the methods used in this study.

4.2 The aims of the study

From a feminist perspective, Crawford and Kimmel (1999) state that the aims of research should not just be about collecting data, but that research should “contribute to the transformation of gender relations and the gender system” (p. 5). Hence, in this study I attempted to create a safe space where a group of adolescent girls could converse and reflect on their experiences as girls. Four specific aims guided this study. First, the study explored girls’ lived experiences of girlhood. Second, it endeavoured to understand their constructions of gender. Third, it explored the girls’ experiences of gender and lastly, I wanted to understand how they negotiate their positions as girls in their different contexts. In the light of this, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How does a group of Black South African adolescent girls, in a low-income community, describe what it is like to be a girl in their contexts?
2. What are the girls’ day-to-day experiences of gender in their contexts?
3. What are the girls’ constructions of femininity and masculinity?
4. How do they negotiate their positions as girls in their contexts?

4.3 Research design

This study is located within a qualitative, feminist and social constructionist framework. In the following section, I discuss these frameworks.

4.3.1 Qualitative research methodologies

Qualitative research encompasses a broad field of enquiry that transcends “disciplines, fields, and subject matters” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, and Tindall (1994) state that there is no unitary qualitative methodology and the different approaches fulfil different objectives, each with its diverse interpretations. Yardley (2000) concurs that within qualitative research there are a multiplicity of methodologies and related epistemologies that are not “simply investigative techniques but represent a range of fundamentally different approaches to the production of knowledge” (p. 215). Despite their plurality, qualitative methodologies are concerned with meaning; how people make sense of their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Willig, 2001). In similar vein, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that qualitative research aims to “explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations” (p. 7.). Dey (1993) contends that these meanings do not merely reside “in the heads of individuals” (p. 11), but are grounded in social practices and are communicated through language. Thus, qualitative methodologies could facilitate our insight into the subjective meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences and elicit how social processes operate within their contexts.

In order to capture the “quality and texture” (Willig, 2001, p. 9) of participants’ experiences, the researcher has to provide the necessary conditions of “deep attentiveness, of empathic understanding (*Verstehen*), and of suspending or ‘bracketing’ preconceptions about the topics under discussion” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6). This assists the qualitative researcher in weaving together the different strands of the participants’ representations about their experiences, to make interpretations of an identified social phenomena and to try and go beyond the taken for granted meanings of social discourses and processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The qualitative researcher understands that the participants’ “participation in a culture includes participation in the narratives of that culture, [and seeks to gain] a general understanding of the stock of

meanings” that they hold (Richardson, as cited by Silverman, 2006, p. 134). Further, qualitative researchers understand that research is an interactive process, shaped not only by the participants’ stories, but also by the subjectivities and personal histories of both participant(s) and the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Although qualitative research enables us to understand the “weave and texture of everyday life” (Mason, 2002, p. 1), its inherent strengths have also been characterised as some of its shortcomings. Unlike quantitative research, where the assumptions of researcher objectivity and neutrality are prized, qualitative researchers value the reflexivity of the researcher and acknowledge that role in making sense of phenomena (Banister et al., 1994; Willig, 2001). Qualitative researchers also “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Social phenomena are open to a plurality of meanings and interpretations, thus researchers should be sensitive to the local context in which participants are situated.

Further, qualitative researchers usually work with smaller samples and endeavour to provide more detailed descriptions and explanations rather than establishing causal factors, making predictions or establishing correlations in the data (Barbour, 2008; Willig, 2001). Although qualitative researchers generally work with smaller samples, Morse (2000) states that data saturation, when no new information surfaces while collecting data, depends on a number of factors. These include:

The quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, the number of interviews per participant, the use of shadowed data, and the qualitative method and study design used. (Morse, 2000, p. 3)

4.3.2 Feminist methodologies

There is no unitary feminist research methodology and the strategies of enquiry can vary from quantitative to qualitative methodologies (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). However, Lather (1991) states that the social construction of gender is at the heart of feminist research. She states that gender not only plays a pivotal role in shaping the material conditions of our lives, but it is also central “in shaping our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege” (p. 70). According to Banister et al. (1994), the “explicit political commitment” (p. 137) that unites feminist approaches is the wish to transform the social structures that oppress women and distort or render their experiences invisible. Feminist approaches challenge the traditional ways of knowing the realities of men and women, particularly masculinist production of knowledge and privileging the experiences of certain groups, by focusing on previously marginalised voices. It also acknowledges the asymmetrical power relations and politics inherent in the research process between the researcher and the researched (Banister et al., 1994; Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990). Contrary to the positivist notions of objectivity and neutrality in research, feminist research does not sanitise the subjectivity of the researcher from the research. Through reflexivity, it emphasises the role of the researcher in the sense-making process and regards the researcher’s reflexivity as a resource (Banister et al., 1994; Willig, 2001).

Further, the aim of feminist research is to “give voice” to women’s experiences by formulating research questions that are grounded in their diverse experiences and knowledge. Feminist research also endeavours to bring about social change and to empower women (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006; Ramazanoğlu, & Holland, 2002). However, positivists are critical of this approach of giving “voice” to women’s experiences. Positivists argue that participants’ accounts are often inaccurate and unreliable, and therefore not objective. They note that self-report measures sometimes yield discrepancies between people’s accounts and actual experiences or participants

often contradict themselves during interviews. Social constructionists, on the other hand, maintain that it is inappropriate to regard participants' accounts as "evidence", they contend such accounts constitute "a form of talk – a 'discourse', 'account' or repertoire" – that represents a culturally available way of packaging experience" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 128). Feminists and qualitative researchers generally rely on research participants' firsthand experiences, not only as a "means of self-expression" but acknowledging the value of participants' "local knowledge" (K. Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015).

4.3.3 Social constructionist epistemology

According to Crotty (1998), we are situated culturally, socially and historically, and through our social interactions, we generate meanings about our subject positions in the world. Similarly, Kitzinger (2004), states that women's experiences do not stem from a peculiarly female way of being or knowing, "but [are] structured within, and in opposition to, social (heterosexual, patriarchal, etc.) discourses" (p. 129). Within a social constructionist paradigm, language also plays an integral role in mediating these meanings and lived experiences. Willig (2001) states that these constructions are linked to a particular context and do not reflect the actual reality. She maintains that there can be no absolute knowledge, but that we collaboratively construct multiple "knowledges" of what is "out there" and these are merely representations of reality. Creswell (2003) suggests that in a social constructionist paradigm these varied, socially constituted representations enable the researcher to interpret the meanings that people have about the world. However, the research process and the consequent interpretations are also social productions, co-produced between the researcher and the researched (Burr, 2003). In addition, the researcher's representation is but a partial version of reality as we can never fully know or understand reality from the research participant's perspective. Further, the personal assumptions and history of researchers influence the entire research process (Esterberg, 2002). Burr (2003) maintains that social constructionists can employ either qualitative or quantitative research methods, but

contends that qualitative strategies of enquiry are often favoured as these are less likely to decontextualise the participants' experiences and narratives. Thus, the narratives that the participants in this study drew on to explain their positions, provides us insight into some of their experiences and the prevailing discourses about gender in their contexts.

Thus, to answer the stated research questions, I deemed the afore-mentioned methodological and epistemological frameworks appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the girls in this study. With these theoretical considerations in mind, I employed the following methods for this study.

4.4 Methods

4.4.1 Sampling

The current study used purposive sampling to access the adolescent girls to participate in the research process. According to Patton (2002) in non-probability sampling, such as purposive sampling, identifying and selecting the primary participants is intentional because they are "information-rich" and we can learn much from them to answer the research questions. In purposive sampling participants are also selected because they share similar criteria such as age, gender, status and experiences that are central to the aims of the research (Patton, 2002; Willig, 2001). Thus, the participants in this study shared similar criteria such as age, socio-economic status and contexts and could provide information to answer the stated research questions.

4.4.2 The participants and their social contexts

Sixty-one adolescent girls, aged between 13 and 15 years participated in this study. The participants all live and attend schools in the Stellenbosch Local Municipality. Stellenbosch is a peri-urban town, located approximately 50 kilometres from the centre of Cape Town, and surrounded by rural areas commonly referred to as the Cape Winelands. This area is renowned for its scenic beauty and rural landscapes, and is a premier tourist destination. It is the centre of

South Africa's wine production, and the agricultural sector, particularly the fruit and wine industries, are the primary employers in this area. The panoramic vista of vineyards and mountains could easily obscure the legacy of inequity of the apartheid system, which Black people in this area still face. The three schools that the participants attend are approximately 15 kilometres from Stellenbosch and are located in formerly classified Coloured townships.

School 1 is located in a community of approximately 2000 residents and caters for the local children as well as the children from the surrounding farms. Situated on prime land with pastoral vistas, this Coloured community escaped the forced removals of the Apartheid Group Areas Act² because it was a mission settlement and the land belonged to the Rhenish church. When one drives through the main access street into this community, it has the facade of an upper middle class settlement, with the pockets of poverty hidden from view. This community has a three-tiered social class structure. The first tier is the propertied Coloured middle class who for generations have resided in this area and regard themselves as the rightful owners of this settlement. The second tier is a diverse group of farm workers and their families who were uprooted from the surrounding wine estates and farms, and established an informal settlement on the periphery of this community. The farm labourers who currently live and work on the adjoining farms can also be included in this tier as they use the community resources, such as the churches, primary health care clinic and the schools. The majority of the school learners/pupils are children of the farm workers and are bussed in daily to the schools in this community. The middle class ratepayers tend to regard the second tier members as intruders, often resulting in tension between the two groups. The third tier is groups of young couples who are unable to find their own accommodation and live in structures in the back yards of their families of origin, and marginalised youth who cannot secure employment. Due to on-going development in this

² The Group Areas Act of 1950 was legislation of the Apartheid government that enforced racially segregated residential areas in S.A. This legislation resulted in the forced removal of people from urban areas proclaimed White and their relocation to Coloured or Black townships.

community, such as an up-market shopping complex, a golf estate and a retirement village for wealthy White people, the former character of this community has largely been lost. Since the demise of the Group Areas Act, land has become a scarce and prized commodity in this community and sold by some property owners to mainly Whites from outside the community. This has also had a pronounced effect on the social bonds within the community (Stellenbosch Municipal, 2010; Van Wyk & Naidoo, 2008).

School 2 is located in a relatively small settlement that has a distinctly rural character. This settlement has a population of approximately 7,700 people and is characterised by high unemployment, low education and low income levels. According to Africa and Associates (2007), a significant section of the population is younger than 14 years (approximately 32.7%) and about 55% of the population is younger than 15 or older than 65 years. Approximately 93% of the population have no formal income or earn less than R1600 per month. It is estimated that more than 25% of the residents are unemployed, cannot find work or are seasonal workers. Ten percent of the residents had no schooling, approximately 59% had some formal schooling but did not complete matric; 7.2% completed matric; and only 1.4% of the residents have some tertiary education. Approximately 71% of the residents live in formal low-income housing and there are about 28% informal households in the community. According to the Stellenbosch Municipal Strategic Report (2010), in the recent past there has been a considerable influx of displaced farm labourers from the surrounding farms and migrants seeking employment. Some of these residents have been absorbed into the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) low-cost housing scheme and the two informal settlements in the area. In a survey conducted by Naidoo and Associates (2005), residents reported poor service delivery for health, transport, education, employment opportunities and recreation facilities in their community as pressing needs. Residents also expressed concern about their personal safety, the escalation in drug use among the adolescents and the rise in taverns / shebeens in their area. According to The

Stellenbosch Municipal Strategic Report (2010), the high levels of unemployment and poverty in this area are consequences of apartheid planning and 100 years of lack of development.

School 3 is a satellite school, situated along one of the main arterial roads and among farms in this area. The learners of this school reside on the surrounding agricultural and wine producing farms where their parents are employed mainly as relatively low-skilled farm workers. Some learners also come from some of the surrounding Coloured townships in the area. The majority of the learners are bussed in daily and some of the learners walk to school from the surrounding farms. Table 4.1 presents the demographic details of all the participants.

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=61)

	School 1 (n=16) f (%)	School 2 (n=21) f (%)	School 3 (n=24) f (%)	Total f (%)
Grade 7	16(100)	-	-	16(26)
Grade 8	-	21(100)	24(100)	45(74)
Home language				
Afrikaans	16(100)	18(86)	22(92)	56(92)
Xhosa	-	3(14)	2(8)	5(8)
Place of abode				
Farm	12(75)	3(14)	20(83)	35(57)
Township	4(25)	18(86)	4(17)	26(43)
Cared for by				
Mother & Father	12(75)	11(52)	20(83)	43(70)
Single Parent	4(25)	10(48)	4(17)	18(30)
Mean Age (SD)	13.13(.34)	13.76(.54)	13.54(.66)	13.51(.60)

The mean age of the participants was 13.51 years (SD =.60). The participants at School 1 (26%) were Grade 7 learners and their mean age was 13.13 years (SD=.34), which is the appropriate age

for a Grade 7 learner. The remainder of the participants (74%) were Grade 8 learners and the mean ages of the participants at School 2 were 13.76 (SD=.54) and 13.54 (SD=.66) at School 3. These mean ages are also appropriate for Grade 8 learners. Fifty-six (92%) of the participants' home language was Afrikaans and five participants (8%) spoke Xhosa at home. The Xhosa speaking participants were fluent in Afrikaans and were active participants in the discussions. Thirty-five (57%) of the girls live on the farms in the area and 26 (43%) lived in the townships where their school was situated. At School 2, 86% of the participants lived in the township compared to 75% of the girls at School 1 and 83% at School 3 who lived on farms. Forty-three (70%) of the participants are cared for by both their father and mother and 18 (30%) of the girls are cared for by a single parent. At School 2, both parents care for 52% of the participants and a single parent cares for 48% of the participants. Both parents cared for 75% of the participants at School 1, and 83% at School 3. Thirty-three (54%) of the participants reported that they did not participate in extra-mural activities compared to 28 (46%) who participated. Table 4.2 presents the participants' mothers' qualifications.

Table 4.2

The Participants' Mothers' Qualifications

	School 1	School 2	School 3	Total
	f	f	f	f (%)
Primary school only	6	10	14	30(50)
Secondary without matric ³	10	5	8	23(38)
Secondary with matric	-	4	2	6(10)
Post matric	-	1	-	1(2)
Total	16	20	24	60(100)

³ Matric is the certificate awarded on completion of Grade 12, the final year of secondary schooling.

Table 4.2 indicates that 88% of the participants' mothers did not complete their secondary school education. Of this group, 50% of the mothers only completed their primary school education and 38% did not complete their secondary education. Only six (10%) of the mothers completed matric and of the total group of mothers, only one mother had a post matric qualification. Table 4.3 presents the participants' fathers' qualifications.

Table 4.3

The Participants' Fathers' Qualifications

	School 1	School 2	School 3	Total
	f	f	f	f (%)
Primary school only	5	2	2	9(20)
Secondary without matric	4	7	13	24(55)
Secondary with matric	3	3	4	10(23)
Post matric	-	-	1	1(2)
Total	12	12	20	44(100)

Table 4.3 illustrates that 75% of the participants' fathers did not complete their secondary school education. Of this group, 20% only completed their primary school education and 55% did not achieve the matric qualification. Twenty-three percent of the fathers completed their secondary school education and one father had a post matric qualification. When comparing the mothers' and fathers' education levels, it is evident that 23% of the fathers had a matric qualification whereas only 10% of the mothers acquired this qualification. It also appears that more (80%) of the participants' fathers had exposure to secondary school education compared to 50% of the participants' mothers. When comparing the education qualifications of the participants' mothers and fathers at School 3, it is evident that only 10% of the fathers and 58% of the mothers had completed primary school. However, it seems that 85% of the fathers and only 42% of the mothers of the participants at this school had exposure to secondary school education. A number of factors, which were not the focus of this study, could possibly have contributed to the

discrepancies in the participants' parents' qualifications, but there seems to be a significant gender disparity in the data regarding this matter. Table 4.4 presents the employment status of the fathers of the participants.

Table 4.4

The Participants' Fathers' Employment Status

	School 1	School 2	School 3	Total
	f	f	f	f (%)
Artisan	4	3	2	9(20)
Farm worker	4	1	11	16(37)
Gardener	-	1	-	1(2)
General worker	3	6	4	13(30)
Public servant	1	-	1	2(4)
Unemployed	-	1	2	3(7)
Total	12	12	20	44(100)

Table 4.4 indicates that 37% of the participants' fathers are farm workers, 30% general workers and 20% are artisans. Seven percent of the fathers were unemployed. Fifty-five percent of the fathers of the participants at School 3, 33% at School 1 and 8% at School 2 are farm workers. At School 1, 33% of the participants' fathers and 25% at School 2 are artisans. The data in Table 4.4 indicates that the fathers of the participants are mainly low-income earners. Table 4.5 presents the employment status of the mothers of the participants.

Table 4.5

The Participants' Mother's Employment Status

	School 1	School 2	School 3	Total
	f	f	f	f(%)
Domestic worker	4	5	8	17(28)
Farm worker	6	4	4	14(23)
General worker	2	5	5	12(20)
Housewife	4	4	5	13(22)
Public servant	-	-	1	1(2)
Unemployed	-	2	1	3(5)
Total	16	20	24	60(100)

Table 4.5 indicates that the mothers of the participants are mainly low-income earners. Twenty-eight percent of their mothers are domestic workers, 23% farm workers and 20% are general workers. Twenty-two percent of the mothers are housewives and 5% of the mothers are unemployed.

The descriptive data of the participants illustrate that they come from similar social contexts, irrespective of whether they lived on the surrounding farms or in the townships. Although the girls were a homogenous group, we should be mindful that each of these three contexts have different micro-contextual factors that could play a significant role in the well-being of the girls.

4.4.3 Data collection strategies

Feminists, social constructionists and qualitative researchers use a variety of data collection strategies such as interviews, participant observation, documentary sources and focus groups (Kelly, 2006). In this study, I used focus groups and interviews to collect the data. Focus groups, traditionally used in market research, have gained popularity as a qualitative method in the social sciences (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Macnaghten & Myers, 2004; Wilkinson, 2003). According to

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005), focus groups also have a long tradition among second and third wave feminists who used it as a consciousness-raising tool to empower women. They also used focus groups to “build theory from the lived experiences of women that could contribute to their emancipation” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 893). Similarly, Madriz (2000) situates focus groups as a feminist strategy to gather plural voices and collective testimonies of women’s resistance to social injustice, their daily experiences and challenges that they face.

Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) caution that contexts are integral to how an individual will respond to questions and that they could respond differently to the same question if they were interviewed individually or if they participated in a group discussion. However, Wilkinson (2003) states that focus groups are more “naturalistic” compared to individual interviews and that it is relatively “closer to everyday conversations” (p. 185). Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) contend that in focus groups the “research participants create an audience for one another” (p. 4). This social interaction enables the facilitator to gauge the opinions and experiences of participants on specific issues. The dynamics of the social interaction in the group is a key feature that distinguishes the focus group from the individual interview, where the focus of the relationship is between the researcher and the interviewee (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988). Feminists argue that focus groups reduce the influence and power of the researcher, and afford participants the liberty to direct the discussions to topics that are important to them (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Wilkinson, 1999). However, the power of the researcher will always be present because s/he formulates the research question and designs the research process.

In qualitative research, researchers also use interviews to gain in-depth information of participants’ experiences, beliefs and/or meanings of social processes or phenomena (Sprague, 2005). Feminists similarly use interviews as strategies where women and marginalised groups can speak firsthand about social issues that concern them (Reinharz, 1992). However, Sprague (2005) cautions that the dynamics of gender, race and class could influence the interviewer-

interviewee relationship. Sprague maintains that we must be mindful that the similarities or differences between participants and researchers could influence the nature of the research relationship and what information is shared.

I conducted focus groups to collect the data for this study and individual interviews with four girls whom I observed to be silent in two of the focus groups at School 1 and School 3. After these individual interviews, I did not deem it necessary to continue with further individual interviews as the participants offered no new insights to those already broached in the focus groups (Morse, 2000). No individual interviews were conducted with the participants from School 2 as all the girls were active participants in the groups and were not hesitant to voice differing opinions during the process. In addition, I conducted interviews with one principal and two of the contact teachers at the different schools who provided more information about the social circumstances of the participants.

4.4.3.1 Focus groups

Feminists contend that focus groups create spaces where participants can talk among themselves about issues that are relevant to them and where they can learn how others are coping with similar challenges (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Krueger, 1994). Hence, in this study, I used focus group discussions as it provided the participants an opportunity to discuss among a group of peers their experiences as girls. Focus groups also enabled me to access a larger group of participants, compared to individual interviews, to ascertain their experiences of gender in their contexts.

In the focus groups, I had the opportunity to observe the girls' interactions with each other, which would not have been possible in individual interviews. In the group setting, the participants also received immediate feedback from their peers, opposing views emerged, and they shared common experiences and views. It also provided them the opportunity to challenge contradictions and to clarify matters jointly. From a social constructionist perspective, this process of interaction

and negotiation in focus groups facilitates the co-construction of meaning among participants, and by implication, they sketch a representation of themselves and their worlds (Wilkinson, 1999).

In the groups I posed broad questions, such as “What is it like to be a girl today?” or “What do you like about being a girl?” The participants had the liberty to raise issues that were relevant to them and could engage with each other on these matters. However, when subject matter not particularly relevant to the study surfaced, I gently guided them back to the focus of the study. In addition, when the participants raised myths or made factually incorrect statements, I addressed these at the end of the sessions and provided the appropriate information.

All the participants in the study knew one another and this familiarity contributed to a relaxed atmosphere and open discussions. Macnaghten and Myers (2004) suggest that familiarity could “serve as a kind of check on how far someone’s statements are consistent with what others know of them” (p. 70), thus minimising the tendency for sharing anecdotes. However, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) cautions that pre-existing groups, such as those used in this study, could have an inhibiting effect on group participation. Pre-existing groups usually have implicit norms about known assumptions in the group and what can or cannot be said. In addition, peer groups often have a hierarchical nature and a “pecking-order” dictating the nature of the status within the group (Michell, 1999). In such instances, the contributions of members with a high status tend to have more currency in the group and individuals with a lower status could be more reluctant to venture their opinions or experiences. Being mindful of such possible dynamics, I monitored the focus groups, drew in the silent participants and moderated the dominant voices.

Focus groups could also have a generative quality where the participants’ perspectives can be challenged or changed (M. Gergen, 2001b; Krueger, 1994). M. Gergen (2001b) contends that through a dialogical process of interaction, the existing ideas in a group are shaved, shifted or

changed and result in its transformation and changes among the participants in the group (including the researcher). In this regard, the focus group is a useful formative and supportive tool where adolescents can be exposed to a range of opinions on a particular topic and learn how their peers deal with similar issues they could also be experiencing. In this study, the participants and I challenged each other, which resulted in some contesting and shifting of ideas but some narratives remained dominant.

I conducted a series of seven focus groups at the various schools. Each of these focus groups had four consecutive weekly group sessions and in total, I conducted twenty-eight sessions. At School 1 and 2, I conducted the sessions at the end of the school day. At School 1, all the girls lived on the surrounding farms and a taxi fetched them after the group sessions ended. All the girls at School 2 lived within walking distance of the school and this facilitated meeting after school. However, at School 3, the principal consented that the focus groups be conducted during the school day as all the girls travelled to school on the school bus. All the sessions were conducted in Afrikaans, which is the home language of the majority of the participants. The five Xhosa speaking participants were active participants in the focus group discussions as they were all fluent in Afrikaans. The sessions lasted for between 60 and 90 minutes and the participants gave their permission to audio-record the discussions. Before the start of each session, I provided refreshments and after the closure of the session each participant received a snack for the road. Eating together in a group created a relaxed and informal atmosphere and it facilitated building rapport with the girls.

All the focus group sessions at the different sites followed the same format. Each session started with an introduction, an energiser and a checking in ritual where we stated our names and how we felt to be in the group on that day. This checking in ritual also served as a voice check that assisted me with the transcription of the data. In the first session, the participants completed a biographical questionnaire and I again explained the research process to the participants. Issues

around confidentiality, voluntary participation and withdrawal from the project were again clarified. During this session, the group also generated their own group norms for the group sessions. Each participant wrote down one rule that she would like her fellow group members to honour during the group sessions. These wishes were then sorted and the agreed norms written on a poster that was displayed every week in the focus group session. In the second and third session, the research questions were discussed. The two sessions provided me the opportunity to probe the issues raised and to deepen the discussion. In addition, I could probe certain issues that participants of one focus group raised and check whether the participants in subsequent focus groups shared similar perceptions or experiences. The sessions concluded with a brief summary of the session and the participants were asked if they wanted to add anything else to the discussion. After the sessions ended, the participants requested to listen to the audio-recordings. It was interesting to observe their responses when they heard their voices on the recordings. They confirmed their stated positions, by stating: “Dis waar” [*It is true*] or “Dis presies hoe dit is, Juffrou.” [*This is exactly how it is, Miss*]. In the fourth session I presented a summary of the issues raised and checked with the participants whether this was consistent with what we discussed in the sessions. I also used the session to reflect about the research process with the girls and their experience of the process. I explained to the participants that the whole process would be documented and thanked them for their participation. Conducting four consecutive focus groups facilitated my establishing rapport with the girls and allowed me to follow up any queries I had about the previous week’s session. I also found that when the participants returned to the sessions, they often clarified or challenged issues we had discussed in the previous session.

4.4.3.2 Reflection on the group processes

Madriz (2000) states that feminist research methods attempt to promote “communication with women and among women” (p. 842). In such spaces, women validate their common experiences, provide social support, and can generate awareness that their problems are structural, rather than

individual problems. Throughout the research process, I was aware of the age, status and class disparities between the participants and myself. I was concerned that these could possibly influence the interaction and my acceptance in the focus groups. I was also aware of power differentials inherent in my status as a psychologist and researcher. The participants were curious about me and I answered their questions truthfully, with appropriate disclosure. I approached the participants as empathically as I could, adopted a stance of not knowing and respectfully acknowledged their importance in this study.

The participants were keen to come to the group sessions and all the girls attended every group session. On one occasion, the school day had ended earlier than usual at one of the sites and all ten participants were waiting for me to arrive. One group also came to a session during their school vacation. The group sessions were lively, with much laughter and loud talking. In these groups, most of the participants had strong opinions, and on occasions I had to tone down the loud voices, draw in the softer voices and tactfully moderate the turn taking. It was interesting to note how quickly the girls took over the role of moderating the turn taking and clarifying statements made by participants in the group. In the focus groups at School 2 and 3, there was much social interaction among the participants and the participants often challenged each other and me in the sessions. However when I listen to the tapes and view the transcripts of the sessions at School 1, I am quite embarrassed at my unusually directive stance with these participants. In this group I seemed to take more of a leading role and the participants seemed to direct the discussions toward me. On reflection, it could be because this group of the sample was relatively younger than the participants at Schools 2 and 3. In hindsight, despite my attempts to include all the participants and to follow up, there were moments in the sessions when participants interrupted one another and did not fully express their opinions in the group. In all the focus group sessions, there were moments when I could have used the silences more productively, and explored unfinished discussions and seemingly irrelevant information. Generally, it seemed to me

that the participants saw me as a teacher (they referred to me as such) who was willing to listen and “witness” their experiences (Banister et al., 1994).

During the sessions, the participants often used local metaphors to substantiate a position and sometimes I needed them, much to their delight, to clarify/translate what these metaphors meant. I also became aware that I had to use language that was simple, clear and unambiguous for the participants. Consequently, I refrained from using formal, academic Afrikaans and engaged in the local Afrikaans dialect with the girls. In the first session, the participants did not seem to know how to respond to my initial question, “What does it mean to be a girl today?” I then reframed the question to “What is it like to be a girl today?” This resulted in the girls conferring among themselves, asking each other, “How is it for you?” and opened up the discussion. During the sessions, I also noticed the girls’ politeness when they referred to the vulgar sexual terms and comments that boys and men make towards them. I had to give them permission and reassure them that it was all right to use these terms in our discussions. This reassurance created quite an intimate space among us and the participants then liberally used these terms.

The participants all knew one another as they lived in close proximity to each other on the farms and in the two townships. In all the focus groups sessions, it was interesting to observe how the participants completed each other’s sentences and could complete each other’s stories about events that happened in their different homes or in the community. The girls even ventured opinions about their peers’ parents and/or family members and often urged each other to relate stories that tied in with the research. However, the familiarity among the participants also presented some difficulty. In one focus group at the start of the session, I noticed that the atmosphere lacked the usual energy and excitement. On probing the reasons for the subdued atmosphere, the participants revealed that an incident had happened earlier in the day on the playground between two of the group members. Soon both the girls were crying and I had to settle the dispute privately between the two of them. On returning to the group, I decided that it

would be inappropriate to continue with the focus group session and instead we played a game of netball to restore the cohesion in the group. I postponed the data collection and re-scheduled another session.

The focus group sessions also provided the girls a safe space to talk about the challenges they face. For example, below Sandra explains the difficulties when both parents abuse alcohol and how she had to assume the responsibility for her younger sibling. Some of the participants' anger at their parents became visible in the sessions and I validated these feelings by offering appropriate reflections and empathy.

Extract 1

Sandra: En nou...nou het my ma en pa kind gemaak..nou los hulle vir my met die kind...die kind..en ek moet opgeskeep sit en nou gaan hulle kantien toe en hulle gaan drink nou hulle goeters..en nou is...daar's nie kos nie..die kind huil..dji weet nie wat om te maak nie..en dan moet dji na die buurmense toe gaan..en vir hulle gaan vra..en een van die dae..dan skinder die buurmense oek (L2P1:324)

Sandra: And now..now my mother and father had a baby..now they leave me with the child...the child..and I must sit with everything and now they go to the liquor store and drink their stuff..and then there's no food..the child cries..you don't know what to do and then you must go to the neighbours and ask them..and one of these days then they also gossip (L2P1:324)⁴

This is an example of how participants felt safe to vent their frustrations, anger, sadness and shame about their situations in the group. Humour also played a significant role in the group sessions. Initially I was irritated by what I regarded as inappropriate humour when the girls spoke about issues that I regarded as quite serious. However, I realised this was the participants' strategy to defend against experiences that were threatening and evoked pain and anger for them. At the end of the group sessions, I left holding much of the emotions in the group. These emotions, among others, included joy, anger, frustration and sadness. I could share these with my supervisor and used the support of my own therapeutic group to clarify the counter-transference

⁴ See Appendix 1 for the transcription symbols.

that I experienced during the research process. Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine (2003) contend that the feelings of the researcher can be regarded as important data as they tell us how similar we are to the participants in our research.

Although the familiarity facilitated active participation in the focus groups, I often wonder whether the familiarity was possibly not an inhibiting factor in this process. Since all the girls knew each other and lived in close proximity, I am curious about the silences and what the participants did not speak about in the groups. For example, the girls went to great lengths to explain to me how they have to be “good” girls and am curious why this ideal figured so prominently in our groups. Although there were some glimpses of some disruption of this ideal, when one participant spoke about girls’ desire and the benefits of dressing provocatively, there seemed to be a silence about their undermining the “good” girl ideal. I am also curious how the interviewer effects, who I am and my role in the group, possibly influenced the dynamics of the focus groups.

4.4.3.3 Research instrument

Although I wanted the focus group discussions to be informal so that the girls could talk spontaneously about their views and experiences, I had to ensure that the different groups at the different schools covered the same topics. To this end, I constructed a semi-structured topic guide, with open-ended questions, so that each discussion group, more or less, covered the same topics. Although the same questions were covered, the dynamics and discussions in each focus group were different. I referred to the topic guide as a prompt for myself, depending on how the discussions developed in the different groups. The focus of the discussions with the participants in the focus groups was “What is it like to be a girl today?” The aim was to encourage them to talk about their meanings and experiences of gender, with a primary interest in understanding what their experiences were as girls. In the first focus group I posed the question, “What does it mean to be a girl today?” When I posed the question, it seemed as if the participants did not know

how to respond to the question and asked me to provide them with examples. I purposefully avoided this so that I did not influence their responses and changed the question to “What is it like to be a girl today? This question opened up the discussion and I tracked the girls using reflections, paraphrasing, summaries and indirect confrontation to deepen the discussions. I encouraged them to talk about the different facets of being a girl, what their experiences were, and how they negotiated their positions as girls. In the first group session, the participants often contrasted their experiences with that of boys and the experiences of women with that of men to enhance their arguments. Consequently, I expanded my questions and asked the participants, “What does it mean to be a girl/boy/woman/ man? (see Appendix 3).

4.4.4 Data management

After each focus group session I recorded the dynamics of the group process, the difficulties I experienced in handling the discussions, what emotions the session surfaced for the participants and me, and thoughts or images that the discussions evoked for me. These process notes were invaluable to jog my memory during the transcription and analysis of the data. As mentioned previously, all the focus group sessions were audio-recorded and in one of the focus group sessions, the latter part of the session was lost as the memory of the audio-recorder was full.

According to Bird (2005), transcription is “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (p. 227). Kvale (2007) suggests that this immersion in the data during the transcription process can reawaken “the social and emotional aspects” (p. 95) of the interviews for the researcher, as well as the preliminary meanings that s/he identified. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) concur that the transcription of the audio tapes is not merely a technical procedure but is part of the interpretative process. They contend that constant listening and re-listening to the audio-recordings affords one the opportunity to pay close attention to the data and facilitates analysis and making sense of the data.

An independent transcriber, a clinical psychologist, and I each transcribed all the audio-recordings of the focus group sessions. This ensured that I could verify my transcriptions with those of the independent transcriber. There is a wide array of transcription conventions, ranging from simple orthographic accounts to conventions that are more complex such as those used for conversation analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wilkinson, 2003). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that when conducting a thematic analysis of the data, “it requires a rigorous and thorough orthographic transcript – a ‘verbatim’ account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal – e.g., coughs) utterances” (p. 88). Following these guidelines, we produced detailed verbatim transcriptions of the focus group sessions and included the non-verbal expressions such as laughter, pauses, silences, overlaps and cutting in. In the focus groups, there were moments of overlap, loud talking and laughter, which complicated the transcriptions of those segments of the sessions. To remedy this, the independent transcriber and I both slowed down the playback speed of the audio recording to 50% to make sense of some of the inaudible data. I compared the independent transcriber’s and my own completed transcripts, improving accuracy by repeated readings while listening and re-listening to the audio-recordings. During the transcription process, I wrote memos on possible interpretations about the data in the margins of the transcript and integrated some of my ideas from my field notes in these memos.

After the transcription process, I uploaded all the transcripts, field notes and memos into ATLAS.ti, a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programme that was developed to support the analysis of qualitative data (Friese, 2012). This computer programme facilitated the organisation and systematic analysis of the data. For example, I could easily modify and rename the various codes, retrieve segments of data or even collapse categories or sub-themes when needed.

4.4.5 Data analysis

According to Tesch (1990), making sense of data is not a linear process but is an ongoing reflective, cyclical activity that runs concurrent with the collection of the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) concur that this recursive process between data collection and early analysis alerts the researcher to possible blind spots and often results in new strategies to collect better data that facilitates detailed interpretations. Similarly, Dey (1993) agrees that it is an iterative process that consists of three “related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how our concepts interconnect” (p. 30). According to Tesch (1990), during data analysis the researcher condenses the data by actively classifying and categorising it into more similar manageable meaning units (segments) rather than working with the whole data set at the same time. This categorisation is a recursive process of reviewing and refining that culminates in the re-contextualisation of the different categories into a meaningful coherent whole. This process facilitates reflection, interpretation and enhances our understanding of the social issue that we are studying.

Crabtree and Miller (as cited by Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 155) state that there are diverse qualitative data analysis strategies, ranging on a continuum from more objective “prefigured technical” strategies to interpretive “emergent intuitive” strategies. They contend that with the more objective data analyses the researcher imposes predefined, technical categories on the data whereas with the more “emergent intuitive” strategies, the researcher immerses herself in the data and draws on her intuitive and interpretive skills. In this study, I used thematic analysis to make sense of the data.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a flexible “method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Although this method is widely used in psychology and many analyses are actually thematic, they argue, it is seldom explicitly acknowledged as a method of analysis by itself. Compared to methods such as Grounded Theory

or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, they suggest that “thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (although not all)” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Thematic analysis shares similar characteristics and stages with other qualitative analyses. Namely, it is a recursive process of familiarisation and searching for similar patterns/themes or contradictions in the data, it entails a detailed process of categorisation, with an ongoing reviewing and refining of the data into meaningful categories or further sub-categories, which can either be defined theoretically or inductively grounded in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Esterberg, 2002; Tesch, 1990). As this study is located within a feminist and social constructionist paradigm, the thematic analysis enabled me to elicit both semantic and latent level themes across the entire data set. On a semantic level, the descriptive patterns of their experiences were elicited and on a latent level, I explored the underlying social assumptions that informed their experiences. These levels of analyses provided me with a nuanced understanding of the participants’ experiences and the meanings of their experiences as girls in their local contexts.

I analysed the data using inductive thematic analysis according to the phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Tesch (1990). Although these phases are presented in a linear fashion, during the process of analysis I constantly moved back and forth, checking the original transcripts and reviewing and refining the codes and the themes.

Phase 1: Familiarisation and immersion

From the onset of a research project one builds up a memory bank and documentation of the people, participants and processes related to the research process. This already initiates the analysis process and one starts formulating questions about the study. Since I transcribed all the focus group sessions, it further facilitated my re-immersion in the data and my awareness of the various topics that the participants raised. I also read all the field notes to re-familiarise myself with the initial ideas I had about the content and processes of the focus group sessions. During

this phase, I systematically re-read the data and paid close attention to interesting features, patterns, metaphors or contradictions that surfaced in the data. I listed these in the margins of the transcripts and simultaneously compiled a list of all these interesting features. After I familiarised myself and had a good understanding of all the data, I started generating the initial codes.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

This phase of generating the initial codes is the start of organising the data into a more meaningful system and sets the table for developing themes within the data. Boyatzis (1998) refers to codes as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (p. 63). Tesch (1990) suggests that to generate codes one should focus on the topics in the data, and ask oneself, “What is this about?” (p. 142), and at this stage not on the content, such as “What is the substance of the statements?” (p. 143). Frankland and Bloor (1999) also refer to this phase as the start of the “indexing process” – where one attaches broad and general “index-code words, or labels” (p. 146) to the data. This initial stage is also called open coding and corresponds with the coding used in Grounded Theory, as developed by Strauss and Corbin (Esterberg, 2002).

During this phase I used inductive coding, namely, the themes were “data driven” and grounded in the focus group data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I coded the first transcript, line-by-line, to generate a list of codes from within the data. I followed this procedure of line-by-line coding with all the subsequent transcripts and applied existing codes from the code list in Atlas-ti to data extracts that were related to those codes. As I generated new codes, I returned to the previously coded transcripts to check whether any similar data items could be coded as such. I systematically applied this coding procedure until all the data items in the transcripts were accounted for. I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) recommendations for this stage:

- (i) the entire data set was coded broadly into many possible themes and codes were also created for data that initially seemed irrelevant to the study;
- (ii) some of the individual data extracts were simultaneously coded into the different themes;
- (iii) data surrounding the coded extracts were included so that its context was not lost.

As I used Atlas-ti computer software programme it facilitated coding, the generation of the code list, collating the coded data and making comparisons of the different codes across the data set. During the coding process, I also documented any ideas about the data as memos and made comments on the different codes. Once this phase was completed, I reviewed all the generated codes and the collated data segments of each of the codes.

Phase 3: Searching for the themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) contend that themes do not emerge from the data but that the researcher plays an active role in identifying and selecting which themes are relevant and interesting in the data. During this phase, I focused on each of the different codes and the relationships between the various codes in order to sort the codes into possible categories. I analysed the relationship between similar codes and its data extracts and merged some of the codes into the same category when the data extracts revolved around a similar topic. These categories were then grouped into a sub-theme, which captured a facet of a broader theme. During this stage, there were a number of codes that were not pertinent to the research questions, which I combined under the theme, miscellaneous.

Phase 4: Reviewing the themes

During this phase I reviewed and refined the identified themes. This corresponds with what Tesch (1990) refers to as the “taking stock” phase (p. 145) where one assesses whether the themes capture the story of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend using Patton’s “dual

criteria” to ensure the *internal homogeneity* and *external heterogeneity* of the themes. The internal homogeneity of the themes suggests that the actual content of a theme should cohere meaningfully within the theme, and external heterogeneity suggests that there should be clear boundaries between the different themes. To ensure the internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of the themes, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) recommendation to separate this phase into two levels of analyses. I first reviewed all the data extracts for each theme to assess whether its content was coherent. Tesch (1990) suggests that during this stage one should scrutinise the content of each theme for “commonalities, uniqueness, confusions and contradictions” (p. 145). On the second level, I assessed whether each identified theme “accurately reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91) and whether the boundaries were clear among the themes. During this stage I also checked for any data that were missed during the previous coding refining stages that needed to be re-coded and then coded these appropriately.

Phase 5: Defining and naming the themes

This phase entailed the final refinement of the themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), during this process of refining and naming the themes one has to ensure that a particular theme captures a facet of the data, and simultaneously ensure that the overall themes present a coherent story of the data. Both Tesch (1990) and Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that themes should not be too broad, narrow, diverse or complex. During the refinement of the themes I reconsidered each of the identified themes, the sub-themes and the various categories. See Table 4.6 for an example of how the different categories and sub-themes illustrate different aspects of menstruation that constitute the broader theme, Menarche: Becoming a woman.

Table 4.6

Constituents of the Theme: Menarche: Becoming a Woman

Data Extract	Category	Sub-theme	Main Theme
M: I must not drink milk or eat eggs or cheese, because if you...if you eat this you will have a heavy flow (L3P6:425)	Menstrual taboos	Preparation for menstruation	Menarche: Becoming a woman
P: I must be still when I'm sick..I must not be so wild..my mother says..now, I'm fond of milk and cheese..I must not eat cheese and milk. (K1P8:245)			
K: Periods..that's not nice..because we get periods..that is not nice..because sometimes at school..the blood comes a lot..then it flows right through..then it is not nice...I don't like it (L2P1:130)	Menstrual experiences and practices		
S: Women's bladders pain when they start having periods...and..and women cry sometimes when their bladders pain..but men don't have such stuff (K2P9:136)		Burdens of menstruation	
S: My mother says "you are a young girl now"...then my mother says..that is the time that I should stay inside the house..my mother cried...and I may not even go walking about (J1P14:302)	Menstruation as danger and reproduction		

4.4.6 Quality issues in this study

According to Banister et al. (1994), central to qualitative research is the assumption that the social world is complex. Our understanding of participants' experiences is socially constructed and informed by our assumptions and frameworks. They argue that concepts of reliability and replicability are inappropriate since social contexts are varied and, the researcher's interpretation in itself is open to reinterpretation from different paradigms. Marshall and Rossman (2006) concur that inherent in the positivists' notion of reliability is the assumption of a static and unchanging social world. This, they argue, is counter to the qualitative principle of a social world that is dynamic and constantly being constructed. Thus, replication and reproducing consistent findings would be problematic as participants in the same or similar contexts would most likely

respond differently to different researchers. However, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) argue that such a stance would hamper systematic research. Thus, they suggest as a means of assisting the reader to decide whether the study's findings are transferable and can be applied to other social contexts, it is incumbent on us to document all the procedures we employ in our research. By clearly documenting the social contextual features, selection criteria and demographics of the participants, data collection strategies and the process of data analysis could assist the reader in reaching an opinion as to whether reliable methods were used and valid interpretations were made (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

Validation

According to Banister et al. (1994) validity, which they refer to “as the adequacy of the researcher to understand and represent people’s meanings” (p. 143), is central to good qualitative practice. Patton (2002) suggests that presenting the participants’ perspectives in their own words enhances the face validity and credibility of the research. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that a “confusing array of terms for validity” (p. 124), such as “trustworthiness”, “goodness”, “authenticity”, and “credibility”, abound in the qualitative literature. Long and Johnson (2000) suggests that, on closer inspection, these alternative terms are similar to the traditional constructs of reliability and validity and little is gained by merely changing the labels. However, there is consensus that qualitative researchers demonstrate the credibility of their research and many authors recommend a range of strategies to achieve this (Banister et al., 1994; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kvale, 2007; Long & Johnson, 2000; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Yardley, 2000).

Yardley (2000) suggests three key criteria to ensure the validity of a qualitative study. First, it is incumbent on the researcher to display a *sensitivity to context* (p. 219). This sensitivity suggests that the researcher should have a theoretical sensitivity (see theoretical triangulation below), and display the necessary sensitivity to the influence of social contextual factors in the lives of

participants in the study. Given that this study is grounded in a feminist and social constructionist orientation, I have attempted to provide a detailed description of the participants and their social contexts as these are integral to understanding the participants' experiences. Creswell and Miller (2000) contend that by providing such "thick, rich description[s]" (p. 128) of the contextual factors, the reader is also able to establish the credibility of the account.

Yardley's (2000) second principle refers to *commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence* (p. 221). The principle of commitment refers to the researcher's ongoing involvement and practical experience in the field regarding the social phenomenon under investigation. The researcher's immersion in the related field of study, expertise and qualifications could facilitate her/him to make informed interpretations about the data. Since 2002, I have been working in one of the communities where this study is based and have rendered services on different levels. This included individual therapeutic services at the local primary health care clinic, collaborations with teachers at the local schools and volunteering in a mentoring programme for adolescents. In addition, I currently also supervise students who render clinical services to members in these communities. My ongoing involvement in these communities, on a professional and supervisory level, has provided me some insight into the complexity of the different social strands in these communities, the range of social issues as well as the social networks that sustain community members. Rigour, according to Yardley (2000), refers to the appropriateness of the sample to provide the necessary information in order to render sound analyses. In this study the sample of adolescent girls were deemed to be well poised to answer the research questions as the present study was interested in the experiences of gender of adolescent girls in a low-income community. The principle of transparency and coherence refers to the accuracy and completeness of documenting the research process and the cogency of the analysis. The present chapter addressed these principles by illustrating the sample recruitment, data collection and management procedures and provided the rationale for the methodologies used in this study. Another

dimension of transparency, namely the researcher's worldview, experiences and motivations for conducting the research, I address under reflexivity below.

Yardley's (2000) third principle addresses the *impact* and *importance* (p. 223) of a study. She argues that social relevance and usefulness should be important criteria to assess the validity of a research project and presents different levels of utility. It is difficult for the researcher herself to make a judgement about this issue, but I am hopeful that the findings of this study will enhance our understanding of adolescent girls' experiences and perceptions of gender. In addition, it could provide insights that could inform interventions to promote gender education and training among parents, teachers and adolescents. On another level, the research process itself afforded these groups of adolescent girls the opportunity to reflect on their positions as girls and the issues relevant to them and they could learn how their peers dealt with these issues. It is my contention that we have to engage boys and girls in such discussions where we can foreground gender issues and collaboratively explore how to achieve gender equality.

Triangulation

Triangulation is also a commonly used qualitative strategy to enhance the depth and validity of interpretations. Creswell and Miller (2000) define triangulation as a "procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (p. 126). Marshall and Rossman (2006) stress that triangulation is not about discovering "truth" but rather about accessing a plurality of perspectives. Banister et al. (1994) mention four types of triangulation, namely, data triangulation, investigator or evaluator triangulation, methodological and theoretical triangulation. In the current study data triangulation involved conducting focus groups with different groups of adolescent girls at three different settings and at different stages in the research process. I also conducted individual interviews with a few of the participants and some key informants at the different settings. The key informants primarily provided information about the social contexts of the girls and the

challenges that the girls face in their communities on a daily basis. Banister et al. (1994) suggest that data from multiple sources facilitates richer interpretations. During the data collection phase, I used the last session of all the focus groups as a debriefing session and presented a synopsis of the previous sessions and the preliminary themes to the participants as a means of checking whether the data rang true for them.

Although I conducted the research alone, the ongoing support and discussions with my supervisor and a few critical peers were invaluable. As a form of evaluation triangulation, Banister et al. (1994), as well as Creswell and Miller (2000), suggest that the expertise and multiple perspectives of such independent evaluators could enrich one's understanding and challenge possible researcher blind spots. In this study, their feedback provided me with opportunities to engage critically with methodological issues at different stages of the project, challenged my initial assumptions and extended my understanding and conceptualisation of the data and the processes.

Central to theoretical triangulation is the assumption that social reality is complex and diverse and that there are multiple realities (Banister et al., 1994). Similarly, Yardley (2000) speaks about having sensitivity to the theoretical context, that is, the theoretical orientations and literature on the topic of enquiry. Yardley suggests, that a sound grounding in the existing scholarship on a given phenomena will equip the researcher with the necessary tools to offer credible analyses. Embracing multiple theories affords one the ability to interrogate social phenomena from different vantage points. In this study, I drew on the relevant literature and used developmental, feminist, social constructionist and sociological theories to understand the position and experiences of the adolescent girls in this study. In addition, since 2001 I have been working in these communities in various roles such as a psychologist, community consultant, group facilitator, mentor and supervisor of trainee psychologists doing their community placements in

these areas. Thus, I am reasonably acquainted with the community contexts and the prevailing psychosocial issues in these areas.

4.4.7 Reflexivity

Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) suggest that as researchers “our obligation is to come clean ‘at the hyphen,’ meaning that we interrogate . . . who we are as we coproduce the narratives we presume to collect” (p. 123). Similarly, M. Gergen (2001b) maintains our research usually tends to have a personal slant. Therefore, personal reflexivity is an ethical necessity as our worldviews, values, personal histories, and the epistemological and ontological assumptions that we hold about the nature of reality, colour the lenses through which we view and interpret social problems. Banister et al. (1994) contend, however, that the subjectivity of the researcher is “a resource [and] not a problem” (p. 13). Willig (2001) further states that reflexivity also affords us the opportunity to reflect on “how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers” (p. 10).

I am a black woman, married for more than 30 years, the mother of three adult children, a daughter and two sons. I am also a grandmother. I am in addition a psychologist and lecturer. Since my youth I have volunteered in community work and particularly enjoy the challenge of working with adolescents. Since 2002, I have been involved in a girls’ mentoring programme where the idea for this research project was planted. I have constantly reflected on my role in this project and have been aware of how similar, yet different, the challenges of my adolescence were compared to those of the girls in the project.

Listening to the girls during the research process, I often felt as if I was in a time machine, transported to my adolescent years. What the participants’ mothers are telling them currently was like hearing my mother’s voice when I was a girl. Kvale’s (2007) *traveller metaphor* for the researcher aptly captures my experience during this time. Kvale suggests that the research

interviewer is like a traveller who goes to a far country to elicit the stories of those she encounters. However, this journey does not only produce new knowledge through the researcher's interpretations of the inhabitants' lived experiences, it also affords the traveller with opportunities for self-reflection and self-understanding. During this research process, I did not go to a far country, but rather it was like going home. It afforded me the privilege not only to reflect on my own processes of becoming and establishing my gender identity, but I also reflected on three generations of women and how our identities are so intricately fused. I have the permission of my daughter to write about her, but am reluctant to speak about my mother as she has passed on. As an adult woman, I have the utmost compassion and admiration for the struggles and sacrifices of my mother and value the courage and integrity with which she lived her life. I will however reflect on a few discourses, in which she was situated and enacted, that played a significant role in my life and shaped the narratives that I re-enacted.

Against the backdrop of apartheid, the dominant discourses of race, class, patriarchy and religion played a significant role in my mother's life. She had no formal schooling and all her life worked as a domestic worker. The Group Areas Act of the Apartheid government played a profound role in our lives and resulted in us being uprooted from our family home. This dislocation significantly influenced our lives. My mother was a loving woman who worked exceptionally hard and devoted all her time and energies to provide for our family. She was also a deeply religious and austere woman and never compromised her values. She held traditional gender norms and women had to be self-reliant and self-sacrificing for the sake of the family. Religion played an integral role in our family and, as an adolescent girl, dictated what I could wear, whom I could befriend and restricted my participation in any "worldly activities" (for example, school sports, pop music, dancing, or going to the cinema). Sex and sexuality were topics never discussed and were associated only with danger, sin and shame. Being a moral and good girl was expected, and any resistance or deviance was met with severe sanction. As a young girl, I often

felt as if I was in a straitjacket, but I had much appreciation for my mother's struggles to provide a better life for me and always tried not to disappoint her or add to her burdens. Thus, as a young girl I was always aware of being different to my peers because of living in such an insular, conservative environment.

As M. Gergen (2001b) states, "people are socialized into their gendered caste" (p. 73) and, like my mother, I also subscribed to the traditional notions learned, and enacted these as I progressed into adulthood. After the birth of my daughter, I stayed at home while my husband was the primary breadwinner. As parents, we both held traditional notions of gender and this we enacted in our relationship and parenting. However, when my daughter entered puberty she steadily challenged us and questioned the double standards that we applied to her and her brothers. This resulted in many debates within our family. Clothes, and how she chose to wear them, was quite challenging for us as parents. It is my contention that my daughter started the process of re-educating us as her parents and this process coincided with my re-entry into academic studies and my introduction to the psychology of gender and feminism. As I gained an academic understanding of gender oppression and patriarchy and a raised level of consciousness in this regard, I started applying my theoretical understanding to my own situation and realised how I accepted gender inequity as part of the natural order. I understood how I actively perpetuated male privilege and was compelled to challenge my practices. Thus, the resistance of my daughter, my formal education in psychology and our commitment as a couple to unravel this gender knot, among other influences, heralded a process of growth and change for my family and me. On reflection, I can say it has been rewarding, but an arduous journey and I am still confronting and learning how to alter entrenched gendered patterns of thinking and behaviour that are limiting change and growth.

I am aware that my personal biography, particularly the above-mentioned factors related to when I was a girl, and my status as a woman and a psychologist, influenced why I choose to work with

adolescent girls and decided to conduct this research with this group of participants. As a psychologist, I am aware of the lack of services in disadvantaged communities and am committed to be of service in such contexts. My work with adolescent girls has taught me that for many girls the transition to womanhood, and how they negotiate their identities, is often a confusing and challenging process. In my interventions, I endeavour to mediate this process with the necessary and appropriate information, knowledge, understanding and support. In addition, I also attempt to plant the seeds to raise a critical self-awareness of the prevailing gender inequities in our contexts and try to equip them with skills to challenge these in constructive ways.

Although I share ostensibly the same demographics, had relatively similar experiences as a girl and come from a social context similar to that of the selected sample, I am aware that this insider status, its echoes of familiarity and my identification with the participants, could have blurred my understanding and interpretation of their lived experiences.

Banister et al. (1994) suggest that we have to be aware of our own processes so that the findings of our research do not reflect “our own unconscious issues, disturbed by the research” (p. 150). In order to gain clarity, monitor my influence on the research process and the interpretation of the meanings of the data, I had ongoing discussions with my supervisor and some colleagues who served as critical friends. At the time of conducting this research, I also enrolled for a course in analytic group therapy, which included an academic and experiential component. The sessions with my fellow group therapy trainees became a valuable space where I could, with some “objectivity” and distance, gain insight into my own processes during this research. On the other hand, my “insider” status possibly contributed to the open relationship I had with the participants and facilitated my understanding of their experiences as girls. I am also mindful that my childhood was located in a different socio-political time and space and that I made the journey from being poor to middle class. These, together with my age and my professional status, are outsider differences that possibly also influenced the research process. I acknowledge that my

personal history, intuition, professional expertise and theoretical orientation were the lenses through which I viewed and approached this research project and the interpretations of the findings. Further, these are my interpretations of the stories the girls chose to tell me in the focus groups; another researcher, and you, the reader would probably construct a different narrative with the same data set.

4.4.8 Ethical considerations and procedure

The Ethics Committee of the University of Stellenbosch, the Western Cape Education Department and the principals of the selected schools granted ethical clearance and the necessary permission to conduct the research at the different schools (see Appendices 4, 5, 6 & 7). I then held an information session for the Grade 7 and 8 girls at the respective schools, where I explained the aims and process of the research. I also informed them that participation was voluntary; that they had the right to withdraw from the project at any time during the research process; and that they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity should they participate. All the girls who volunteered to participate were handed a letter stating the aims and processes of the research and the assent and consent forms that they and their parents had to sign (see Appendix 8). Only the participants whose parents gave permission and those who returned the signed assent and consent forms were included in the study. I arranged the logistics for the focus group sessions with the contact teachers at the respective schools. On receipt of the assent and consent forms, I informed the participants of the meeting times of the focus groups. As a group, we contracted norms of respect and confidentiality in the focus groups to ensure that the discussions were not repeated outside the group. Given that I was working with adolescents, I advised the participants not to disclose any information that was too personal and that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions posed in the focus group sessions. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. There was no risk of harm to the participants and they received no monetary remuneration for their participation in the study. None of the

participants needed the available counselling services during or on completion of the study. On completion of the data collection, I conducted a debriefing session with the participants, we viewed and discussed the DVD *Once upon a girl*, and I thanked the girls for their participation in the study. To ensure the anonymity of the girls, pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis.

4.4.9 Summary

In this chapter I discussed the methodological framework and rationale for the methods I employed in collecting the data for this study. I also discussed the participants and their social contexts, the ethical considerations and the various steps I followed to analyse the data. Further, I discussed the quality issues in qualitative research and I reflected on my role as researcher in this study. In the next three chapters I present and discuss the core findings of the study.

Smith (2000) suggests that when we conduct research with women or girls, we “must begin with the everyday/everynight actualities of [their] experience[s]” (p. 1147). The stories the participants in this study told me focused on their proximal relationships, which included their “everyday/everynight” experiences as girls/women, daughters, sisters, and their peer relationships and friendships with both girls and boys. They spoke about their pleasures, dreams, aspirations, fears and anxieties. However, their spontaneous narratives of girlhood and womanhood primarily focused on the burdens of being girls/women in their contexts, and were marked by some ambivalence and contradictions. They also spoke about some social issues in their communities that significantly influence their experiences as girls. I categorised the data into three dominant themes and Table 4.7 presents a summary of the key themes, sub-themes and categories of this study.

Table 4.7

Summary of Themes, Sub-themes and Categories

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
About being a girl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differences and similarities between boys and girls • Aspirations to be a “good” woman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls are not strong enough to defend themselves • Girls are neat and boys are never mind • Girls must be beautiful • Passive bodies • Some girls and boys are almost the same • A girl must always behave like a lady • A girl must know her place • Being caring mothers, hardworking and independent women
Menarche: Becoming a woman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for menstruation • The burdens of womanhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menstruation as an illness • Menstrual taboos • Menstrual experiences and practices • Menstruation as danger and reproduction
Gender relationships at home and with peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of gender relations in the home • Girls’ relationships with their peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is nice to be a man – he’s the boss in the home • Girls are compliant and responsible • Boys have more privileges and girls get no name brands • Girls’ strategies of resistance and felt experiences of the inequity • Peer relationships with girls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indirect aggression ○ Direct aggression • Peer relationships with boys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Platonic friendships ○ Romantic relationships

In the next section, I discuss the themes, sub-themes and categories presented in Table 4.7. Although I present the participants’ stories in three themes whose contents differ in length, the girls’ experiences are fluid and dynamic. Hence, some of the themes are interwoven and some of their strands may overlap. In Chapter 5, I discuss the girls’ experiences about being a girl, in

Chapter 6 their experiences about menarche and becoming a woman, and in Chapter 7, I discuss their gender relationships at home and with their peers. In Chapter 8, I present some concluding thoughts about this study and some of the contribution to our understanding of contemporary adolescent femininities.

Chapter 5: About being a girl

Well! What are you? said the Pigeon. I can see you're trying to invent something! I – I'm a little girl, said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day. A likely story indeed! said the Pigeon.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*

5.1 Introduction

During the focus groups, the participants used the social categories “girl” and “woman” in an interchangeable manner and similarly with “boy” and “man”. They often referred to themselves as a collective “we”, “*ons, as vroumense*” [*us, as women*], and referred to boys as “*mansmense*” [*men*]. Hence, in this text the categories girls/women and boys/men are used interchangeably to reflect their discussion of the experiences of girls and women, and those of boys and men, respectively.

5.2 About being a girl

The participants' self-definitions about being a girl revolved around two main ideas, namely, the similarities and differences between boys and girls and their aspirations to be “good” women. To explicate the essence of this theme, I categorised it into two sub-themes. Table 5.1 presents the thematic map of these sub-themes and its categories.

Table 5.1

Thematic Map: About Being a Girl

Sub-themes	Categories
The differences and similarities between boys and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls are not strong enough to defend themselves • Girls are neat and boys are never mind • Girls must be beautiful • Passive bodies • Some girls and boys are almost the same
Aspirations to be a “good” girl/woman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A girl must always behave like a lady • A girl must know her place • Being caring mothers, hardworking and independent women

In the section that follows, I discuss the sub-themes and categories illustrated in Table 5.1.

5.2.1 The differences and similarities between girls and boys

After the introductions, I usually started the focus groups by asking the girls what it is like for them to be girls. Although they reported that they were glad to be girls, a recurring theme, however, was “*how hard it is to be a girl*”. The participants offered this response in all the focus groups at the different schools and they juxtaposed their experiences as girls against that of boys. In the extract below, we see how they prize being girls and some factors contributing to their frustrations.

Extract 1

Sherine: Hoe’s dit vir jou om ‘n meisie te wees?

Ivana: Ek is bly ...want dit is mos nou klaar so, ek’s klaar ‘n meisie, djy kan nie nou weer seun gaan word nie, maar somtyds is dit nie lekker om ‘n meisie te wees nie.

Sherine: Ok Ivana, vertel meer...soos byvoorbeeld?

Ivana: Sommige tye as djy in die huis werk dan voel djy...d jy wil nie die werk doen nie..en dan dink djy nou net, kan djy maar nou nie ‘n seun gewees het nie om nie daai werk te doen nie...vir my is dit altyd so, dis ..umm..lekker om ‘n meisie te wees want.. daar is baie dinge wat die meisies altyd kan doen wat die seuns nie kan doen nie

Liza: Dis vir my lekker om 'n meisie te wees....want 'n meisie kry alles reg wat 'n seun nie regkry nie ... sy kan alles doen in die huis....en sy.....kan kosmaak, haar ma te help met wasgoed was, huis skoonmaak...

Sherine: Ok, julle sê dis somtyds lekker om 'n meisie te wees...maar somtyds is dit nie lekker nie. Agnes, hoe's dit vir jou?

Agnes: Dis lekker om 'n meisie te wees want 'n meisie word bederf.....haar ma gee vir alles wat sy wil hê, sê maar sy vra vir haar ma iets=

Ivana: Almal word nie bederf nie....dit is lekker en dit is ook nie lekker nie [laughs] (L1P3:15)

Sherine: How is it for you to be a girl?

Ivana: I am glad...because that's already how it is, I am already a girl, you can't become a boy again...but sometimes it's not nice to be a girl.

Sherine: Ok..Ivana, tell us more...for example?

Ivana: Some times when you work in the home then you feel...you don't want to do the work...and then you just think..couldn't you rather have been a boy so that you don't have to do that work..for me it's always like that, it's..umm...nice to be a girl because....there are many things that girls can always do that boys can't do.

Liza: For me it's nice to be a girl...because girls get everything right that boys can't get right...she can do everything in the home and she can cook, help her mother with the washing, clean the home

Sherine: Ok, you say it's nice sometimes but other times it's not nice to be girls...Agnes, how is it for you?

Agnes: It's nice to be a girl because a girl gets spoilt... her mother gives her everything that she wants, if she asks her mother for something

Ivana: Everyone is not spoilt...it's nice and it's also not nice [laughs] (L1P3:15)

The responses of the participants in the extract above were typical of the majority of the girls in this study. It was evident that certain domestic competencies were distinguishing features that set them apart from boys and were integral in their self-definition of girlhood. However, Ivana's response, "*it is nice and it is also not nice*", also illustrates their ambivalence and frustration associated with the demands of girlhood.

All the participants constructed their positions as girls in terms of the differences and similarities between girls and boys. They presented boys/men and girls/women as dichotomous, oppositional groups in terms of a number of markers of difference, such as physical strength, behaviour and social representation. They also used binary polarisations such as weak/strong, soft/aggressive,

hardworking/lazy and wild/reserved to illustrate these differences and/or similarities. According to Pedwell (2010), feminists have long argued that, when speaking about different groups, such binaries usually tend to overvalue one group, while devaluing the other. They also tend to efface or minimise the differences or similarities within, among and between the groups. In this study, the girls' presentation of the differences and similarities between themselves and boys/men offer us a glimpse into how embedded they are in a heteronormative discourse, how they "do" femininity and construct the masculine "other" in relation to themselves.

5.2.1.1 Girls are not strong to defend themselves

A primary hardship that all the participants strongly emphasised revolved around fears for their personal safety in their community as well as the harassment by boys at school. This was their spontaneous response to my first question, "*What is it like to be a girl today?*" All the girls elaborated how girls are not strong enough to defend themselves when they feel threatened.

Extract 2

Sandra: Dis nie maklik nie, dis baie swaar...dis baie gevaarlik vir ons meisies want ons gaan deur baie, baie dinge...um [laughs self-consciously] Om 'n meisie te wees is baie moeilik want ons gaan deur baie dinge

Sherine: Ok, Sandra so wil jy ons meer vertel...wat is die baie dinge?

Sandra: um...ons maandstonde en seuns knou vir ons baie af..die seuns knou vir ons baie af

Jasmine: In vandag se lewe is dit ook nie net maklik om 'n meisie te wees nie want mansmense verkrag baie vrou... meisie kinders...meisie kinders moet deesdae so bang wees om in die nagte te loop en om kort goeter aan te trek... want mansmense se oë val daarop en dan kan hulle jou verkrag en baie seermaak...so.. om 'n meisie te wees dink ek is nie lekker is nie ..dis nie maklik in vandag se lewe nie. (L1P3:14)

Sandra: It is not easy, it's very difficult...it's very dangerous because we experience many..many things.. um [laughs self-consciously] To be a girl is hard because we experience many things

Sherine: Ok Sandra, do you want to tell us more...what are these many things?

Sandra: um...our menstruation and the boys are very mean to us...the boys are very mean to us

Jasmine: In today's life it is just not easy to be a girl, because men rape many women...girls...today, girls must be so scared to walk at night and to wear short clothes....because the mens' eyes fall on it and then they can rape you and hurt you...so...I think that it's not nice to be a girl...it is not easy in today's life. (L1P3:14)

Vera: Vir my is dit eintlik swaar...want vandag se lewe...want ek as meisiekind...vandag se lewe is nie meer soos dit in die ou dae gewees het nie [ernstig]. Die meisiekinders word verkrag en dan word hulle vermoor en so aan. In die ou dae was die kinders mos nou...kinders was nog nie verkrag en so nie

Claudine: Dis moeilik om 'n meisie hier te wees hier in XX...want dis nie veilig hier vir 'n meisie nie...want hier's baie skollies en tikkoppe wat meisies net wil hê en seks saam met hulle wil hê. (K4P13:29)

Vera: For me it is actually difficult...because in today's life..because as a girl..today's life is not as it used to be in the olden days [serious]. The girls are raped and then they are murdered...In the past the children were..children weren't raped and so

Claudine: It's difficult to be a girl here in XX⁵...because it is not safe for a girl...because here are many skollies⁶ and meth-heads⁷ that just want the girls and want to have sex with them. (K4P13:29)

The participants framed their concern for their personal safety by distinguishing themselves from boys in terms of physical strength and girls' vulnerability to danger. They spoke at length of the boys' strength, their power to defend themselves when they (boys) face possible attack. In contrast, they portrayed girls as weaker and consequently vulnerable to be overpowered or sexually harassed by boys/men. From the gravity displayed on their faces and in their voices, it was evident that they not only regarded these threats as life threatening, but they also played a pivotal role in curtailing their freedom in their communities.

Extract 3

Charmaine:'n Seun is meer..um..hoe kan ek sê? Hulle is meer sterker as meisiekinders as dit kom by...miskien hulle word aangerand...dan kan hulle hul man staan...maar meisie kinders is nie altyd so sterk nie (L1P3:43)

⁵ XX and YY are codes for the names of the communities where the participants live.

⁶ The term skollies (scoundrels) refer to boys/young men who are involved in anti-social behaviour and usually belong to a gang.

⁷ A local term used to describe persons who use methamphetamine.

Charmaine: A boy is more..um..how can I say? They are more stronger than girls when it comes to..maybe they get assaulted..then they can stand their man..but girls aren't always so strong (L1P3:43)

Rose: Partykeer is mans...agge..meisies ook nie sterk genoeg nie..dan probeer die mans oorvat...hulle kan hulle nie self verdedig nie

Sandra: En...vir my is dit ook nie somtyds maklik nie...as dji miskien nou allenig in die aand geloop het...en 'n man wil nou vir jou aanval...en dji het miskien nou nie kinders by jou en so aan nie...en hy vra nou vir jou om saam met hom seks te het en dji sê nou vir hom nee...dan gaan hy probeer vir jou slaan en so.. (L2P1:40)

Rose: Sometimes men are...girls are also not strong enough..then men try to take over..they can't defend themselves

Sandra: And for me it is sometimes also not easy..perhaps if you are walking alone at night..and a man wants to attack you..and you don't have children with you..and he asks you to have sex with him and you say no to him..then he will try to hit you and so (L2P1:40)

Although they also present themselves as strong in the above extract, they are however, not always strong enough when compared to boys/men. Hence, girls' physical weakness is associated with vulnerability, the inability to defend themselves and the risk of domination and/or violation by boys/men. We also see how the participants use an essentialist and masculine drive discourse to frame their anxieties and fears for their personal safety and possible sexual violence.

Extract 4

Elze: Dis lekker om 'n meisie te wees ...maar juffrou...maar... ek is so bang vir die verkragtings [Candy: ja and group agrees] en as ek van sulke goed hoor dan raak 'n mens hartseer..net om te dink...en dji weet nie of dit more met jou kan gebeur nie...en

Ebony: as 'n outjie vir my sê: "Ja..dji gaan sien ..ek..gaan more vir jou oulik maak" ...dan begin my nerves werk..dan raak ek bewerig.....dan klop my hart (J2P16:271)

Elze: It's nice to be a girl..but Miss...but..I am so scared for the rapes [Candy: ja, group agrees] and when I hear of such stuff then one gets sad..just to think..and you don't know if tomorrow this can happen to you and=

Ebony: =When a guy tells me: "Yes, you will see. I..tomorrow I will make you nice"⁸. Then my nerves start working..then I get jittery...then my heart beats (J2P16:271)

⁸ Here Ebony is referring to a sexual threat.

In terms of their behaviour, the participants also portrayed the boys at school and at home as aggressive and irritating, while they presented themselves as soft and well behaved. It was evident that, at home and at school, there were certain high status boys who were a source of much irritation for the participants.

Extract 5

Sherine: Ok...so hoe is dit om 'n meisie op skool te wees?

Mandy-Lee: Dis lekker...Juffrou...maar som dae dan loop 'n mens ..pouse...en dan kom die seuns en dan slaan hulle jou sommer

Sharon:uhh...ja...onnodig...ek ken daai kind...daai David...hy's so irriterend

[Group animated, loudly talking together and agreeing about the boys who are irritating and rude.]

Mona: Hulle is irriterend...hulle kom en slaan sommer vir jou..jy doen niks vir hulle nie

Leigh: Maar daar is een kind wat my mal maak...oe...daai Stanley!...ek kan vir almal vat maar behalwe daai kind [Group agrees]

Mandy-Lee: Kyk net hier juffrou...hy slaan jou juffrou...onnodig...kyk net hier [shows me her bruised lip] hy het my in my mond geslaan juffrou...hy't my seer geslaan vanoggend..

Sherine: Ok, so die seuns lyk my...umm...is baie

Leigh: hulle is baie walglik [Group agrees: Walglik]

Sherine (laughs): Hulle is baie?

Leigh: Walglik

Sherine: Walglik...ok...is hulle net so op die skool of hulle by die huis ook so?

Ashleen: Nee...by die huis ook...en daai Stanley!.....oe...ek kan hom nie vat nie!

Mona: Sê maar jy sê vir hulle "Ek hou nie van jou nie"...dan stoot hulle jou..of hulle kap jou sommer

Randy: En sommige van hulle steek sommer vir jou met 'n pen of skêr

Sherine: So dit lyk vir my....die seuns raak sommer gewelddadig

Sharon: Ja...hulle worrie nie of dit meisies is nie (JIP14:125)

Sherine: Ok, so how is it to be a girl at school?

Mandy-Lee: It's nice...Miss..but some days when you walk...during break time..then the boys come and they will just hit you

Sharon: uhh...yes...unnecessary...I know that child...that David...he is so irritating [Group animated, loudly talking together and agreement]

Mona: They are irritating...they just come and hit you..you do them nothing

Leigh: But there is one child that makes me mad...oh..that Stanley!...I can take everyone, but that child [Group agrees]

Mandy-Lee: Just look here Miss..he hits you Miss...for no reason..just look here [shows me her bruised lip] he hit me in my mouth Miss...this morning he hurt me.

Sherine: Ok...so it seems to me that the boys are very=

Leigh: =They are very disgusting [Group agrees: Disgusting]

*Sherine (laughs): They are very?=
=*

Leigh: =Disgusting

Sherine: Disgusting..ok....are they like that only at school or are they like that at home too?

Ashleen: No, at home too and that Stanley!....oh...I can't take him!

Mona: If one tells them "I don't like you!" Then they push you or they stab you

Randy: And some of them will stab you with a pen or a scissor"

Sherine: So it seems....the boys can get aggressive

Sharon: Yes..they don't worry if it's girls (J1P14:125)

In all the focus groups, the participants reported being on the receiving end of the boys' aggression. Mandy-Lee provided the evidence of such an act of aggression, namely, her bruised lip. It seems that the boys' hostility towards the girls is not restricted to the school but is also prevalent in the community. Sharon's comment, "Yes, they don't worry if it's girls"- seems to suggest that girls should be treated differently by the boys. Although most of the participants constructed themselves as passive recipients of the boys' aggression, in Chapter 7 I will discuss how some girls resist and fight back. I will also show how they differentiate between the "nice" boys and the "disgusting or irritating" boys.

The boys' problematic behaviour as reported by the girls is consistent with previous research where girls also constructed the boys as immature, undisciplined and troublesome (Frosh et al., 2002). In Frosh et al.'s study with adolescents in London schools, the participants similarly used essentialist and binary constructions to define femininity and masculinity as the participants in this study. However, none of the girls in Frosh et al.'s (2002) study reported any direct physical acts of aggression or victimisation as was reported by the girls in the current study. In all the focus groups discussions about boys' aggression towards the participants and their fears of

violence and sexual threats in their communities were a dominant and recurring theme. The presence of violence and threats of sexual violence in the lives of these participants are symptomatic of the endemic, high levels of violence against girls and women in the South African context (Mathews et al., 2014; Moffet, 2009, SAPS, 2014). Through this display of aggression, the boys seem to exercise dominating and controlling the girls, which is symptomatic of the power relations in a patriarchal society as reported by numerous studies in the South African context (Boonzaier, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2005; Vetten et al., 2008).

5.2.1.2 Girls are neat and boys are “never mind”

In all the focus groups the girls discussed the differences between boys’ and girls’ social presentation and appearance. The participants portrayed boys as untidy, rough, “never mind” – not worrying about their appearance and generally positioned girls as meticulous, neat and taking pride in their appearance.

Extract 6

Else: Meisies is netjies en seuns is so never mind..hulle worrie nie..oor hoe hulle nou lyk nie...meisies sal sorg dat hulle hare plat gekam is en so ..maar die seuns sal nie worrie hoe hulle lyk nie...hulle kom sommer net soos hulle is

Sherine: Ok..so meisies is meer netjies..sê jy...ok..so wat is daar nog?

Patsy: Seuns is baie rof en meisies is rustig...

Jessy: Nie almal nie....

Sherine: So seuns is rof en meisies is rustig...maar Jessy sê..nie almal nie...Hoekom sê jy so Jessy?

Adrienne: Want seuns gedra hulle soos skollies...

Else: Deesdae se seuns

Candy: Partykeer is daar meisies ook

Jessy: Sommige meisies ook...en as die juffrouens vir hulle [die seuns] sê... “Kyk hier, trek op jou broek!”...dan trek hulle hul broek op...en as hulle verder loop dan trek hulle weer dit weer af...en dan haal hulle hul hemp uit... (J2P16:145)

Else: Girls are neat and boys are so never mind..they don't worry.. about how they look..girls will take care that their hair is combed flat...but boys won't worry how they look..they just come as they are

Sherine: Ok..so you say girls are more neat...ok..so what else is there?

Patsy: Boys are very rough and girls are reserved

Jessy: Not everyone

Sherine: So boys are rough and girls reserved..but Jessy says..not everyone...Why do you say that Jessy?

Adrienne: Because boys behave like skollies

Else: The boys today

Candy: Sometimes there are also girls

Jessy: Some girls also..and if the teachers tell them [the boys]: "Look here, pull up your pants!" Then they pull up their pants..but if they walk on then they pull it down again and then they take their shirts out (J2P16:145)

Else's statement "*they just come as they are*" seems to indicate that for the girls, male embodiment, namely their appearance and how they present themselves, is of little consequence to boys. These findings are consistent with those of Currie et al. (2009) where the girls also reported that boys "just roll in, put on the clothes that they want, [and] wander to school" (p. 100). Likewise, the boys in the study of Frosh et al. (2002) regarded the girls' obsession with their looks in a negative light and a waste of time, while they regarded their own concerns about appearance as functional. However, the participants in this current study seemingly viewed the boys' lack of self-care and their never-mindedness in both a negative and positive light.

In the above quotations, the girls associated the boys' reported behaviour, their use of slang and their social representation, with the skollie subculture. Generally, in the South African context, this style of dressing (e.g., low hanging pants) and using slang are associated with this subculture and usually viewed as a negative form of masculinity. Paechter (2007) contends that perceptions of what it means to be a man or a woman in the wider community context influence the masculinities and femininities that children construct on school playgrounds. Often these constructions are in conflict with the values of the school (Warrington, Younger, & McLellan, 2003). In the quotation above, we see how both the girls and the teachers police what forms of masculinities and femininities are acceptable in the school context.

Contrary to the discussion above, Merle's experiences of her brother challenged the participants' notion of men being "never mind". It illustrates the fluidity and different ways of doing masculinities.

Extract 7

Ursula: Djy gaan nie uit huis sonder dat djy nie mooi lyk

Sherine: Is dit?

Kathleen: Seuns worrie nie...oe!...hulle worrie nie...hulle staan net op...trek 'n t-shirt aan...hulle worrie nie...hulle kam nie hulle hare nie...hulle maak net so [*illustrates how boys use their hands to tidy their hair*]

Merle: Juffrou, maar ek het 'n broer en hy vat amper so 'n uur voor hy uit die huis uit gaan. Hy kyk wat is verkeerd, juffrou en dan kom hy weer terug en dan spray hy vir hom en dan gaan hy weer uit en dan kom hy weer terug en dan spray hy weer... jô, juffrou! [*laughter*]

Ursula: My broer vat vyf minute

Sherine: So..wat julle eintlik sê, daar's daar's verskillende maniere hoe mans aandag gee aan hoe hulle lyk? Merle's se broer vat lank, en jou broer vat net vyf minute

Ursula: Soos ons, juffrou, ons sal lekker relax in 'n lekker bad water en so.. en hulle in 'n wasbak, [*lag*] hulle was net gou....in 'n kommetjie met koue water

Sherine: So die mans gee nie eintlik om hoe hulle lyk nie...sommige mans.

Kathleen: Nee, juffrou, want hulle mors spray. Ons gebruik die spray versigtig en...parfuum in die nek [*illustrates how she pats perfume in her neck*]....maar hulle spuit

Carol: "tsssssss!" [*imitates the sound of spraying deodorant*] tot by die voete (L3P6:93)

Ursula: You (girls) don't leave the house without looking beautiful

Sherine: Is that so?

*Kathleen: Boys don't worry oo! they don't worry..they just get up...put on a t-shirt..they don't worry..don't comb their hair..they just do this [*illustrates how boys use their hands to tidy their hair*]*

*Merle: Miss, but I have a brother and he almost takes an hour before he leaves the house. He looks what is wrong, Miss and then he comes back again and sprays himself and then he goes out again and then he comes back again and sprays himself again...jô, Miss! [*laughter*]*

Ursula: My brother takes five minutes

Sherine: So..what you are really saying, there are different ways how men focus on how they look? Merle's brother takes long and your brother only takes five minutes

*Ursula: Like us, Miss, we will relax nicely in a nice bath and so..and they will wash in a basin [*laughs*] they just wash quickly...in a basin with cold water*

Sherine: So the men don't really care how they look...some men

Kathleen: No, Miss, because they mess the spray. We use the spray carefully and..perfume in the neck [illustrates how she pats perfume in her neck] but they just spray

Carol: "tsssss!" [imitating the sound of spraying deodorant] right to the feet (L3P6:93)

In the above extract, Merle and Ursula present the different ways their brothers do masculinity. Merle's brother takes more than an hour before he leaves home whereas Ursula's brother spends less time on his grooming regime. Merle's story counters the perception that men do not care about their appearance. However, their amusement, at what she regards as her brother's compulsive grooming habits, could be indicative of how they view this as "deviant" from normative masculine grooming.

Although the participants regarded themselves as superior in terms of physical grooming, it seems they were also envious of the boys' lack of grooming and the freedom associated with it.

Extract 8

Candy: Dis lekker om 'n seun te wees....dji kan opstaan...dji gaan vat 'n stort ..dji kan jou hare kam...dji kam jou hare...maar nie so lank soos ons nie...en as jou hare mince...dan kam dji dit net...dan trek dji aan...partykeers lyk dit vir my ek kan net saam met die seuns in die boom klim of karretjie ry.. daar by ons ..daar speel hulle lekker.

Elze: Ons moet nog styles kam....

Jessy: Juffrou, somdae voel dit vir my ek moes 'n seun gewees het....wantsom dae lus ek nie vir kop kam nie, Juffrou...[laughter]..Dis die waarheid!...Hulle kan net hulle hare vorentoe kam of natmaak....en hulle kan lekker sokker of rugby speel (J2P16:49)

Candy: It's nice to be a boy...you get up...you take a shower...you comb your hair...but not as long as we comb our hair...and if your hair mince⁹ then you just comb it...then you get dressed... sometimes I feel like I can just climb in the tree or ride cars with the boys...they play so nice.

Elze: We must still comb [hair] styles

⁹ Mince is a local term that refers to how one's hair becomes kinky when it gets wet or when one sweats.

Jessy: Miss, some days I feel I should have been a boy...because...some days I don't feel like combing my hair Miss [group laughter] It's the truth! They can just comb their hair forward or wet it and they can play nice soccer or rugby (J2P16:49)

Zelda: Vir seuns is dit lekker want hulle hoef nie elke dag hulle hare te kam nie [laughter]

Denise: Hulle hoef ook nie elke dag vir hulle te was nie [Zelda cuts in: Ja hulle doen dit] want hulle sê hulle was hulle geluk af (K3P11:67)

Zelda: For boys it is nice because they don't have to comb their hair every day [laughter].

Denise: They also don't have to wash themselves everyday [Zelda cuts in: Yes they do that] because they say they wash their luck away. (K3P11:67)

From the above extracts, the burden of normative femininity is evident and how these ideals seem to constrain the girls' behaviour and influence how they feel about their bodies. For the participants, boys are active agents and their easier grooming seems to endow the boys with more freedom, thus making masculinity more valued and desirable. Shefer (1999), in her study with university students, similarly shows how the female students, when reflecting on their childhood femininities, constructed femininity as passive and a liability, while masculinity signified for them freedom, agency and something desirable. Although Candy has the urge to join the boys, self-objectification and the internalised social prescriptions of how girls should behave seem to disconnect her from the voice of her body (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Consequently, she inhibits herself from joining the boys in climbing trees.

5.2.1.3 Girls must be beautiful: "The boys just look at the girls with nice hair."

According to the participants, girls "*don't leave the house without looking beautiful*" because they "*must still comb styles.*" Thus, "*it's hard to be a girl*" because their body management is not only demanding in time and energy, but also in style. Currie et al. (2009) similarly report that their participants experienced "dressing up as both the 'best' and 'worst' aspect of being a girl" (p. 100). Although their participants enjoyed the "freedom" to dress as they please, they experienced the demands of how to dress equally exacting. Martin (1996) suggests the demands

of these regimes of beauty are often unattainable and could “cause girls to dislike their bodies, objectify their own bodies, and act on (rather than in) their own bodies” (p. 15). The extracts in this following section illustrate how appearance seems integral to girls’ self-definition of girlhood, how femininity is achieved through disciplining the body (Chrisler, 2013b), and how failure to comply with ideal femininities could be stressful. Below, Sharon eloquently expresses how her failure to manage her recalcitrant hair sometimes drives her to “madness”.

Extract 9

Sharon: Somtyds maak my hare my mal! Ek kan dit nie regkry nie...as ‘n mens swem dan word dit taai.... [group laughter]...dan wens jy net jy kan ‘n seun gewees het ...
Leigh: Dis ingekoek...dit mince! Nee, ek wil nie kort hare hê nie. (J1P15:200)

*Sharon: Sometimes my hair makes me mad! I can't get it right...when one swims then it gets tangled [Group laughter] then you just wish you could have been a boy.
Leigh: It's matted...it minces! No, I don't want short hair. (J1P15:200)*

Sharon illustrates how this struggle for beautiful hair evokes a sense of failure and inadequacy for her. Against the foil for idealised notions of femininity, Sharon’s shame of having bad hair becomes even more complex as the legacy of “racial hierarchies and values of colonial racism have left a deep mark on our conceptions of beauty” (Erasmus, 1997, p. 12). Motsemme (2003) concurs that in South Africa notions of beauty persist to be “violently raced or articulated through the medium of skin colour and hair texture” (p. 14). Pattman and Bhana (2009) provide evidence of how the quality and texture of hair persists to be significant markers of difference and heterosexual attractiveness, and how it affects S.A. adolescent girls’ feelings of worth. According to the Black girls in their study, the Indian girls regarded themselves as more attractive than the Black girls because they have straight hair. Despite the Black girls’ anger at being positioned as less attractive in relation to the Indian girls, they still prized the Indian girls’ hair by stating, “the only thing wonderful about them is they got nice hair” (Pattman & Bhana, 2009, p. 26).

In the extracts that follow, we see how both boys and girls reproduce dominant gender norms.

Extract 10

Elze: Ja, en die hare ook.

Jessy: Soos wie het die kortste hare

Ebony: Of dan sê hulle: “Oe!..kyk daai een met die pittekop.” [group: uhhh...laughter] Waarvoor lag julle? Dis tog die waarheid!

Bianca: Of dan sê party meisies: “Nee...hulle hardloop net agter hulle hare aan.”...dis waar!

Elze: Djy kan mos nie...dis nie jou skuld as djy ‘n pitte kop het nie [laughs self-consciously]..djy is mos net so gebore

Rena: Baie meisies is net oor hare

Jessy: Die seuns is ook so...hulle kyk net na meisies met mooi hare....en wat hulle dra

Elze: Ja..die outjies soek jou uit...die outjies kyk hoe netjies ‘n meisie is...djy moet maar vir jou netjies hou...jou hare moet altyd mooi wees [laughs] djy moet nie kom rof wees nie hier verby die seuns nie. (J2P16:321)

Elze: Yes, and the hair also.

Jessy: Like who has the shortest hair.

Ebony: Or then they say: “Oh! look at that one with the pittekop¹⁰” [Group agrees: laughter] Why do you laugh? It is the truth!

Bianca: Or then some girls say: “No, they are only running after their hair” that’s true!

Elze: You can’t help it...it’s not your fault that you have a pittekop [laughs self-consciously] you are just born that way.

Rena: Many girls are just worried about hair.

Jessy: The boys are also like that...they just look at the girls with nice hair....and what they wear.

Elze: Yes, the guys pick you out....the guys look how neat a girl is [that’s why] you have to keep yourself neat...your hair must always be beautiful [laughs], you must not be wild around the boys. (J2P16:321)

Elze’s statement, “*the guys pick you out...you must not be wild around the boys*”, illustrates the participants’ self-monitoring, how they view themselves from the boys’ perspective and the costs associated with not conforming to boys’ standards.

¹⁰ In the Coloured community, a number of derogatory terms are used to describe hair that is not sleek or straight. This term refers to the tightly coiled texture of short hair that resembles black peppercorns.

In this current study, we also see how the girls actively compete for the boys' attention and the strategies they adopt so that the boys will notice them. Thorne (1993) suggests that this kind of competition often affects friendships among girls and perpetuates male privilege. Currie et al. (2009) and Williams (2002) similarly found that this competition and negative social evaluation often resulted in physical and emotional fights among girls. In the extract below, we see the demeaning strategies the girls would resort to, so that the boys could notice them.

Extract 11

Zelda: Hoe djy jou klere dra en hoe..miskien nou..uhm..Sheryl [pointing to Sheryl next to her] het nou 'n outjie, nou wil ek ook by daai outjie wees...ek sal alles doen om van haar sleg te praat

Eunice: Jy wil net die mooiste aangetrek wees en net dat daai outjie vir jou kan raaksien en nie vir haar nie.

Sherine: So hulle is jaloers. Praat hulle baie oor klere?

Sheryl: Ja.

Sherine: En wat nog?

Eunice: En hare

Sherine: Hare? Is hare 'n groot ding?

Eunice: Jy't nie hare nie. O jirre! Pitte koppe! [groep lag uitbundig]

Queenie: Maar jy, jou kroeskop! Of miskien, as my broer...hy wil nou by 'n meisie wees, dan sê ons, en daai meisie se hare is nou kort: "Nee, wil jy tog nie met daai afkop meisie wees nie?" (K4P13:655)

Zelda: How you wear your clothes and how...perhaps...uhm..Sheryl [pointing to Sheryl next to her] has a boyfriend and now I also want to be with that guy...I will do everything to speak ill of her.

Eunice: You just want to be the best dressed so that that guy can notice you and not her.

Sherine: So they are jealous. Do they speak a lot about clothes?

Sheryl: Yes.

Sherine: And what else?

Eunice: And hair.

Sherine: Hair? Is hair a big thing?

Eunice: You don't have hair. Oh lord! Pitte koppe! [raucous laughter among the girls]

Queenie: But you, you kinky head! Or perhaps, when my brother....he wants to be with a girl and, maybe her hair is short..then we say: "No, surely you don't want to be with that 'afkop'¹¹ girl?(K4P13:655)

From the girls' narratives, it is evident how girls with "bad" hair are objectified and marginalised. Here we see how the girls exercise power, albeit a negative power, over other girls by policing and evaluating their brothers' girlfriends based on the texture of their hair. Further, "good hair" seems to be an important selection criterion for boys when they select possible girlfriends. However, this not only sets up a hierarchy among the girls but it also creates dissension and disconnection among girls (Rich, 1983). The girls also envy those who win the "prize", namely, selection as girlfriends by the boys. From these findings it is evident how the boys exercise their power of selection and the tangible benefits that accrue for the girls who are selected as girlfriends. Thus, it seems that the popular girls, with sleek hair and who are the best dressed, also have a higher status and power over the girls who do not meet the boys' selection criteria.

According to Erasmus (1997), this quest for "good hair" is not a phenomenon unique to South Africa. She states that Black women across the world share similar experiences and endure various layers of pain associated with having "bad" hair. Maya Angelou (2009) captures this pain and the dream for "good' hair" when she writes: "Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream, and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass that Momma wouldn't let me straighten?" (p. 2). Erasmus (1997) also speaks about this pain (for heterosexual women) of rejection by men and by other women when artificially straightened hair returns to its natural state, namely, it "goes home" (see Erasmus, 1997 for a discussion on the politics of hair).

In the extracts above we see how the girls exercise horizontal aggression, envy and competition, how they engage in calculating behaviours and sabotage their friendships, so that they can be

¹¹ This is another derogatory term for having "bad" hair and being ugly. A literal translation would mean "having no head".

visible, desired and chosen by the boys. Despite the competition among girls and their need for visibility to the boys, some girls expressed sadness about the boys' perceived lack of sincerity, the boys' objectification of girls and not being valued for who they are.

Extract 12

Ursula: Ja juffrou, hulle [die seuns] lag partykeer vir die meisiekinders se lang skirte. As jy miskien nie..en die seuns...en daai seuns....dan sê hulle: "Nee, kyk daai meisie; sy lyk nie lekker nie." En meeste van die seuns, juffrou..uh..gaan agter meisies aan met lang hare en dan sê hulle: "Nee, djy't nie hare nie" of so..en Juffrou, sommige kere...dan kyk seuns net aan die buitekant..hulle kyk nie aan die binnekant nie..hoe die meisie rêrig is nie (L3P5:521)

Ursula: Yes Miss, they [the boys] sometimes laugh at the girls' long skirts. If you perhaps don't..and the boys...those boys...then they say: "No, look at that girl, she doesn't look nice." And most of the boys, Miss..uh...go after the girls with long hair and then they say: "No, you don't have hair." or so...and Miss, sometimes...then the boys just look on the outside...they don't look at the inside...how a girl really is. (L3P5:521)

Sharon: Hulle kyk ook net hoe djy lyk...kyk na jou gesig...of djy mooi of lelik is...en jou hare

Leigh: Ja juffrou...hulle het nie gevoelens vir jou nie...net omdat jy mooi is ..dan wil hulle vir jou hê...so is hulle...umm...ja...hulle het nie eintlik rerig gevoelens vir jou somtyds nie...maar hulle vat net vir jou omdat jy mooi is. (J1P15:34)

Sharon: They also just look at what you look like...look at your face...whether you are pretty or ugly, and your hair

Leigh: Yes Miss, they don't have feelings for you...just because you are pretty then they want you...that's how they are....umm...yes...they actually don't really have feelings for you...sometimes...but they take you just because you are pretty. (J1P15:34)

These statements illustrate the girls' disappointment regarding the boys' perceived superficiality and lack of interest in establishing genuine relationships with them. This reported objectification of girls recalls Shefer's (1999) findings where the male participants reported that winning over the attractive and most desirable girls was regarded as winning trophies and an affirmation of masculinity. However, girls also seem to be in a double bind, a Catch-22. They are angry that the boys only notice the pretty, best dressed girls with "good" hair, but at the same time they yearn

that the boys should notice and desire them. The boys thus also seem to be objects of their desire who can provide them with the envied status as “most desirable” girl.

By objectifying themselves and other girls, the girls in this current study seem to disempower themselves, and reproduce the power of boys to validate successful femininities and masculinities (Currie et al., 2009; Thorne, 1993). Rich (1983) postulated that competitive behaviours, similar to those reported by the girls in this study, are the consequence of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. These institutions, she posited, promote disconnection between women and advance the interests of men and boys. Holland et al. (2000) also refer to this dynamic as the “male-in-the-head,” namely, “the surveillance power of heterosexuality . . . [where] both young men and young women come under pressure to be masculine or feminine in ways that make masculinity powerful” (p. 222), thus perpetuating male dominance.

Thorne (1993) suggests that during the transition from “child” to “teen”, adolescent girls “start negotiating the forces of adult femininity, a set of structures and meanings that more fully inscribe their subordination on the basis of gender” (p. 170). Connell (1987) refers to this as “emphasized femininity” – a culturally defined and idealised type of femininity that is structured around passivity, compliance and gender inequality and is geared to “accommodating the interests and desires of men” (p. 183). From the girls’ narratives, we see that they are aware of the status and power that conventional femininity holds for them. Further, we see the social and material rewards associated with normative femininity; how the girls actively aspire to attain these rewards and how imperative boys are to affirming the girls’ femininity and desirability.

At the most basic level, being attractive and passive makes one desirable because “*the guys pick you out.*” We see how the girls are active agents in this pursuit of idealised femininity and how they self-impose passivity as a result of the belief that being “wild” could have negative consequences for them. Tolman, Spencer et al. (2003) suggest that such “enactments of

compulsory heterosexuality” are the consequence of “unwritten but clearly codified and compulsory conventions . . . [that] sustain and perpetuate this institution to insure that it functions unconsciously and imperceptibly for most individuals” (p. 160). Although we cannot disregard the personal agency and power of the girls, we also cannot interpret their actions at face value. In this regard, critical scholars such as Bourdieu and Foucault (as cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) contend, that people internalise the norms and regulations of the contexts in which they are embedded. Hence, they tend to police themselves and one another to comply with societal expectations. Thus in order to be validated by the boys, we see how the girls in this study police themselves not to be wild and how they regulate their bodies to conform to the standards of ideal femininity. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) succinctly capture how, through acquiescence and self-surveillance, we succumb to the power of internalised cultural prescriptions. They state that,

Seemingly, we can do whatever we want . . . but our choices are highly circumscribed by norms of conformity we have made our own, not necessarily because they are good for us, but because we are subjected to social influences all the time. . . . [There is] no need for physical chains, many of us wear psychological chains. (p. 101)

Like the girls in this study, Currie et al. (2009) and Williams (2002) also found girls valued attractiveness and regarded their desirability by boys as important markers for femininity. According to these authors, attachment to boys seems to enhance adolescent girls’ self-esteem. Although conventional femininity and notions of beauty seem to ensure girls power, Williams (2002) contends it draws girls into “gender traps” and Lamb (2001) states, “it is a borrowed power, a granted power – granted by men [or boys] who benefit most from girls’ niceness” (p. 43).

5.2.1.4 Passive bodies: It's nice to be a girl because you don't have to play rugby.

As already discussed, the participants were envious of the boys' freedom to play sport. Yet their aspirations for idealised femininity and being attractive seem to constrain their physical activity. In the extract below, we see how they construct the female body as fragile and how they use physical activity as a marker of gender difference.

Extract 13

Merle: Ja, juffrou, ek hou nie van oefening doen nie. Ek hou...dis lekker om 'n meisie te wees want jy hoef nie rugby te speel nie. Netnou dan slat hulle jou tand uit dan loop jy sonder 'n tand. 'n Meisie kan lekker "smile," wit tande...as...miskien... 'n meisie saam met..uhm..die seuns rugby speel of so en dan kan sy miskien 'n nael verloor of so, juffrou en....meisies is meer.....besitlik oor hulle self

Ursula:[shouts out] Ek het 'n nael gechip!

Sherine: So wat sê...Merle sê eintlik, meisies is baie meer gesteld op hoe hulle lyk?

Carol: Ja, juffrou.

Sherine: Oor julle naels en so

Ursula: Djy gaan nie uit die huis sonder dat djy nie mooi lyk nie (L3P6:81)

Merle: Yes, Miss, I don't like to exercise. I like..it's nice to be a girl because you don't have to play rugby. Maybe they can hit your tooth out then you walk without a tooth. A girl can smile nicely, white teeth..maybe..when a girl plays with..uhm..the boys rugby or so and then you can maybe lose a nail or so...Miss and..girls are more....possessive over themselves.

Ursula:[shouts out] I chipped a nail!

Sherine: So what is Merle saying...is she saying that girls are actually more concerned about how they look?

Carol: Yes, Miss.

Sherine: About your nails and so.

Ursula: You don't leave the house without looking beautiful. (L3P6:81)

In the afore-mentioned extract, Merle constructs femininity as passive, and relates how exercise and sport are threatening to girls' appearance. This is similar to Owens et al.'s (2000) findings where the girls in their study also presented boys as more active and engaged in sports compared to some of the girls' who disliked getting hot and sweaty. Frosh et al. (2002) similarly found that

the boys in their study situated girls in a feminine, passive discourse and boys in a masculine, agentic discourse. The boys in their study reported that girls were afraid to get dirty or break their nails and constructed girls as obsessive about their appearance “in a way which made them fragile and pathetic” (Frosh et al., 2002, p. 101). Likewise, Slater and Tiggemann (2010) found that girls disliked physical activity and regarded it as “not being ‘cool’ or feminine for girls to play sport” (p. 624). They also report that the fear of being labelled butch or a tomboy deterred these girls from participating in sports. Salo (2009) reports on such a case where a young woman who liked playing soccer and wearing masculine clothes was labelled aggressive and suspected of being a lesbian. Thus, like the participants in the studies of Slater and Tiggeman (2010) and Frosh et al. (2002), the girls in this study regarded sport and physical activity as integral to masculinity but incompatible with femininity.

In one of the focus groups in this study, one participant expressed her struggles with the practice of gender segregation in sport and the perceptions that certain sports codes are incompatible with femininity.

Extract 14

Charmaine: Vir my is dit partykeer lekker om ‘n meisie te wees maar partykeer is dit nie so lekker nie...want partykeer wil jy goed doen wat seunskinders doen maar dan pas jy nie in by die geslag nie.. en om ‘n meisie te wees is nogal lekker ...want jy word partykeer meer...beter... umm...behandel as ‘n seunskind....maar vir my is dit nie lekker nie wanneer ek sien miskien....die seuns speel miskien ‘n game. Soos byvoorbeeld, hulle speel touch of sokker of so...en ons meisies vra miskien om saam te speel...dan sê hulle “Nee...netnou word julle gebrand of julle word lelik geskop.” of so...[Ivana cuts in: seergemaak] maar dan dink ons...ons moet nou seunskinders wees om saam te kan speel (L1P3:30)

Charmaine: For me it is sometimes nice to be a girl, but sometimes it is not so nice...because sometimes you want to do things that boys do but then you don't fit into the gender...and to be a girl is actually nice...because sometimes you are treated much...better...umm..than a boy..but for me it's not nice when I see perhaps..the boys play a game. For example, maybe they play touch¹² or soccer and us girls we perhaps

¹² Charmaine is referring to touch rugby.

ask to play with...then they say, "No, just now you get burned or you get kicked badly." [Ivana cuts in: get hurt] then we think..we must be boys in order to play with them (L1P3:30)

From Charmaine's narrative, it is evident how both girls and boys construct the gender enclaves and act as "self-policing subjects" (Bartky, 1990). We see how Charmaine regards herself as not fitting into the masculine gender in order to play a game of touch or soccer with the boys. Yet, when the girls muster the courage to cross the gender boundaries into the boy-dominated spaces, the boys apparently thwart their attempts to "protect" the girls from the rigours of the boys' game. We also see how the boys construct the girls as not tough enough or possibly not "man" enough for the rigorous boys' game. Warrington and Younger (2011) similarly found gender segregation in sports among early and middle adolescents were markers for gender boundaries. Thus, it appears that here the girls and boys are simultaneously constructing and regulating femininity and masculinity. Both girls and boys perceive physical activity and participation in sport by girls as threatening to girls' and boys' notions of femininity and masculinity, and by keeping the girls out, the boys are also protecting their turf.

Yet, in another focus group at the same school, one of the participants reported how she crossed the gender boundaries and played soccer with the boys on the farm where she lives. However, we see that crossing boundaries and challenging the institution of compulsory heterosexuality resulted in her being labelled a "*tomboy, rough and just like a man*".

Extract 15

Zena: Hulle sê ek's nes 'n man.

Sherine: Sê hulle jy's nes 'n man?=
=

Ursula: Ek sê nie so nie...Sy lieg.....die seuns=
=

Zena: =Hulle sê ek is 'n "tomboy"

Ursula: Hulle sê sy loop nie, sy rol, sy loop so [illustrates how Zena walks]

Sherine: Dan wat sê die seuns vir jou?

Zena: Ek's 'n "tomboy" - mannetjierig

Ursula: Rof

Zena: Ek is.....speel net met seuns. Daar waar ek bly is nie eintlik meisies nie, dan speel ek saam met hulle sokker.

Sherine: Dan hoe voel jy as hulle vir jou so sê, Zena?

Zena: Nee, ek voel nie sleg nie. Dit is so. (L3P5:1008)

Zena: They say I'm just like a man.

Sherine: Do they say you are just like a man?

Ursula: I'm not saying that....she's lying....the boys=

Zena: =They say I'm just like a tomboy.

Ursula: They say she doesn't walk, she rolls¹³, she walks like this [illustrates how Zena walks].

Sherine: Then what do the boys say to you?

Zena: I'm a tomboy – like a man.

Ursula: Rough.

Zena: I am...only play with boys. There where I stay there aren't actually girls, then I play soccer with them.

Sherine: Then how do you feel when they call you that, Zena?

Zena: No, I don't feel bad. That's how it is. (L3P5:1008)

As Zena spoke, Ursula became quite agitated and defensive, and denied labelling Zena. I got the impression that Zena was actually referring to all the girls in the group. These negative associations for not conforming and playing with the “wrong gender group” are similar to the negative costs associated with transgressing the gender boundaries, as reported by Shefer’s (1999) participants. Female students in her study, when reflecting on their displays of non-traditional pubertal gender behaviour, related how they were pathologised and punished. Their stories illustrated the pain and sense of dislocation associated with being “on the outside of the ‘gender game’” (Shefer, 1999, p. 200).

Thorne (1993) contends that when girls or boys cross the gender boundaries they tend to undermine the oppositional structure of the gender order. She suggests that the teasing and

¹³ This colloquial term usually refers to a style of walking usually associated with the skollie subculture.

labelling associated with these transgressions are strategies to police and contain this “deviance”. Foucault (as cited by Thorne, 1993) argues that the construction of such deviant identities is a means of effecting social control to maintain the gender order. In the above quotation, we see how Zena’s classmates construct her as the “Other” and how Ursula foregrounds Zena’s difference compared to conventional femininity. Through the essentialist construction of Zena as “rough” and, that she does not seem to walk like a woman but “rolls” like a man, Ursula keeps traditional femininity intact. On the other hand, we see how Zena does not seem to be offended with the label “tomboy” when she states that she does not “*feel bad. That’s how it is.*” I interpreted Zena’s response as a coping strategy to deal with the pain associated with being othered and labelled “*just like a man*”. We also see how she rationalises that her way of being and identification with boys is a consequence of “*only playing with boys*” because there are no girls on the farm where she lives.

One could also argue that the boys granted Zena the status of an “honorary boy”. Thorne (1993) refers to this conferred status as a “kind of ‘fictive’ boy” (Thorne, 1993, p.133) when girls are attributed “some of the positive qualities associated with the masculine” (p. 111). However, when we consider the girls’ reports in this study of the boys’ resistance towards them joining their game, we could infer that the status conferred on Zena was probably a pragmatic solution by the boys for the sake of the game. Contrary to Thorne’s assertion that girls tend to benefit when they cross the gender boundaries, we see how Zena’s peers seem to pathologise her for crossing the gender line.

5.2.1.5 Some girls and boys are almost the same

As discussed previously, the participants portrayed boys as aggressive and “disgusting” and girls as “soft” and passive. However, some participants contested this idea and argued that some girls also tend to display similar tendencies as boys. In the data extracts below we see how they challenge each other, thus disrupting the taken-for-granted assumptions that boys/men and

girls/women are essentially different. However, we also see their disgust with girls/women who contravene the codes of normative femininity.

Extract 16

Ivana: Want soos seuns nou is...die wat nog groot word...hulle is al klaar so al...so onbeskof...en vloek...

Carlene: Baklei...en steel 'n mens se goeters en gaan aan

Ivana: Maar 'n mens kry ook baie meisies wat so is...

Carlene: Uhh..wat soos seuns optree...en want hulle wil net soos seuns wees..hulle trek hulle aan soos seuns.... meisies is ook so...dis baie erg.. (L1P3:196)

Ivana: Because the way boys are now...those that are still growing...they are already like that...so rude..and swear.

Carlene: Fight...and steal one's stuff and go on.

Ivana: But one gets girls who are also like that.

Carlene: Uhh that act like boys and because they want to be just like boys...they dress like boys....girls are also like that...it's very bad. (L1P3:196)

Ursula: Hulle tree nie dieselfde op nie. Mans is baie aggressief. Vroumense is sag.

Carol: Nie alle vroumense nie.....net sekere vroumense.

Sherine: Is hoe?

Carol: Sag.

Sherine: Hoe is die ander vroumense?

Ursula: Rof...hulle is wild.

Sherine: Hoe is.... nou hoe is daai nou?

Merle: Geweldadig

Ursula: uhh...hulle slat mekaar met ...met grawe [laughs]

Sherine: Baklei die vroumense onder mekaar?

Group [chorus]: Ja.

Ursula: Baklei sommer met hulle manne...hulle baklei met hulle manne en dan trek hulle manne hulle kaal uit...en vat aan hulle bra's. Dis vieslik, juffrou! Daar by ons ook Sondag.....twee vrouens het baklei...toe trek hulle vir hulle uit. Toe jag hulle 'n ander meisie...'n ander meisietoe steek hulle haar in die nek met 'n bottelkop (L3P6:117)

Ursula: They don't act the same. Men are very aggressive. Women are soft.

Carol: Not all women...only some women.

Sherine: How are they?

Carol: Soft.

Sherine: How are the other women?

Ursula: Rough...they are wild.

Sherine: How is...now how is that?

Merle: Violent.

Ursula: uhh..they hit each other...with spades [laughs].

Sherine: Do the women fight among each other?

Group [chorus]: Yes.

Ursula: They fight with their men...they fight with their men and then their men undress them..and touch their bra's. It's disgusting! Miss, there by us also on Sunday, two women fought...so they undressed themselves. So they chased another girl..another girl...so they stabbed her in the neck with a bottle head. (Ursula is most likely referring to a head of a broken bottle.) (L3P6:117)

Although Ursula initially made the distinction between women being soft and men being aggressive, when Carol challenged her that not all women are soft, we then see how Ursula undermines her initial position about the differences between men and women. She then presents some women as “rough and wild”, also prone to acts of aggression, and continues to relate an example of a rather severe form of violence between some women. From the manner in which the participants related this story, one can infer that they have a sense of disgust at the spectacle of undressing and the aggression among women, which they seem to regard as unfeminine and unbecoming of women. Here we see how the girls invoke normative constructions of femininity by pathologising the women’s non-normative femininities as “rough” and “wild”. However, it emerged in the focus groups how they also resorted to direct aggression to settle disputes or defend themselves against other girls or boys (see Chapter 7). From the discussions and interviews in all the groups, aggression seemed to be pervasive on different levels in their contexts.

In the discussion above, the participants challenged each other regarding the differences between men and women and they agreed that some men and women have a similar capacity to be aggressive. However, in the data extract below, Sharon makes a distinction about the extent of the

sameness and difference between some boys and some girls. We further see how invested the girls are to differentiate between “tomboys” and “real girls” and how important it is that one’s position in either category is clarified.

Extract 17

Sharon: Juffrou, van die meisies en van die seuns is dieselfde...hulle is net dieselfde...’n mens kry wilde meisies en seuns en so..en dan kry dji daai rustige meisies en seuns...hulle is amper dieselfde...nou nie heeltemal nie..maar amper

Ruby: Jy kry tomboy meisies ook....en dan kry jy **regtige** meisies =

Sharon: =Oe!..ek kan hulle nie vat nie! [Group agrees: uhh] Hulle hou hulle soos mansmense...hulle **wil** mans wees...sny hulle hare...en trek soos skollies aan! [laughter]

Sherine: Nou wat sê die meisies van so ‘n meisie?

Leigh: En die seuns stel nie belang in sulke meisies nie...want hulle is tomboys! =

Mandy-Lee: =Maar meisies stel belang in sulke meisies...oe! [Group: Ja, juffrou!]

Ruby: =Oe jene!...ek praat nou van die....ek weet nou nie...meisies stel belang in meisies wat nou tomboys is...en seuns wat moffies is stel belang in seuns wat moffies is [raucous group laughter]

Sharon: Hoekom lag julle? Seuns wat moffies is stel belang in seuns...en meisies wat tomboys is stel belang in meisies! =

Ashlene: Maar juffrou...’n mens kry van sommige seuns wat so gebore is ...hulle kan nie help nie...[Sharon cuts in: Ja] dan kry mens van die seuns..hoe’t sy ma hom van kleins af ‘n rokkie aangetrek...[Group laughter] en ‘n mens kry seuns wat so gebore is...hulle kan nie help nie. ‘n Mens kry som seuns wat baie skaam is..[laughter]..hy’s mommy’s little boy. (J1P14:310-319)

Sharon: Miss, some of the girls and some of the boys are the same...they are just the same...one gets wild girls and boys and so....and then you get that reserved girls and boys...they are almost the same...not exactly....but almost.

*Ruby: You get tomboy girls also...and then you get **real** girls.*

*Sharon: Oh! I can’t stand them! [Group agrees: uhh] They keep themselves like men..they **want** to be men...cut their hair and dress like skollies! [laughter]*

Sherine: Now what do the girls say about such a girl?

Leigh: And the boys are not interested in such girls...because they are tomboys!

Mandy-Lee: But girls are interested in such girls...oh! [Group: Yes, Miss!]

Ruby: Oh my word! Now I'm talking about the...I don't know now...girls are interested in girls, that are tomboys and boys who are moffies¹⁴ are interested in boys who are moffies [raucous group laughter].

Sharon: Why do you laugh? Boys who are moffies are interested in boys and girls who are tomboys are interested in girls!

Ashlene: But Miss...you get some of the boys are born that way...they can't help it..[Sharon cuts in: Yes] then you get...some of the boys..his mother dressed him in a dress when he was small [Group laughter].

Leigh: Yes, you get boys who are born that way...they can't help it. You get some boys who are shy [laughter] he's mommy's little boy. (J1P14:310-319)

Although some girls and some boys are the same for Sharon in some respects, it seems that despite their similarities, boys and girls cannot be classified as quite the same – “*they are almost the same...not exactly....but almost*”. Thus, we see how Sharon holds onto a position of difference between boys and girls and how she uses “almost” and “not exactly” as qualifiers to emphasise the difference between boys and girls.

In the above extract, we see how the girls differentiate between “real girls” and “tomboys”. An interesting feature of the dynamic of this interaction was how the girls seemingly dismissed my question about what girls say about tomboys. Yet in their construction of tomboy girls as “Other”, they clarified how tomboys are denigrated. From their narratives, it is also evident how the tomboys’ “deviance” unsettles their notions of conventional femininity and heterosexual norms. Here we see how the girls position the “tomboy girl” as a “figure that disrupts” (Garber, 1992) the binaries of masculinities and femininities. This topic evoked an animated and emotionally charged discussion in the group. There was much laughter, talking over each other and when they agreed, they confirmed their agreement in a loud chorus. This probably attests to the intensity of their blatant dislike of tomboys. Beneath the surface of this humour, their disgust of and negativity towards tomboys was palpable in the focus group session. Hollway (1989) contends, that “when someone gives an account of her experience, some meanings are more anxiety-provoking or ego-threatening than others, and through defence mechanisms, they can be

¹⁴ Moffie is a local term for a boy/man who is effeminate.

avoided” (p. 45). Thus, I understood the girls’ humour to be a defensive strategy against their anxiety regarding non-heteronormative sexuality. It is also evident how the girls are enacting the “culture of compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1983). They marked this “deviance” as abhorrent, which displays their homophobia towards tomboys.

It was interesting to note how tolerant the girls were towards boys whom they identified as gay and how they exonerated them by offering different theories. For example, “*some of the boys are born that way...they can’t help it*” or perhaps it was the mother’s fault, because “*his mother dressed him in a dress when he was small*”. Yet, they offered no such empathy for tomboys because, to them tomboyism seems to be a matter of individual choice, “*they want to be men*”. We also see how they intensify the “pathology” of tomboys from masquerading as men to being “skollies”. What seems to be happening here is that the disruption of the usual patterns of identification and desire seem to be anxiety provoking and unsettling the participants as it challenges their traditional assumptions of gender. It appears that girls who display non-normative femininities are judged as threatening and that the object of desire for tomboys are other girls is seemingly equally threatening and unsettling. Further, Leigh’s response that “*boys are not interested in such girls...because they are tomboys*”, suggests that identification as a tomboy threatens one’s eligibility as an object of desire by boys.

In this interaction, we see the marginalisation and pathologising of those who transgress traditional heteronormative sexuality and reinforcement of the dominant gender norms and ideals among the girls. According to Richard Johnson (as cited by Pattman & Bhana, 2009), “opposed identities . . . are not only constructed in relation to each other, they always carry in their inner configurations, some version (fantasy, image, imago) of the Other” (p.23). In this regard, Pattman and Bhana (2009) conclude:

Gendered identities, then, are not only played out in relation to each other, but produce the Other through projected anxieties as well as longings which are split off from the self. A sense of . . . gendered identity is derived *through* constructing the . . . gendered Other, which becomes a fantasy structure onto which difference is projected, a peg onto which fears or desires can be hung. (p. 23)

Further, Gonick (2003) suggests that through such dialectical constructions of the deviant “other” – the “real girls” are able to know and recognise themselves, it makes “the normal girl imaginable, through the presence of the not-‘normal’ girl” (p. 5). Gonick contends that through such attributions “the hegemony of this set of understandings is reinscribed and those who are seen as other are further marginalized” (p. 5).

In sum, consistent with feminist social constructionism and objectification theory, through discourses of difference and essentialism, we see how the girls in this study construct, perform, police and reproduce femininities and masculinities. They seem invested in the performance of “emphasised femininities” and the institution of compulsory heterosexuality. The power that girls derive from embodying and enacting idealised femininities is a double-edged power as it not only disempowers them, but it perpetuates competition and inequality among girls. Further, it is also evident that performances of femininities that deviate from the conventional are not only pathologised, experienced as threatening and intolerable, but they also seem to jeopardize girls’ chances to be the object of desire for boys/men.

5.2.2 Aspirations to be a “good” girl/woman

In all the focus groups, there was a constant refrain among the girls that they wanted to be good girls/women and “ladies” one day. As illustrated below, they juxtaposed the “good” versus the “bad” woman, and described the good woman as a caring mother/wife, who runs a good household and is a compassionate woman who reaches out to others. She is also a rational person

who resolves conflict in a reasonable and mature manner. The “bad” woman, on the other hand, was scandalous and tends to get involved in fights on the streets.

Extract 18

Rose: Ek wil ook eendag ‘n goeie vrou wees.

Sherine: Rose...nou wat is ‘n goeie vrou?

Rose: Sy doen haar huiswerk..alles is op sy tyd..en...die kinders is altyd skoon...en my...haar man moet ook sy plig kan doen.

Jasmine: Dis ‘n vrou wat mededeelsaam is...sy bly in haar huis..wat nie skandalig is nie....wat djy staat kan maak op...wat nie..umm..op strate baklei en skel nie...wat liewers die ding miskien nou...op ‘n plek...‘n rustige plek kan uitsorteer en praat.. (L2P2:648)

Rose: I also want to be a good woman one day.

Sherine: Rose...now what is a good woman?

Rose: She does her chores...everything is on its time...and the children are always clean...and my...her husband must also do his duty.

Jasmine: This is a woman who is charitable...she stays in her house...she’s not scandalous...you can depend on her...she doesn’t...umm...fight on the streets and scolds...she rather sorts things out...in a place...a quiet place where you can talk and sort things out. (L2P2:648)

Sheryl: Ek wil ‘n goeie vrou wees eendag.

Sherine: Nou sê gou vir my....wat is ‘n goeie vrou? Almal praat van die “goeie vrou”, wat is ‘n goeie vrou? [2s]

Sheryl: ‘n Goeie vrou is wanneer jy miskien nou.... daar kom miskien nou net so ‘n vrou... en sy’s honger.... of sy’t miskien nou nie blyplek nie..... dan gaan ek vir haar blyplek gee en vir haar moed inpraat. (K4P13:966)

Sheryl: I want to be a good woman one day.

Sherine: Now tell me quickly....what is a good woman? Everyone speaks of the “good woman”... what is a good woman? [2s]

Sheryl: A good woman is when, maybe when you...perhaps a woman comes to you...and she’s hungry...or perhaps she doesn’t have a place to stay...then I’m going to give her a place to stay and encourage her. (K4P13:966)

According to the participants, the charitable woman is also not stuck up (haughty) and she is prepared to reach out to others and, despite limited resources, gives generously.

Extract 19

Charmaine: huh huh...ek wil nie vir my sturvy hou eendag as ek groot is nie...ek wil.....ek wil behulpsaam ..um...waar ek miskien waar ek sien..um..mense is miskien swak...dan wil ek instaan..dan wil ek help..[Ivana cuts in: Al kan djy nie help nie, maar djy wil] al is dit mense wat toe ek klein was..hulle het nou nie vir my gerespek het nie..dan gaan ek hulle wys..ek is beter..en ek gaan vir hulle respekteer...dis wat my ma altyd vir my sê

Ivana: Liefdadigheid

Sherine: umm...so wat jy sê..jy wil uitreik na ander mense toe...Ivana praat van...liefdadigheid

Julie: Wat is liefdadigheid?

Charmaine: Mense gee...mense gee al het djy nie....maar djy gee wat djy het. (L1P4:172)

Charmaine: huh huh...I don't want to keep myself sturvy (haughty) one day when I'm big...I want..I want to help others...um..perhaps where I see..um people are perhaps weak...then I want to reach out...then I want to help [Ivana cuts in: even if you can't help, but you want to]even if it were people...who when I was small...did not respect me..then I'm going to show them...I'm better..and I will respect them...that's what my mother always tells me.

Ivana: Charity.

Sherine: umm...so what you are saying...you want to reach out to other people..Ivana speaks of charity.

Julie: What is charity?

Charmaine: People give...people give even if you don't have...but you give what you have. (L1P4:172)

In their descriptions of how a good girl should behave, the participants also used binary constructs such as modest/haughty, wild/disciplined, and decent/indecent to clarify the good girl's behaviour. They reported that they were constantly reprimanded to be “good” girls and that their conduct was under intense levels of surveillance. Surveillance included self-surveillance, monitoring and control by their parents, and scrutiny by other girls, boys/men, community members and teachers. From the girls' stories, it is evident how these forms of surveillance regulate the respectability of the girls, thereby keeping the “good” girl intact.

In this sub-theme, I elucidate the participants' aspirations to be good girls/women and explore what, according to them, constitutes a good girl/woman. To illustrate how the participants

constructed the different facets of a “good” girl/woman, I created the following categories: a girl must always behave like a “lady”; a girl must know her place; and being a caring, hardworking and independent woman.

5.2.2.1 A girl must always behave like a “lady”

In patriarchal societies, the formal and informal social prescriptions how girls should behave are more restrictive than those allowed for boys. Holland et al. (1994) maintain that in patriarchal contexts young women’s bodies become the site for the inscription of the prevailing social norms. They state that,

Young women are under pressure to construct their material bodies into a particular model of femininity, which is both inscribed on the surface of their bodies, through such skills as dress, make-up and dietary regimes, and disembodied in the sense of detachment from their sensuality and alienation from their material bodies. (p. 24)

Consequently, girls learn to walk the tightrope of femininity (Cowie & Lees, 1981), where they learn how to conduct themselves in public, else they run the risk of negative labelling, or sanction. In this regard, Gonick (2003) posits,

The body is constantly threatening to reveal the desirous girl. The combined effect of this predicament for the good girl is the requirement of a constant awareness of the rules surrounding the use of the body, rules that involve not only prohibitions and constraints, but also pleasure and desire. A girl’s production and repression of her body demand, therefore, a perpetual watchfulness that might best be summarized as a “regulation of the self”. (p. 76)

As discussed earlier, on the one hand, the participants expressed the need to be visible and desired by the boys, but on the other hand, this visibility could also possibly threaten their safety.

Extract 20

Julie: ‘n Meisie moet ordentlik wees. Reg wees en respek het vir die ander mense ook...en jy moet reg aantrek. Nie so.... kaal nie...[group: laughter]..oe jene!...my ma...sy sê: “Gedra vir jou!...trek vir jou lekker toe aan....want die jongens kyk....wees netjies en hou jou gesig van die jongens af.”

Claudine: Hulle sê djy moet nooit vir jou te kaal aantrek nie...want hulle sê djy maak...as djy vir jou te kaal aantrek....dan maak djy aanleidinkies vir die ouens. Hulle dink....nou miskien nou....djy maak aanleidinkies....maar djy hou maar net van so aantrek...en dan sê hulle nou sommer, nee, hulle gaan jou nog daai...en as djy nou nie wil nie dan...

Sherine: So, dink julle die mans dink..as julle....as julle vir julle ‘n lekker..uhm..mini aantrek dat jy gee aanleiding?

Claudine: Ja

Eunice: Of party...miskien...nou jy loop hier verby nou in jou kort skirtjie en jou kaal toppie, dan skree hulle sommer: “Way! Way! Hoe lyk dit dan? Hoe lyk dit dan? Wanneer dan?...Wanneer dan? Wanneer kan ‘n man dan indruk?” So praat hulle saam met die meisiekinders. (K4P13:638)

Julie: A girl must be decent/respectable.¹⁵ Be proper and have respect for other people...and you must dress properly. Not so.... revealing [Group laughter] oh my word! My mother, she says: “Behave yourself! Dress yourself and cover up..because the guys look. Be neat and keep your face away from the guys”.

Claudine: They say you must never dress too skimpily...because they say you...when you dress too skimpily...then you provoke the guys [lead them on]. They think...that perhaps you are provocative...but you actually just like to dress that way....and then they say: No, they are going to do this to you....and if you don't want to then ...

Sherine: So, do you think that when you wear...when you wear a nice..uhm...mini..the guys think you are leading them on?

Claudine: Yes.

Eunice: Or some...maybe...now...you are walking past in your short skirt and your bare top, they will shout: “Way! Way! How's it? How's it? When then? When then? When can a man put it in?” That's how they talk to the girls. (K4P13:638)

Sherine: Ok, so June sê dit hang af of djy die man aanleiding gegee het.

June: Dis jou eie skuld want djy het die man aanleiding gee.. want djy kap jou kaal [group laughs and agrees: uhh]

Sherine: June, nou wat beteken dit as djy sê djy kap jou kaal?

June: Djy trek jou kaal aan...en dra kort klere...dit gee aanleiding vir die mans....oe!...die man wil jou sommer beet kry...[group laughter]

¹⁵ All the participants used the term “ordentlik” (respectable) when they spoke about being “good” girls. According to Fiona Ross (2005), “*ordentlikheid* [respectability/decency] is considered an old-fashioned word, Victorian in tone, with connotations of gentility and restraint” (p. 633).

Sherine: So wat sê julle nou? As 'n tienermeisie nou kort skirtjies dra [June cuts in: Dis aanleiding vir die mans!] dat sy aanleiding vir die mans gee?

June: Ja...party weet nou hoe om vir hulle aan te trek...maar daar is som wat alles wys ..en wys hulle holle! [raucous laughter]

Sherine: Ok..so julle sê as 'n vrou kaal...kort klere dra of klere dra wat 'n bietjie te veel wys...dan gee sy aanleiding vir die mans? [group chorus: ja]...dan gee dit aanleiding. Maar kan 'n vrou dan nou nie aantrek soos sy wil nie? [group disagrees vehemently]

June: Ja.....hulle kan, maar nie so kaal nie...**djy moet weet hoe djy aantrek!**

Lizanne: ???? (says something but it's inaudible due to all the laughter and talking over each other)

Sherine: Ok, wat sê djy Lizanne?

Lizanne: Hulle trek uitspattig aan.

Sherine: Ok....nou wat beteken uitspattig?

Lizanne: Hulle trek aan sodat die mans vir hulle kan raaksien

June cuts in: Ja, hulle voel belangrik ..hulle is **daai** mense..as hulle so aantrek en hulle raakgesien word

Lizanne: Sê maar dis warm dan kan ek nou 'n kort skirtjie of 'n kort toppie aantrek..maar dit moet nie te kort wees nie...

Sherine: So hoe moet 'n meisie dan nou aantrek? [Sharon whispers something to Lizanne sitting next to her] Wat sê djy Sharon?

Sharon: Sy moet haar bedek... sy kan nou 'n toppie dra..maar sy moet nie haar skirt op die heupe sit nie...want die manne kyk mos net daar (K1P7:47-57)

Sherine: Ok, so June says it depends on whether you enticed the man.

June: It's your own fault because you provoked the man...because you showed too much [Group laughs and agrees, uhh].

Sherine: June, now what does it mean when you show too much?

June: You show too much....and wear short clothes...that provokes the men...oh! the man would want to grab you [Group laughter].

Sherine: So what are you saying now...when a teenage girl wears short skirts [June cuts in: That's provocation for the men] that she's provoking the men?

June: Yes...some know how to dress themselves...but there are some that show everything and show their backsides [raucous laughter].

Sherine: Ok, so you say that when a woman bares...wears short dresses or clothes that just shows a little too much ...then she is provoking men [Group: yes] then it is provocative. But can't a woman dress as she pleases? [Group disagrees vehemently]

*June: Yes...they can but not so skimpily...**you must know how you dress.***

Lizanne: (Says something but it is inaudible due to all the laughter and talking over each other)

Sherine: Ok, what are you saying Lizanne?

Lizanne: They dress “uitspattig”.

Sherine: Ok...so what does “uitspattig” mean?

Lizanne: They dress in such a manner so that the men can notice them.

*June [cuts in]: Yes, they feel important...they are **the** people...when they dress in such a manner and they can be noticed.*

Lizanne: Let’s say it’s warm then I can wear a short skirt or put on a short top..but it must not be too short.

Sherine: So how is a girl supposed to dress? [Sharon whispers something to Lizanne sitting next to her] What are you saying Sharon?

Sharon: She must cover herself up ...she can wear a little top....but she must not wear her skirt on her hips....because the men just look there. (K1P7:47-57)

In the extracts above, it is apparent how embedded the girls are in the canonical narratives of respectability and the consequences for transgressing the norms of modesty. From their narratives, it is evident that they understand that girls’ material bodies are not neutral or merely vehicles for self-expression or self-projection. Rather, girl’s bodies are socially constructed and sites for the inscription of the dominant social discourses (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Holland et al., 1994; Pedwell, 2010). The participants’ experiences also support the contention of Yarnal, Son, and Liechty (2011) that “in essence, dress works at the edges and boundaries of the body, it shapes the self, embodying personal tension between having a docile body and being an active body” (p. 59).

Rich (1983) posits that in patriarchal contexts “male power is manifested and maintained . . . through a pervasive cluster of forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness” (p. 185). Thus in the quotations above, we see how there is not only external regulation but also self-regulation; how “the girls participate in both constructing and policing of the good/bad border” (Gonick, 2003, p. 78), and how they invoke a blaming discourse. Hence, when girls wear sexually provocative clothing, the participants contend that girls are to blame for the consequences. Salo (2009) similarly reported the prevalence of such a blaming discourse in her

study in Manenberg.¹⁶ She found that when girls wore revealing clothes they were regarded as “slegte dogters [bad daughters] or slatternly/spoiled girls” (p. 15), who “pushed the envelope of *ordentlikheid* or respectability” (p. 16). Salo notes how when a young girl reported that she was raped, the girl’s mother and some women in the community blamed the girl for transgressing the normative boundaries and bringing this misfortune onto herself. Thus, Salo posits that mothers and older women wield power and control “the ideological means whereby young men and women . . . [become] persons within the community” (p. 353).

Similarly, in this study the participants reported that their parents and members of the community also monitor their behaviour. In the next extracts, the participants illustrate how community members watch whom the girls associate with and how they behave on the streets.

Extract 21

Sherine: Ok...nou wat word vandag van meisies verwag?

Sharon: Om voorbeeldig te wees [group agrees]

Sherine: Nou wat beteken dit? Verduidelik vir my hoe is ‘n mens voorbeeldig

Sharon: Om nie laat op die straat te staan nie..want dan praat mense weer sleg van jou en dan kom dit by jou ma uit...en sulke dinge.

Sherine: So praat die mense sleg van jou as hulle nou sien jy is laat op die straat?

Group [chorus]: Ja juffrou

Kim: Soos ‘n ander meisie ...sy’t gesê: “Sharon vry rond” hulle gaan vir haar ma sê

Mandy-Lee: Wie het so gesê?

Kim: Bianca hulle

Leigh: Jy kan nie laat buite staan nie....jy kan ook nie met ‘n seunvriend rondloop nie...dan sê...word dit vir jou ma gesê...dat jy loop in die rondte met seuns en jy vang ander goed aan...

Mandy-Lee: En jy is jas....sulke goed...dit is so

Sharon: Juffrou...YY is ‘n klein dorpie...as jy vir die een iets sê dan kom dit sommer daar anderkant ‘n verkeerde storie uit.. (J1P15:114)

Sherine: Ok..now what is expected of girls today?

Sharon: To be an example [Group agrees].

¹⁶ Manenberg is an urban, low-income Coloured township in Cape Town.

Sherine: Now what does that mean? Explain to me how one is an example.

Sharon: Not to stand on the street late at night...because then the people talk ill of you and then it comes to your mother...things like that.

Sherine: So do people speak ill of you when they see you on the street late at night?

Group [chorus]: Yes Miss.

Kim: Like another girl..she said that Sharon makes out...they are going to tell her mother.

Mandy-Lee: Who said so?

Kim: Bianca them.

Leigh: You can't stand outside late at night...you can't also walk with a boy friend..then they will tell your mother that you walk around with boys and that you do other things

Mandy-Lee: And you are randy¹⁷ such things...that's how it is.

Sharon: Miss, YY is a small town...if you tell the one person something then a wrong story will surface on the other side. (J1P15:114)

Denise: Daar word altyd neergekyk op jou as jy iets verkeerd doen....die mense praat...want almal ken vir jou..jy mag nie eers met 'n seunskind staan nie dan dink hulle ander goed...dan sê hulle dji's ougat of so [laughter]

Sherine: Nou wie is dit wat so praat van die meisies?

Chandre: Dis nou mense wat nie van jou hou nie... dan sê hulle vir jou ma of so en dan gaan die stories om (K3P11:19)

Denise: They always look down on you when you do something wrong...the people talk..because everyone knows you..you can't even stand with a boy then they think other stuff...then they say you are precocious [laughter].

Sherine: So who is it that talks about the girls?

Chandre: Its people that don't like you...then they will tell your mother and then the stories do the rounds. (K3P11:19)

Adrienne: En party groot mense praat uit..lyk om van 'n mens te praat...hulle praat uit 'n mens se liggaam....soos daai ander auntie het vir my gesê...een Saterdagand gesê...ja ek wil [Elze: Dit was nie 'n Saterdag aand nie...dit was in die week gewees] ek het nog nie eers my periods nie...maar ek hou vir my ouderwets

Sherine: Ok, so van die groot mense daar waar jy bly

Jessy: Ja juffrou van ons bure...hulle is baie besig...hulle is baie besig met ander mense...hulle lyk om van jou te praat...maar hulle goed kom nooit uit nie..hulle hou nie van my ma nie...hulle is jaloers vir my ma..en hulle like 'n mens bedink..met verkeerde goeters..soos groot goeters...wat 'n mens nog nie van weet nie..en nog

¹⁷ The Afrikaans term the girls used was “jas” that comes from the Afrikaans term “jags”, which means to hunt in English.

juffrou..nou nie vir my nie..soos hulle sê die meisie kinders lê met groot mense (J2P16:27)

Adrienne: And some adults like to talk...like to talk about a person...they talk about your body...like that other aunty told me...one Saturday evening...yes I want [Elze cuts in: It wasn't a Saturday evening...it was during the week] I haven't even got my periods yet...but I keep myself precocious.

Sherine: Ok, so some of the adults there where you stay

Jessy: Yes Miss some of our neighbours...they are very busy...they are very busy with other people...they like to talk about you...but their stuff never comes out...they don't like my mother..they are jealous of my mother..and they like to suspect a person..with wrong stuff..like big stuff..that you don't even know about yet..and now Miss..not me..like they say the girls sleep with adults. (J2P16:27)

In the quotations above, we see the girls' awareness of the implications when transgressing the normative boundaries set for girls and the costs of rumour mongering and community suspicions for their reputations. Thus, walking about with boys and being out on the streets late at night is contrary to the exemplary behaviour expected of respectable/good girls. Girls who are out on the street late at night or standing around with boys risk accusations of flirting and “*doing other things*” – interpreted here as engaging in promiscuous behaviour. In the extract above we see the power that the “neighbourhood watch system” exerts over the girls' lives. Hence we see how Jessy is trying to dislodge herself and the other girls from the rumours and the “troubled subject position” (Wetherell, 1998) in which community members located them by re-positioning herself and girls as unknowing of the “*big stuff...like [sleeping] with adults.*”

Extract 22

Ilse: Ek dink ook...dit is maar liefste die beste asas..umm....soos ons nou hier lewe dat ons so lewe...want..netnou kry ons ook net so ..veel vryheid soos 'n seunskind

June: Uhh...seuns loop en slaap rond...meisies kan mos nie dieselfde doen nie?

Ilse: Dan netnou dan ruk **ons** ook nou weer **te** uit die hand uit..net soos die seunskinders...dan is dit ook nou weer ons...weer nou net ons ..wat weer die slegte persone is in ander mense se oë.....maar.....mense is meer opgeskeep met ander mense se kinders....hulle moet na **hulle** kinders kyk...maar dan praat hulle van ander mense se kinders...[group: ja]

Vicky: Mmm...veral hier in XX...hulle praat van ander mense se kinders se probleme..dan vergeet hulle..dat hulle kinders het nog die ergste probleme...

June: oe!...veral in ons straat...oe!...veral Ouma Mary...veral sy...sy lyk skinder (K1P8:187)

Ilse: I also think...maybe it is better if..if..umm..that we live as we are living here now...because...just now we also get just as much freedom as a boy.

June: Uhh...boys walk and sleep around...girls can't do the same?

*Ilse: Then maybe just now we also become **too** unruly...just like the boys...then it is again just us...again just us...that are the bad persons in other people's eyes..but...people are more concerned with other people's children...they must worry about **their** own children...but they talk about other people's children...[Group: yes]*

Vicky: Mm...especially here in XX...they talk about other people's children's problems..they they forget..that their children have the worst problems..

June: ooh! especially in our street ooh! especially Granny Mary, especially her..she likes to gossip. (K1P8:187)

Here the participants agree with Ilse and would rather comply with the restrictions imposed on girls than risk the spoiling of their reputations and being labelled a “bad” girl. From the girls’ stories, it is also evident how the girls themselves, their mothers and other women in the community are not only the “keepers’ of femininity” (Shefer, 1999), but they also seem to be the “keepers of respectability”.

Although the majority of the girls seem to comply with the restrictions of femininity and expected codes of respectability, there seem to be some who consciously resist the social pressures to conform and subvert these restrictions. In extract 20 above, June tells us that “*some [girls] know how to dress themselves...but there are some that show everything...and show their backsides*”. June and Lizanne suggest that such girls want to enhance their visibility to men; however, one could also interpret these girls’ behaviour as a form of talking back and resisting the male gaze. Despite possible sanctions, it appears that some girls are prepared to challenge the restrictions and exercise agency to dress as they please. However, Gonick (2003) argues that instances of such resistance “replace one set of constraints with another: the use of sexuality/pleasure to reject the family [or community restrictions], places young women squarely within the dictates of femininity” (p. 78). Thus, although some girls assert themselves and display

the courage to challenge the taken-for-granted notions of respectability/decency, this seems to trap girls in a double bind.

In extract 23 below, the girls relate how their parents teach them to be “ladies” and how boys should be “gentlemen”. The content of these instructions illustrates how gendered the expected norms of behaviour are. Seemingly, boys are socialised in a discourse of masculinity that is courteous and respectful towards women, while girls are taught to be respectable. The participants positioned boys in a gentleman/predator binary and they foreground the management and disciplining of girls’ bodies.

Extract 23

Sherine: Ok, so jy moet hardwerkend wees...dan wat sê hulle vir die seuns..wat sê die ouers vir die seuns?

Charmaine: Hulle moet behulpsaam wees...altyd groet...hulle moet gentlemens wees...as hulle miskien in ‘n plek is en daar is miskien te min sitplekke...en daar kom miskien vroumense en hulle sit...dan moet hulle opstaan vir die vroumense...sodat die vroumense kan sit...of die vroumense help as hulle miskien swaar goed het...

Sherine: So die ouers leer vir die seuns om gentlemen te wees...en vir die meisie...wat leer hulle die meisies?

Charmaine: Hulle moet dames wees...

Sherine: Nou hoe is ‘n dame?

Charmaine: Sy’s netjies...sy kyk agter haarself [Ivana cuts in: Sy is pragtig]...en saggeaard

[Ivana: ja] sy moet altyd vir haar mooi maak

Laura: Sy moet respek het vir haar liggaam

Sherine: Ok..’n dame moet respek het vir haar liggaam...en wat nog?

Ivana: Jy moet ook altyd jou gedra soos ‘n dame

Sherine: Nou hoe gedra ‘n dame vir haar?

Charmaine: Jy moet nie vir jou uitgee of vir jou uitgelaat hou nie...

Sherine: Nou wat is uitgelaat? [laughter]

Ivana: Djy’s wild..en djy drink..en djy’s uitspattig..en trek kort klere aan en so...vir my is dit uitspattig

Carlene: En as djy wild is...vir my is djy nie ‘n dame as djy wild is en djy gaan uit...en djy’s uitgelaat...en djy lag hard...d jy is net nie soos ‘n meisie moet wees nie! Wanneer djy miskien nou dans...en djy dans... miskien... nou saam met ‘n man en djy dans nou net nie ...soos ‘n meisie moet dans nie...en djy dans met jou agter parte ...net

so uitspattig...en miskien...dan is dit wanneer die man miskien nou dink...[group laughter] ..vanaand gaan ek die meisie.....so.....dan drink djy ook nog...dji weet nou nie eers wat djy maak nou nie...dan is dit sy gap wat hy vir jou gaan vat... (L1P3:142)

Sherine: Ok, so you must be hardworking...then what do they say to the boys...what do the parents tell the boys?

Charmaine: They must be helpful..always greet..they must be gentlemen..maybe if they are in a place and there are too few seats..and maybe there are women and they sit...then they must stand up for the women..so that the women can sit..or they must help the women when perhaps they carry heavy stuff.

Sherine: So the parents teach the boys to be gentlemen...and the girls...what do they teach the girls?

Charmaine: They must be ladies.

Sherine: Now how is a lady?

Charmaine: She's neat...she takes care of herself [Ivana cuts in: she's beautiful] and soft-natured...she must always make herself beautiful.

Laura: She must have respect for her body.

Sherine: Ok...a lady must have respect for her body...and what else?

Ivana: You must always behave like a lady.

Sherine: Now how does a lady behave?

Charmaine: You must not be stuck-up or behave seductively.

Sherine: Now what is seductive? [laughter]

Ivana: You are wild...and you drink...and you are seductive...and wear short clothes and so...like that..for me that's seductive.

Carlene: And when you are wild...for me you are not a lady when you are wild and you go out...and you are seductive...and you laugh loud..you are just not how a girl is supposed to be! Perhaps when you dance...and maybe you dance...with a man and you don't dance like a girl should dance...and you dance with your backside....just so seductive and...maybe that's when the man perhaps think [Group laughter] tonight I'm going to get this girl...so..and then you also drink...you don't even know what you are doing...that is his gap when he will take you. (L1P3:142)

In their talk, the girls present an explicit picture of the defining qualities of a lady and they position girls/women as either good or bad. In this positioning, the participants invoke the “Madonna/whore” discourse (Ussher, 1989). This discourse typifies female sexuality as depraved and dangerous, either good or bad and describe women in terms of either one of the binary categories “wife and mistress, virgin and whore, Mary and Eve” (Hollway, 1984, p. 232). According to the girls, ladies must respect their bodies and are modest; by implication they are

good women. On the other hand, the wild girl/woman is loud, conceited, drinks alcohol and dances seductively. She pursues pleasure and contravenes the rules and conventions of how a lady or girl should be. This pursuit of pleasure also tends to expose her to social, sexual or physical vulnerabilities.

In their narratives, the girls also invoke the “male sexual drive discourse” (Hollway, 1984) and position themselves as possible victims of men’s power. Hollway posits that the “male sexual drive discourse sees men as sexually insatiable and male sexuality as naturally an uncontrollable drive” (Hollway, 1984, p. 63). In extracts presented earlier, we see how the participants speak about men’s uncontrollable sexual drives, how girls/women are responsible for provoking men, and the possible violence that could transpire. This articulation of the “male sexual drive” discourse is consistent with the findings of a number of South African studies with varied samples where male and female sexuality are cast as dangerous (Mankayi, 2006; Shefer, 1999; Shefer et al., 2008). Shefer et al. (2008) posit that such discourses play a seminal role in the reproduction of “the dominant binary constructions of men and women and legitimise hegemonic (hetero)sexual practices” (p. 167).

In this current study, it seems girls have to exercise constant vigilance to discipline their bodies and not to embrace their burgeoning sexuality. Tolman (1994) contends that:

In a social context in which danger and violence, the constant threat of violation, is palpable, visible, and unavoidable, most . . . girls make conscious choices to sacrifice pleasure as an attempt to protect themselves from danger, a self-protective strategy that costs them a connection to themselves and to their own bodies and unfortunately provides little real safety. (p. 259)

As discussed earlier, South Africa is a hostile environment for women and girls (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Vetten et al., 2008). In violent contexts, Tolman (1994) argues, adolescent girls engage in a

mind-body dilemma where their minds compel them to suppress the voices of their bodies. In the quotation above, Ivana and Charmaine relate how they consciously guard against “unladylike” behaviours. This mind-body split, Tolman (1994) suggests, serves as a self-protection strategy against possible “physical vulnerability to AIDS and pregnancy, as well as social vulnerability in the form of getting a ‘bad reputation’ – they make explicit connections between their sexual desire and danger” (p. 259). In Carlene’s quote above, we see how she uses her mind to restrain her body to dance like a lady in order to protect herself from physical or social dangers. Thus, in situations such as these, girls not only silence the voices of their bodies, but they could also become detached or alienated from their bodies and from their selves (Holland et al., 1994; Tolman, 1994).

In the extract above it is also evident how the assumptions of compulsory heterosexuality pervade the girls’ narrative. Their stories of vigilance; how they armour themselves against the pervasive threat of violation and violence; their denial and denigration of pleasure; and that they could be responsible for eliciting predatory male behaviour, are evidence of such tenets of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1983) and objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Tolman (2006) contends that this detachment for a girl from her body “could diminish her self-knowledge and self-esteem, her ability to have authentic relationships, and to make safe and . . . pleasurable decisions” (p. 72). A further consequence of these social processes, Nicholson (1994) posits, is that girls could develop an “understanding of what are considered ‘normal’ sexual desires and practices, and accordingly demarcate their own boundaries of behaviour and expectations” (p.7). Thus, we see how tenets of compulsory heterosexuality and sexual objectification tend to be normalised and masked as codes of respectability.

As I tried to understand the meanings of the girls’ stories of their vigilance when dancing and suppressing the voice of their bodies, this story lingered with me and constantly intruded my thoughts. For me it still felt as if “there was something happening there – a kind of resonance, a

sense that there's something [more] meaningful beyond the simple meaning of the words" (Foster, 2003, p. 54). I imagined how a "lady" should dance and the images that surfaced in my mind were those of disembodied, mechanical, lifeless bodies in a semblance of a dance, devoid of vitality. It also conjured up images of paralysis, lack of joy, fulfilment and the essence of being. The girls' stories took me to T.S. Eliot's (1984) poem, *The Hollow Men*, which seems to capture this lack of vitality in their stories:

Shape without form, shade without colour,

Paralysed force, gesture without motion. (p. 304)

It is evident that we learn the steps of this mechanical dance through the "everyday/everynight" lessons and practices in our communities. This captures for me the symbolism of how patriarchy not only traps girls in a gender straitjacket, but it also detaches them from their selves and from embracing the sensuality of their bodies. Thus by conforming, the girls not only adhere to the conventional codes of respectability, but it also keeps girls in their place within the patriarchal structure.

5.2.2.2 A girl must know her place

According to Hubbard (2005b), the "key question about space and place is not what they are, but what they do" (p. 4). He posits that gender politics structure space differently for men and women, and play an integral role in shaping sexual subjectivities and gender relations. Patriarchal ideologies clearly demarcate social life into the private sphere, which is associated with women, nurturing and caring, and the public/social sphere that is associated with men (Andersen & Taylor, 2006; Kearney, 2009). In all the focus groups and interviews, the participants were clear about their place in their contexts.

Extract 24

Shamiella: ‘n Meisie moet haar plek ken

Sherine: Nou wat is haar plek?

Shamiella: Djy moet weet wat djy moet doen en wat djy nie moet doen nie...sy moet weet hoe sy moet optree en sy moet respek het vir die groot mense.

Sherine: Nou hoe moet ‘n meisie optree? Hoe moet ‘n meisie wees?

Chandre: Djy moet netjies en ordentlik wees

Sherine: Ok...so wat is ordentlik?

Anna: Skoon en netjies nie so wild lyk soos wie kom daar aan nie .. en sy moet maniere het

Chanelle: Jy moet ‘n goeie meisie wees

Sherine: Nou wat is ‘n goeie meisie?

Chanelle: ‘n Goeie meisie bly heeldag in die huis...sy’t goeie maniere en gaan skool en gebruik nie alkohol nie (K3P11:54)

Shamiella: A girl must know her place.

Sherine: Now what is her place?

Shamiella: She must know what she must do and what she must not do...she must know how she must act and she must have respect for the adults.

Sherine: So how must a girl act? How must a girl be?

Chandre: You must be neat and decent.

Sherine: Ok...so what is decent?

Anna: Clean and neat and don’t look wild...and she must have manners.

Chanelle: You must be a good girl.

Sherine: Now what is a good girl?

Chanelle: A good girl stays inside the home the whole day...she has good manners and goes to school and does not use alcohol. (K3P11:54)

Eunice: Versigtig wees vir die outjies....ja...soos my ma sê: “Jinne, my kind, jy moenie so soos die ander meisiekinders buitekant wies nie. Jy sien vir hulle, jy sien hoe swaar en hoe duur is die lewe vandag. Kyk, daar loop daai enetjie met ‘n kind.” Dan wys sy miskien vir jou... “Kyk, daar loop sy met ‘n kind.” (K4P13:496)

Eunice: Be careful for the boys...yes...like my mother says: “Gee, my child, you mustn’t be outside like the other girls. Look at them, you see how difficult and how expensive life is today. Look, there that one walks with a child.” Then she perhaps shows you: “Look, there she walks with a child.” (K4P13:496)

This knowing their place is consistent with Bourdieu's theory of habitus, namely, "a system of *dispositions*, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27). Our sense of place and lived experiences are socially constructed and, through a dialectical process, Bourdieu (as cited by Dovey, 2002) posits, the social order with its social divisions and hierarchies simultaneously "inscribes itself [not only on our] bodies" (p. 268), but also on the physical spaces that we inhabit.

In the extracts below, it is evident how patriarchal constructions about the girls' location in their contexts and dangers in the environment play a role in their parents' regulation of the girls' mobility. From the girls' reports we see how their parents employ avoidant coping strategies, such as seclusion, shaming, negative labelling or physical punishment to protect their daughters from the sexual advances of boys/men and early pregnancy.

Extract 25

Zelma: Die seuns kan enige tyd in die huis kom....want hulle is mos manne.. hulle is bang vir niks nie.

Edna: Maar oe! Meisies is baie bang, maar meisies hulle is bang, daar is baie gevare...die meisies vry [group: uhh] Ja hulle is bang...die meisies het outjies en die meisies verwag gouwant dis mos nou 'n groot ding hier in (name of township) want al die meisies verwag gou. Dis hoekom die meisies se ma's, soos ons ma's is baie bang...dat ons laat op die straat moet wies want hulle is bang ons kry vroegdag kinders soos die ander meisies en so aan.

Sherine: So wat sê julle ma's vir julle dan as julle wil uitgaan?

Edna: My ma sê ek kan nie uitgaan nie..ek is ougat

Zelma: My ma sê "Djy's ougat. Djy soek al weer 'n man daar buite!" [group:mm] Ja, so sê my ma

Sherine: So sê julle, julle ma's wil nie hê julle moet uitgaan nie omdat hulle is bang julle gaan swanger raak? Nou wat doen julle dan nou die heeltyd? So wat kan julle dan doen?

Laura: Ek sit heeltyd in die huis

Edna: Ons moet maar TV kyk

Zelma: 'n Mens kan ook nie eers reg TV kyk nie....hulle wil hul eie goeters kyk

Edna: Ja, ja

Sherine: So...so wat kan julle nou alles doen?

Zelma: Ons moet maar heelyd huis skoon maak...wasgoed was, vloere mop.... en wasgoed was, en sulke goedjies doen en vir hulle tee maak [group: uh]

Sherine: Sjoe! ...Dit klink 'n bietjie boring

Zelma: Baie!

Sherine: Nou wat maak julle? Kla julle? Of wat maak julle?

Zelma: Ons kan nie ... As ek nou kla, dan sê my ma [Edna cuts in: Ek klap vir jou] "Ek klap vir jou." of "Doen daai ding, djy kry nie dit nie, djy kry nie dat nie." So maak hulle [group: uh] (K2P9:187)

Zelma: The boys can come indoors any time...because they are men...they aren't scared of anything.

Edna: But oh! Girls are very scared...but girls they are scared, there are many dangers...the girls make out [Group: uhh] Yes, they are scared...the girls have boyfriends and the girls become pregnant quickly ...because this is a big thing here in XX (name of township) because all the girls get pregnant quickly. That's why the girls' mothers...like our mothers are very scared....when we are out late on the street because they are scared that we will have children early like the other girls.

Sherine: So what do your mothers tell you when you want to go out?

Edna: My mother says I can't go out ...I'm precocious.

Zelma: My mother says: "You are precocious. You are again looking for a man outside." [Group: mmm] Yes, that's what my mother says.

Sherine: So do you say....your mothers don't want you to go outside because they are scared that you will get pregnant? Now what do you do all the time? So what can you do?

Laura: I sit indoors all the time.

Edna: We have to watch TV.

Zelma: A person can't even watch TV properly....they want to watch their own stuff.

Edna: Yes, yes.

Sherine: So, so what can you do?

Zelma: We have to clean the house all the time...do washing, mop floors...and do washing, and such things and make tea for them [Group: uhhh].

Sherine: Phew! That sounds a little boring.

Zelma: Very!

Sherine: Now what do you do? Do you complain? Or what do you do?

Zelma: We can't, if I complain, then my mother says [Edna cuts in: "I'll smack you"] "I'll smack you!" or "Do this, you won't get this, you won't get that." That's what they do [Group:uhh]. (K2P9:187)

Sherine: Nou wat sê julle ma's vir julle as julle wil uitgaan

Anna: My ma sê altyd "Nee...djy kan nie uitgaan nie."

Zelda: "Nee, waan toe wil djy nou gaan?"

Chandre: “Djy kan nie nou uitgaan nie ...dis te laat”

Denise: Ja, ons moet al 6 uur moet djy in die huis wies

Zelda: Maar som kinders vra die ma vroeg maar dan sê die ma: “Djy moetie laat t’rugkom nie.”

Denise: Ja, jou ma kom haal jou...agt uur

Sherine: So moet julle vroeg by die huis wees as julle uitgaan?

Chandre: As djy nog nie daai tyd by die huis is nie, dan kom soek sy vir jou. En as sy jou kry....dan slat sy jou! [Group: Raucous laughter as she illustrates how her mother hits her]

Zelda: Daai tyd is ek kwaad

Sherine: Daai tyd is djy kwaad omdat djy nie kan uitgaan nie. Nou hoekom is julle ma’s so bekommerd?

Chandre: Party ma’s...is um....is bang dat haar meisiekinders kom iets oor..miskien soos, party ma’s het mos op ‘n jong ouderdom kind gekry, nou is sy ook bang ..nou dieselfde ding gaan ook met haar dogter gebeur [group uhh] (K3P11:108)

Sherine: Now what does your mothers tell you when you want to go out?

Anna: My mother always says: “No, you can’t go out.”

Zelda: “No, where do you want to go to?”

Chandre: “You can’t go out now...it’s too late.”

Denise: Yes, by 6 o’clock you must already be indoors

Zelda: But some children ask the mother then the mother says: “You mustn’t come back late.”

Denise: Yes, your mother fetches you.. 8 o’clock.

Sherine: So when you go out, must you be indoors early?

Chandre: If you are not at home at that time, then she comes looking for you and when she finds you then she hits you! [Group: Raucous laughter as she illustrates how her mother hits her]¹⁸.

Zelda: That’s when I’m angry.

Sherine: Then you are angry because you can’t go out. Now why are your mothers so concerned?

Chandre: Some mothers....are um....are scared that something can happen to her girls...maybe like, some mothers had a child at a young age, now she is also scared...now the same thing will also happen to her daughter [Group uhhhh]. (K3P11:108)

¹⁸ A colleague and I facilitated a weekly group with women from this same community and in one session a member told the group about her fears and desperation on the weekend when, after searching for her daughter for more than an hour, she could not find her. When she finally found her daughter at the sports field, she vented her anger on the girl and gave her a hiding. In the group, the women all spoke about their fears for their daughters’ safety in their community.

From the girls' stories, it is apparent that the public spaces are regarded as dangerous and their mothers constantly warn them about the threats outside. Those girls who want to go outside are labelled precocious and punished when they violate their curfews and/or transgress the normative codes for "good" girls. A few girls, though, reported that their mothers allowed them to go out under supervision at night.

Extract 26

Sherine: So kan julle as meisies laat in die aand uitgaan?

Charmaine: Nie altyd nie...maar as ons...ons plaas vat ons meisies altyd uit in 'n groep met iemand om 'n flik te gaan kyk...dan kan ons uitgaan...dan kan ons geniet maar op 'n responsible way

Sherine: Ok...en vir die anders...hoe's dit vir julle?

Ivana: Ek kan ook laat uitgaan..but ek moet 'n sekere tyd...wat ek in die huis moet wees

Sherine: So as julle nou uitgaan dan wat sê jou ma vir julle?

Charmaine: Geniet vir jou maar gedra ook vir jou

Sherine: Wat beteken daai "gedra vir jou?"

Charmaine: Hou vir jou in...moenie te veel met seunskinders oorreeger nie

Carlene: Te meng of so nie en moenie te in seuns belangstel nie=

Ivana: Moenie te geïntereeserd wees nie....jy kan meng maar op 'n verantwoordelike manier (L1P3:97)

Sherine: So can you as girls go out late at night?

Charmaine: Not always...but if we....our farm always takes us as girls in a group with someone to go and watch a movie..then we can go out...then we can enjoy ourselves but in a responsible manner.

Sherine: Ok...and the others...how is it for you?

Ivana: I can also go out late, but at a certain time I must...when I must be in the house.

Sherine: So when you go out, then what will your mother tell you?

Charmaine: Enjoy yourself but also behave yourself.

Sherine: What does that "behave yourself" mean?

Charmaine: Keep yourself in...don't over react with the boys too much.

Carlene: To mix but don't be too interested in boys.

Ivana: Don't be too interested...you can mix but on a responsible manner. (L1P3:97)

Sherine: Sê nou jy gaan uit...ne...djy het nou vir jou ma gevra...julle gaan nou uit êrens...wat sal jou ma nou vir jou sê?

Ruby: Moenie te laat in die huis kom nie... en moenie met outjies lol nie...en hou jou koekie in jou broekie [laughter]

Sherine: Nou wat beteken daai?

Leigh: Moenie uitsprei nie...jy moet 'n groot slot daaraan sit

Sherine [laughing]: Ok... nou hoekom moet 'n mens 'n groot slot aansit?

Leigh: Want somtyds vry die kinders Juffrou....dan raak hulle sommer lus ook vir.....dan gebeur dit net Juffrou.....of as hulle vry en dan staan hulle teen die muur...dan squeeze hulle... [group all talking together and lots of laughter] (J1P14:268)

Sherine: Say now you go out...you're going somewhere...what will your mother then tell you?

Ruby: Don't come home too late...and don't worry with boys...and keep your cookie in your pantie [laughter].

Sherine: Now what does that mean?

Leigh: Don't spread out...you must put a big lock on it.

Sherine [laughing]: Ok...so why must one put a big lock on it?

Leigh: Because sometimes the children make out Miss..then they also desire for....then it just happens Miss or if they make out and then they stand against the wall...then they squeeze...[Group all talking together and lots of laughter]. (J1P14:268)

In the parents' reported instructions to their daughters, we see how the content seems to revolve around cautioning the girls to control their sexual desire, illustrating "how girlhood cannot be separated from girls' sexed bodies" (Currie et al., 2009).

In the next extract, the girls also seem to suggest that girls who are out on the streets are already sexually active.

Extract 27

Mary: Daar is baie meisies wat op straat is...van hulle wat nie bang is nie....hulle weet mos al hoe is dit... hulle is al gewoon daaraan [Group agrees: uhh,uhh...ja..hulle is gewoon al]

Sherine: Hulle is al gewoon daaraan..so as hulle gewoon is daaraan, is hulle nie bang om op straat te wees nie?

Chandré: Hulle is nie bang vir mansmense wat hulle kan verkrag nie..want maybe het hulle al seksueel verkeer nou's hulle nie meer bang vir manne of sulke dinge nie (K1P7:19)

Mary: There are many girls who are on the street..some of them are not afraid...they already know how it is...they are used to it [Groups agrees: uhh..yes, they are used to it].

Sherine: They are used to it..so if they are used to it, then they not afraid to be on the street.

Chandré: They are not afraid of men who can rape them ..because maybe they already had sex now they are not afraid of men or such things. (K1P7:19)

Similar to Harrison's (2002) findings, fear of pregnancy, sexual violence and HIV/Aids were also immediate concerns for the girls and their parents in this study. From Leigh's statement above, it appears that girls' sexual desires could pose a risk for girls because girls tend to get "pregnant quickly" in their communities. Hence, it seems that mothers are attempting to protect the girls not only from the dangers outside, but also from the "dangers" within. Mothers try to remedy this by sequestering the girls and allocating them household chores to keep them occupied.

Extract 28

Sherine: Maar wat dink julle is nog van die redes ..dat daar so verskille...dit lyk vir my daar's 'n verskil hoe hulle meisies en seuns behandel...wat dink julle is die rede daarvoor?

Larry-Anne: Maar party ouers sê mos..hulle beskerm liewers hulle meisies [group:mmm] deesdae as wat hulle hul seuns beskerm

Sherine: Nou hoekom beskerm hulle die meisies?

Larry-Anne: Dis meer gevaarlik vir die meisie kinders

Jackie: Daar is baie siektes

Vivian: Veral hier in XX [Group talking together]

Chandre: Daai lewenslange siektes loop mos op hoë hakkies hier in XX

Sherine: Waarvan praat jy Chandre? Ek weet nie waarvan jy praat nie

Chandre: MIV/VIGS hy loop op hoë hakkies hier in XX [group laughter] Hy loop op hoë hakkies..hier is baie...hier is baie...veral die MIV hardloop deur onder die jongmense [Group chorus: Dis waar!] net onder die jongmense [Group: Dis waar] net onder die jongmense...dis hoekom die ouers die meisies wil beskerm

Jackie: Die ouers wil die meisies meer beskerm...die seuns gee die meisies VIGS

Ilse: Darem...my ma sê elke dag vir my..sy werk mos meestal by die hospitaal mos nou...dan sê my ma elke dag vir my.. “Ilse..jy moet in die huis bly..jy moet nie rondloop nie.”...Dan sê ek: “Haai..ek mag nie eers winklel toe gaan nie..ek moet net hier in die huis bly.”

Sherine: Dan hoe voel ‘n mens as jy so ingehok is?

Ilse: Oe! Ek wil teen die mure uitklim...dis sommer boring (K1P8:95)

Sherine: But what do you think are more reasons....that there are such differences...it seems to me there’s a difference in how they treat girls and boys...What do you think are the reasons for this?

Larry-Anne: But some parents say...they rather protect their girls today [Group: mmm] than they protect their boys.

Sherine: Now why do they protect the girls?

Larry-Anne: It’s more dangerous for the girls.

Jackie: There are many illnesses.

Vivian: Especially here in XX [Group talking together].

Chandre: That lifelong disease walks about on high heels here in XX.

Sherine: What are you talking about Chandre? I don’t know what you are talking about.

Chandre: HIV/Aids walks on high heels here in XX [Group laughter]. He walks on high heels...here are many...here are many...especially the HIV runs among the young people [Group chorus: That’s true!] just among the young people [Group: That’s true!] that’s why the parents want to protect the girls.

Jackie: The parents want to protect the girls more...the boys give the girls Aids.

Ilse: That’s why...every day my mother says to me...she works mostly at the hospital...then everyday my mother says to me “Ilse..you must stay in the house...you mustn’t walk about.” Then I say.. “Gee...I can’t even go to the shop...I must just stay here in the house.”

Sherine: Then how does one feel when you are caged like that?

Ilse: Oh! I want to climb the walls....it’s just boring (K1P8:95)

Here we see how the girls construct themselves as passive, vulnerable and in need of protection from “*the boys [who] give the girls Aids.*” Chandre’s statement, “*HIV/Aids walks on high heels here in XX*”, is a local idiom that refers to the high prevalence rate of HIV/Aids in the community. Hence, Ilse’s mother cautions her every day to stay indoors to protect her from pregnancy and the virus. As Ilse told us about her mother’s warnings that she should stay indoors, her story evoked in me an image of being trapped. Such a discourse of danger/protection suggests that girls are passive recipients for pregnancy and HIV. It also implies that those girls who are out

on the streets are more vulnerable to HIV infection, compared to those who stay indoors. In the S.A. context, narratives of seclusion and the home as a refuge of safety could provide the girls with a false sense of security. Risky sexual behaviour among adolescents and the risk for sexual violence against girls happen in a wide range of settings, including the home. Below, the girls illustrate how the home could be equally unsafe for girls.

Extract 29

Ilse: Ek kom van Namakwaland...nou... my ma hulle bly hier in XX...ek het by my ouma gebly..my ouma het nou verkies dat ek nou maar hier moet bly...maar dis nie baie lekker om hier in XX te bly nie...maar ek kan mos nou nie anders nie

Sherine: So hoe verskil XX van Namakwaland? Vertel vir ons

Ilse: Dit verskil baie meer...XX is ver meer gevaarliker as...ok...partykeer...almal ken mekaar hier so...al **ken** hulle jou...kan hulle jou nog steeds molesteer

Sherine: Hier in XX...is dit mense wat jy ken? [Group agrees: Ja, uh uh]

Chandre: **Family**, juffrou, **dis family**...**familie** [her emphasis] ...mense wat jy vertrou wat dit aan jou doen..wat jou seermaak...en ...meeste jou ouers se vriende..of ander mense wat jy ken...of jou stiefpa.. ja...wat die kinders

Vivian: Ja...jou stiefpa...jy kan nie rerig iemand vertrou nie..dis die meeste stiefpa's wat hulle kinders molesteer ...jy kan niemand vertrou nie (K1P7:32)

Ilse: I come from Namaqualand¹⁹, now my mother she stays here in XX. I used to stay with my granny..my granny now prefers that I should live here now...but it's not very nice to live here in XX but I can't do anything about it.

Sherine: So how does XX differ from Namaqualand? Tell us.

*Ilse: It differs a lotXX is far more dangerous than...ok...sometimes...everyone here know each other...but even if they **know** you....they can still molest you.*

Sherine: Here in XX...is it people that know you? [Group agrees: Yes]

*Chandre: **Family**, Miss, **it's family**...**family** [her emphasis] people that you trust that do it to you...that hurt you..and...mostly your parents' friends..or other people that you know...or your stepfather...yes...that the children*

Vivian: Yes...your stepfather...you can't really trust anyone...it's mostly stepfathers that molest their children...you can't trust anyone. (K1P7:32)

Candy: Dan kry djy party groot mense...sê maar...ek gaan sê...maar ek was verkrag...dan glo hulle nie 'n mens nie...dan wat moet 'n mens dan maak as hulle jou nie wil glo nie?

¹⁹ Namaqualand is a rural area approximately 600km from Cape Town.

Ebony: Ja juffrou..dis veral groot mense wat nie die kinders glo nie...hulle sê ja...die kinders maak deesdae stories

Candy: Nou wat moet ons nou maak as hulle nou so sê?

Sherine: Dis nogal terrible as iets met jou gebeur en dji het niemand wat jou wil glo nie...

Ebony: Ja ...hulle sê altyd: “Vertrou op ons”...maar hulle glo jou dan nie!

Sherine: Ja...’n mens moet iemand vertel wat dji kan vertrou [Candy cuts in: Wat jou sal glo!] en soos Elze gesê het...as enige iets ongemaklik voel...dan moet dji vir die persoon sê: “Ek hou nie daarvan nie.”

Bianca: Soos my beste vriendin...sy het haar ma vertel...haar stiefpa vat aan haar...maar haar ma wil haar nie glo nie...toe het sy haar auntie vertel...toe sê sy ook vir haar auntie van haar stiefpa...sy kan nie buitekant toe kom nie...sy moet net heeldag in die huis bly...sy kan vir niemand sê nie...hy slat haar...as sy iemand vertel...maar as sy haar ma sê...maar haar ma wil haar nie glo nie...daar’s klomp kinders daar waar ons bly...maar sy sê vir niemand nie...hy het haar een keer geslaan oor haar tette [Ebony cuts in: borste] geslaan

Sherine: Maar as ‘n mens daarvan weet dan moet dji iets doen daaromtrent

Bianca: Maar haar ma wil haar nie glo nie...haar auntie het gesê as dit weer gebeur dan gaan haar auntie haar na die polisiestatie toe vat...toe sê haar ma...ja haar ma gaan nie toelaat dat hulle haar kind wegvat nie (J2P16:212)

Candy: Then you get some adults...say perhaps....I go and tell....but I was raped....then they don’t believe you....then what must you do when they don’t want to believe you?

Ebony: Yes Miss...it’s especially the adults who don’t believe the children....they say, yes...nowadays the children make stories.

Candy: Now what must we do when they say that?

Sherine: That’s terrible when something happens to you and no one wants to believe you.

Ebony: Yes...they always say: “Trust us.” But then they don’t believe you.

Sherine: Yes, a person must tell someone that you can trust [Candy cuts in: That will believe you!] and as Elze said..if anything feels uncomfortable...then you must tell the person: “I don’t like this.”

Bianca: Like my best friend...she told her mother...her stepfather touches her...but her mother didn’t want to believe her...so she told her aunt...so she also told her aunt about her stepfather...she can’t come outside...she must stay indoors the whole day..she can’t tell anyone...he beats her...if she tells anyone...but if she tells her mother...but her mother does not want to believe her...there are many children where we stay...but she tells nobody...once he hit her across her tits [Ebony cuts in: breasts].

Sherine: But if you know about it then you must do something about it.

Bianca: But her mother does not want to believe her...her aunt said, if it happens again then her aunt is going to take her to the police station..so her mother said..yes, her mother won’t allow them to take her daughter away. (J2P16:212)

Compared to the rural area where she previously lived, the peri-urban area seems more hostile for Ilse. As reported earlier, despite these being close-knit communities, the girls are all aware of the risk for sexual abuse and molestation in their contexts, not only by strangers but also by “*people that you know and trust*”. These findings are consistent with previous reports that sexual abuse against girls is often perpetrated in the home or by persons known to them (Mathews, Loots, Sikweyiya, & Jewkes, 2012; Richter & Dawes, 2008). By scolding and denigrating the girls that they are “*looking for a man on the street*” or telling them that they must “*put a big lock on it*” – mothers are implicitly also acknowledging and attempting to control and police their daughters’ sexual desires. Hudson (as cited by Walkerdine et al., 2001) argues that the general “attitude towards the adolescent girl is that some girls are unable to control their sexuality and sexual behaviour, and therefore it has to be regulated and controlled authoritatively – preferably by their parents” (p. 192). Although these coping strategies seem to contain the parents’ anxieties, it also illustrates how “the regulation of female sexuality becomes a ‘normalized’ aspect of growing up as a girl” (Currie et al., 2009, p. 97).

Besides the girls’ reports that the public spaces as threatening, what is also troubling is the girls’ perception that they “*can’t really trust anyone*”. What is equally unsettling though, are their experiences that when they *do* report incidents of sexual abuse or violence, their parents/caregivers do not believe them and they are accused of “*making up stories*”. In one of the groups, Jasmine also poignantly stated:

Extract 30

Jasmine: As meisies...umm...meisies in ‘n situasie is wat..waarin jy dink niemand kan vir jou help nie...en dan is dit nie maklik nie...ek...veral as jy...as iets gebeur het en niemand wil jou glo nie..dan is dit moontlik vir jou om selfmoord te pleeg...is moontlik...en ..dit is baie net hartseer om te dink dat niemand wil jou glo nie...dan glo hulle nie vir jou nie..so....dis swaar. (L2P1:51)

Jasmine: If girls...umm..girls are in a situation where..you think that nobody can help you...and then it’s not easy..I.especially if you..if something happens and nobody

wants to believe you..then it's possible for you to commit suicide...it's possible..and..it is just very sad to think that nobody wants to believe you...then they don't believe you..it's difficult. (L2P1:51)

In the focus groups it was evident that the girls seem disillusioned and frustrated with adults' lack of support and empty promises of trust. Such actions are counterproductive to the well-being of adolescent girls and tend to foster a climate of silence and secrecy that is conducive for the perpetuation of violence and abuse of girls.

Most of the girls in this study understood why their parents did not want them to be on the streets and obeyed their parents' instructions to stay indoors. Nonetheless, they complained and resisted the taken-for-granted double standard of “*it works like that*”.

Extract 31

Mercia: Juffrou, sommige kere uhm...dan complain ek by my ma as my broer so.... uhm.... gaan...dan sê my ma “Nee, uhm... hy is ‘n seunskind en hy **mag** loop waar hy wil wees....en hy is groot....dit werk so.”

Sherine: Nou hoekom mag die meisiekind nie loop waar sy wil wees nie?

Mercia: Sommige kere dan wil jou ouers maar net vir jou beskerm en dan sien ons miskien nie die..... die ander deel daarvan nie.

Sherine: So hulle wil julle beskerm...teen wat?

Ursula: Teen verkeerde seuns, manne en so....teen die gevare daar buite en slegte invloede

Mercia: Verkragtings en

Ursula: En misdad, juffrou, dis baie hoog in Suid-Afrika. (L3P5:150)

*Mercia: Miss, sometimes uhm...then I complain by my mother when my brothers uhm..goes about..then my mother says: “No, uhm..he is a boy and he **may** walk where he wants to go...and he is big...it works like that”.*

Sherine: So why can't the girl walk where she wants to be?

Mercia: Sometimes then your parents just want to protect you and then we don't see the....the other side of it.

Sherine: So they want to protect you against what?

Ursula: Against the wrong boys, men and so....against the dangers outside and bad influences.

Mercia: Rapes and

Ursula: And crime, Miss, it's very high in South Africa. (L3P5:150)

Despite their resignation, in our groups the girls voiced their anger at the lack of freedom and recreation and resented the chores. Their parents' authoritarian strategies seem to frustrate the girls' need for peer socialisation; it could also create a climate for inauthenticity, which could negatively influence mother/parent-daughter relationships. Below, Mandy-Lee illustrates her resistance to this seclusion.

Extract 32

Mandy-Lee: Sê maar ek staan buitekant...dan staan my ma daar...en ek het miskien nou iets gesê het...as ek binnekom dan wil sy my met iets gooi...sommer met 'n bak [group laughter and lots of agreement with Mandy-Lee]

Leigh: Sy's evil [laughter]

Mandy-Lee: Maar as ek kwaad is en ek kom binne...dan dol ek die hele huis om...ek dol die hele huis om...ek raak kwaad juffrou..as hulle vir my uitstel...as ek miskien laat buite is of oorkant by my tjommies is.. as ek buite is...**ek mag mos nie uitgaan nie**...dan sien hulle nou vir my...dan hulle wil net hê ek moet iets doen...dan vererg ek my...want hulle sien vir my...nou dan roep hulle my want hulle wil hê ek moet iets doen...dan raak ek kwaad juffrou..as ek inkom....dan raak ek kwaad dan gaan ek in dan is ek kwaad..dan dol ek die huis om (J1P14:106)

Mandy-Lee: Say I'm standing outside...then my mother stands there...and maybe I said something when I come inside then she wants to throw me with something, maybe with a bowl [Group laughter and lots of agreement with Mandy-Lee].

Leigh: She's evil [laughter].

*Mandy-Lee: But when I'm cross and I come inside...then I turn the whole house upside down..I turn the whole house upside down...I get angry Miss...when they scold me...maybe when I'm outside late...or maybe when I'm opposite by my friends...when I'm outside....**I can't go outside**...then they see me....then they just want me to do something...then I get annoyed...because they see me...now then they call me because they want me to do something...then I get angry Miss...when I come inside...then I get angry and then I go inside and then I'm angry....then I turn the whole house upside down. (J1P14:106)*

Here we see Mandy-Lee's level of frustration that she cannot socialise with her friends and how she vents her anger by turning the house upside down. In the following extract, we see how she makes plans to get out and to be with her friends when her mother is not at home.

Extract 33

Mandy-Lee: Somtyds..as my ma weg is [laughs] soos dié naweek....toe kom ek die naweek laat in die huis...Vrydag eers 12 uur in die huis....en Saterdag het ek seker 11 uur ingekom....ek was in die Kaap Vrydag...toe wil ek nou nie hê my ma moet weet nie [laughs]

Sherine: So as jy somtyds plekke wil gaan dan weet jou ma nie waar jy is nie

Mandy-Lee: Net somtyds as ek saam met die jeug gaan...dan sê ek my ma...dan gaan ek ook nie regtig met die jeug nie

Sherine: Dan waarna toe gaan julle?

Mandy-Lee: Dan gaan ons soos umm...dan gaan ons dorp toe...as daar goed is in die dorp...soos Vensters...en sulke goed....dan gaan ek met my tjommies

Sherine: Maar nou hoekom sê jy nie vir jou ma nie?

Mandy-Lee: Nee...my ma...sal nooit ja sê nie (J1P15:154)

Mandy-Lee: Sometimes...when my mother is gone [laughs] like this weekend...I came in late...Friday around 12 o'clock in the home...and Saturday I only came in at 11 o'clock...I was in Cape Town on Friday so I didn't want my mother to know [laughs].

Sherine: So when you want to go places then your mother doesn't know where you are.

Mandy-Lee: Only sometimes when I go with the youth...then I tell my mother...then I don't really go with the youth.

Sherine: Then where do you go?

Mandy-Lee: Then we go to umm...then we go to town..if there are things in town..like Vensters²⁰ and such things...then I go with my friends.

Sherine: But now why don't you tell your mother?

Mandy-Lee: No...my mother...will never say yes. (J1P15L154)

Coupled with the assumption that a girl should be located in the home, the church was another space that they associated with good girls.

Extract 34

Zelma: 'n Jongetjie kan... 'n jongetjie kan dans toe gaan ...maar meisies moet kerk toe gaan. [laughter]

Rosemary: Die kerk is 'n veilige plek want daar kan dji baie goeie..... 'n mens leer baie dinge wat dji nie in die straat leer nie....en die dans is 'n baie onveilige plek want daar hang baie gevare rond...hulle kan 'n meisie hijack..

Sherine: 'n Meisie te hijack? Wat beteken dit om 'n meisie te hijack

²⁰Vensters (Windows) is an annual street theatre competition among the residences at Stellenbosch University. Each residence stages a 10 minute story line or dance routine, which the public attends by walking from one residence to the next.

Rosemary: Te vang....en te vat waar hulle nie mag vat nie

Sherine: So seuns kan gaan dans maar 'n meisie moet kerk toe gaan? [laughter] So meisies moet heelyd sedig wees?

Laura: Maar dit is reg as jy kerk loep...dis reg as jy kerk loep...jy moet die Here aanneem in jou hart sodat djy 'n goeie vrou kan wees

Sherine: Maar hoekom kan jongetjies nie=

Edna & Zelma [jointly]: =uhh hoekom kan die jongetjies nie? =

Laura: ='n Seun kan ook ... maar as hy nie wil nie ..en die Here gaan hom straf.. dan gaan hy duiwel toe...dat die duiwel hom kan uitbrand (K2P9:366)

Zelma: A boy can go dancing...but girls must go to church[laughter].

Rosemary: The church is a safe place because there you can learn many good....a person learn many things that you can't learn in the street...and the dance is a very unsafe place because many dangers hang around there...they can hijack a girl.

Sherine: Hijack a girl? What does it mean to hijack a girl?

Rosemary: To catch....and to touch where they are not supposed to touch.

Sherine: So boys can go dance but girls must go to church? [laughter] So girls must be pious all the time?

Laura: But it's right when you go to church..it's right when you go to church..you must accept the Lord in your heart so that you can be a good woman.

Sherine: But why can boys=

Edna and Zelma [jointly]: Uhh why can boys

Laura: A boy can also...but if he does not want to...and the Lord will punish him..then he goes to the devil...so that the devil can burn him. (K2P9:366)

Although, as a group, we did not unpack Rosemary's statement that one can learn many things in the church, previous studies have illustrated how religious institutions in South Africa supported traditional notions of gender, male authority and the subservience of women in heterosexual intimate relationships (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003; Shefer et al., 2008). It is interesting to see how the girls associate dancing and pleasure with boys, but they regard these as dangerous spaces/actions for girls. Although Zelma initiated this response, as soon as I challenged this notion, it seemed to open up a space for her and the other girls to reflect on this double standard. Hence, we see how she and Edna then jointly challenged Laura's position. Laura was quite adamant regarding this and we see her perceptions of the consequences for pursuing pleasure and not going to church. Implicit in Laura's argument, the church-going girl/woman is a "good"

woman and damnation would probably also befall girls/women who do not stay on the straight and narrow.

From the girls' talk, it is evident that "sexuality is both everywhere and nowhere" (Epstein & Johnson, 1998, p. 108). Other than their mothers' warnings, it seems that mothers/parents and daughters are not speaking to each other about romantic relationships or sex and sexuality. By secluding the girls in the home and restricting their mobility in the social sphere, parents are also limiting the opportunities for the girls to interact with their peers to acquire the necessary social and self-efficacy skills for healthy teenage social or emerging romantic relationships. As illustrated above, it is evident that the participants' parents/caregivers interpret the girls' conversations regarding interacting with boys as sexual interest, which needs regulation. In such instances, Currie et al. (2009) caution that "a moral panic can ensue that conflates sex, sexuality and the heterosexualization of femininity" (p. 194).

From multiple studies, we cannot deny the objective reality of endemic violence against women and girls in S.A. (Jewkes et al., 2005; POWA, 2014; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2011), which informs parents' strategies to protect their girls from violence. However, as Madriz (1997) notes, narratives of fear and danger tend to constrain the lives of girls/women and perpetuate gender hierarchies. Further, strategies such as denigrating the girls, warning them about boys, talk about morality or abstinence and/or seclusion, tend to reproduce the danger/victim and/or moral discourses of sex, teenage pregnancy and HIV/Aids. Such strategies also tend to deny girls' agency, thwart their quest for independence and fail to teach them about structural inequalities in gender relations (Martin, 1996). It could also stifle adolescent girls' normative emerging interests in intimate relationships and developmental curiosity about sex and sexuality. To enhance adolescents' sexual responsibility and subjectivity, Fine (1988) suggests, we should rather engage them in "a genuine discourse of desire [that]

would invite . . . [them] to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs, and limits” (p. 33).

Thus, through surveillance and policing, parents regulate the boundaries between the private/public spheres and the girls are socialised to know their place. This perpetuates gendered constructions about space, place and mobility, limiting the opportunities for social engagement for girls. Contrary to the assumptions that it is safer for girls in the home than on the street, the participants related how both spaces could compromise their well-being as adolescent girls. In their stories, we see what feelings these normative standards evoke for them and how they resist or cope with these rules. Despite their awareness of the social sanctions for contravening these regulations, we also see the strategies some girls use to resist their seclusion.

5.2.2.3 Being caring mothers, hard working and independent women

Although the participants reported frustration about the inequities in the home, they ascribed to traditional gender roles. In the focus groups, they frequently invoked the “have/hold” discourse (Hollway, 1989), which explicitly demarcates the boundaries of care and relating in heterosexual relationships. The have/hold discourse posits that the man is the “head of the family and . . . responsible for his wife and children” (p. 55), whereas the primary role for a woman is that of a dutiful, caring mother/wife. In one of the groups, Zelma stated, “*I just want to be like a mother should be*” – which seems to suggest there is a natural way of being a mother or doing motherhood. The following account highlights the girls’ ideals to be caring/nurturing mothers and wives:

Extract 35

Sherine: Ok...die ander vraag wat ek wil vra is...wat wil julle graag eendag word?

Carlene: Ek wil ‘n vrou wees ...wat vir my kinders liefde gee...wat my huis skoonmaak...ek wil ‘n man hê wat vir my...wat vir my en my kinders sorg..wat vir my help..en alles..daar wat ek nie kan nie...ek soek nie ‘n man..wat net in die week my man wil wees nie..en naweke nie my man is nie...ek soek nie so ‘n man nie...

Sherine: Nou dis hoe die man moet wees..nou hoe gaan djy wees?

Carlene: Ek wil wees...ek wil lief vir hom wees..en ek wil lief vir my kinders wees..

Ivana: Ek wil 'n hardwerkende vrou wees

Carlene: Ja...ek wil my huis skoonmaak...ek wil my huis mooi silwerskoon hê

Sherine: Ivana...djy sê djy wil 'n hardwerkende vrou wees...nou hoe is daai?

Carlene: Jy moet hard werk op die plaas...dat jy klomp geld kan kry

Ivana: Ek wil elke dag in my werk wees..ek wil reg kyk na my kinders...my huis wil ek elke dag skoonmaak..my man moet ook vir my help...en ek wil omgee vir my kinders ek wil vir hulle lief wees ...en..my man moet ook vir my kan help waar hy kan...en ja..daai is wat ek wil wees. (L1P4:141)

Sherine: Ok, the other question that I want to ask is....what would you like to be one day?

Carlene: I want to be a woman....who gives love to my children....who cleans her house. I want a man who...who provides for me and my children...who helps me and everything...there where I can't be...I'm not looking for a man...who only wants to be my husband in the week and weekends he doesn't want to be my man....I'm not looking for such a man.

Sherine: Now that's how the man is supposed to be...now how will you be?

Carlene: I will be...I want to love him...I want to love my children.

Ivana: I want to be a hardworking woman.

Carlene: Yes, I will clean my house...I want my house to be nice and spotless.

Sherine: Ivana... you say you want to be a hardworking woman....now what is that like?

Carlene: You must work hard on the farm...so that you can get a lot of money.

Ivana: I want to be in my work every day....I want to look after my children properly....I want to clean my house every day...my man must also help me....and I want to care for my children and I want to love them....my husband must also help me where he can...and yes...that's what I want to be. (L1P4:141)

It is evident that the girls are situating themselves in an idealised mothering discourse. Also known as the “motherhood mystique” that propagates motherhood as central to a woman’s identity and the ultimate, natural and necessary source of fulfilment for women (Crawford & Unger, 2004). Motherhood ideologies attribute domestic, caring and nurturing tasks as the “natural” duties of girls and women, and this glorification of motherhood reproduces essentialist discourses and gender inequality and keeps women and girls in their place (Crawford & Unger, 2004). The girls’ aspirations are also consistent with previous South African research that women

tend to uphold traditional gender roles and relations in their intimate, interpersonal and other domains of social interaction (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2004; Shefer et al., 2008). In the quote below, Mandy expounds on women's "natural" qualities to execute mothering/caring tasks.

Extract 36

Mandy: Hulle kan nie sonder ons lewe nie ...hulle kan nie sonder ons lewe nie ...die mans kan nie die soorte werk doen wat ons in die huis doen nie

Sherine: Die mans kan nie sonder die vroumense lewe nie...hoekom nie?

Sandra: Ek wil nou net by daai punt gekom het wat Mandy gesê het van die ..van die vroumense ..want ..ons doen goed wat ons ouers behoort te doen. Hoekom um..um..ons ma's baie vir ons werk gee want eendag dan moet ons oek.....um..rond staan vir ons manne en vir ons kinders..dan moet ons oek vir ons kan bewys dat ons kan oek nou..umm..kosmaak...ons kan oek die huis aan die kant kan kry en hy moet oek kan dink dat djy's 'n beter vrou en hy sal by jou bly...dij's netjies (L2P1:135)

Mandy: They can't live without us...they can't live without us...the men can't do the kinds of work that we do in the home.

Sherine: The men can't live without the women....why can't they?

Sandra: I just want to get to that point that Mandy made of the... the women..because we do things that our parents are supposed to do. Why...um..um..our mothers give us a lot of work, is because one day then we must also..um...stand around for our men and for our children...then we must also be able to prove ourselves...that we can also...umm...cook...and we can also tidy the house...he must also think that you are a better woman...and he will stay with you...you are neat. (L2P1:135)

Here Mandy talks about the life-sustaining powers of women or "myth of maternal omnipotence" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982); implicit is also the notion that men are unable to perform such nurturing and caring tasks. It further perpetuates the fantasy of idealised motherhood, that the wife/mother could fulfil all the needs of the family (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982). Chodorow and Contratto contend that "this idealization of mothers is an infantile fantasy [as]: No human being can be perfect" (p. 65). They argue that the "fantasy of the perfect mother" perpetuates cultural narratives of blaming and idealising mothers, which "deny mothers the complexity of their lives, their selfhood [and] their agency" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982, p. 67). Although the girls acknowledged that women could also fulfil other roles, their dominant responses however, portrayed a caring/mothering role and a hard working ethic for women.

Extract 37

Lizanne: 'n Meisie is daar om kinders te hê en vir hulle kinders te sorg...en 'n seun is ook daar om vir hulle kinders te sorg ..maar hulle is nie soos ...'n ma is meer oor haar kinders

Sherine: So is dit al wat 'n vrou kan wees...om in haar huis te werk?

Ivana: huhuh...soos as djy gaan werk soek ook...d jy moet hardwerkend wees..want djy wil daai werk gehad het

Liza: My ma sê vir my dieselfde.. “Moenie lui wees nie...jy’s ‘n meisie..jy moet hard werk...jy is ‘n vrou.”

Sherine: So meisies moet hard werk=

Charmaine [cuts in]: =My ma sê altyd vir my....as ek nou leer dan gaan dit vir my eendag makliker wees as ek groot is om aan te pas by 'n huisvrou...dan weet ek wat my te doen staan..wat te doen (L1P3135)

Lizanne: A girl is there to have children and to support their children...and boys are also there to support their children..but they are not as...a mother is more over her children.

Sherine: So is this all that a woman can be..to work in her house?

Ivana: huhuh...when you go and look for work also...you must be hardworking...because you wanted that job.

Liza: My mother says the same to me: “Don’t be lazy, you’re a girl...you must work hard...you are a woman”.

Sherine: So girls must work hard=

Charmaine [cuts in]: =My mother always says to me, if I learn now then it’s going to be easier for me one day to adjust to be a housewife...then I know what is expected of me...what I should do (L1P3135)

Julie: Dit is lekker om 'n vrou te wees...jy’t jou eie huis...jy’t jou eie werk. Jou kinders, jou man. Alles is umm...net hier voor jou...en jy’t nie nodig om te werk nie...en jou manhy’t 'n lekker werk en hy gee vir jou kosgeld en hy gee vir jou allerhande dinge en so (K4P13:757)

Julie: It’s nice to be a woman...you’ve got your own home...your own work. Your children, your man. Everything is umm...just there for you and you don’t have to work...and your man...he’s got a nice job and he gives you money for food and he gives you all kinds of stuff and so. (K4P13:757)

Further, such essentialist notions also seem to limit the girls’ thinking about who they are and imagining who they might become (Currie et al., 2009). In this regard, Walkerdine et al. (2001) state that “people who cannot imagine things being different, cannot at least fantasise something else, cannot reinvent themselves” (p. 68). However, Currie et al. (2009) remind us, “the

heterosexual imaginary that predominates youth culture is not simply gendered, but is also shaped by relations of subordination, including class, racialization, and colonialism” (p. 193). Walkerdine et al.’s (2001) study with working class and middle class girls in Britain, illustrated the salience of class in the educational attainment and life trajectories of their participants. They suggest that often “many working-class girls do not have a career or even job prospects, making . . . motherhood a realistic and rational choice of job” (p. 195). On the other hand, educational success and the prospect of a professional career were the norm and a rite of passage for the middle class girls in their study. Thus in our analyses, we have to go beyond the face value of the participants’ aspirations and enactments of emphasised femininities and explore how, in a patriarchal culture, the complex dynamics between social and moral discourses could influence the girls’ motivations and behaviours in the reproduction of motherhood ideologies (Crawford & Unger, 2004; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Salo’s (2009) findings that idealised mothering seems to be a significant marker for the standing of women/girls in the community are also pertinent here to understand the dynamics of the reproduction of idealised mothering discourses. As explained by the girls below, they are already cognisant of the costs of non-compliance with such discourses.

Extract 38

Sherine: So wat word van seuns vandag verwag?

Vicky: Om ‘n goeie werk te kry [group: mmm] en...ja...hulle moet nie kinders maak nie....ek sê maar net hulle moet....van hulle word verwag om ‘n goeie werk te kry...en vir hulle ouers te sorg

Jackie: En hulle moet ‘n goeie vrou vir hulle vat om na hulle ...kinders te kyk...en vir hulle te sorg

June: Ja om na hulle te kyk

Jackie: Ja...om vir hulle te sorg...en nie ‘n vrou wat drink nie...wat elke aand sê: “Maak vir jouself kos...doen dit self...stryk jou klere self.”

Zelda: Dis waar

June: Gooi sommer panne hier...dis gewoonlik sulke mansmense wat rond...umm...hoe kan ek nou sê?...rond

Zelda: Rond jol

June: Ja...’n man wat jol..’n man.. wat jol..kan ek maar so sê...maar... partykeers..is dit ook die vrou wat... rond gaan...ek sal maar sê..rond slaap...en jolle gaan...en..dan lyk asof dit nou net die mansmense is wat dit doen...maar vrouens doen dit ook

Sherine: Nou wat sê die mense van vrouens wat dit doen?

June: Sy’s sleg...dji’s sleg...en sy is nie ‘n goeie ma vir haar kinders nie [group: loud talking and calling out different names]

Vicky: En so ‘n vrou is treurig..sy is nie ‘n voorbeeld vir haar man en vir haar kinders nie...en

Denise: En ‘n meisie kind kyk altyd wat haar ma doen...so ‘n ma...’n meisie kind sal ook altyd...sal ook so optree teenoor haar man en en haar kinders as dji nie vir jou kind ‘n voorbeeld stel nie [group: mm]

Zelda: Hulle beskinder vir jou...hulle sê dji...is ‘n...’n....vuil prosti....prostituut [laughs]

June: Hulle...sê dji’s ‘n g....

Sherine:Ok..dji kan maar sê

June: En dji’s ‘n vuil gintoe

Larry-Anne: Ja en ‘n hoerjaar...en dan sê hulle: “Daar gaan daai hoerjaar...daar gaan sy na haar ander man toe [group laughter] daar staan hy al.” [animated all talking together] (K1P8:134)

Sherine: So what is expected of the boys today?

Vicky: Just to get a good job [Group: mmm]...and...yes...they must not make children....I’m just saying they must...it’s expected of them to get a good job... and to provide for their parents.

Jackie: And they must take a good wife who can care for their....children...and to care for them.

June: Yes to look after them.

Jackie: Yes...to care for them....and not a woman that drinks...that says every evening: “Make your own food....do it yourself...iron your own clothes”.

Zelda: That’s true.

June: Throws the pans....it’s usually such men that go around... umm...how can I say it now? Go around

Zelda: Flirts around.

June: Yes, that have affairs..a man.. that has affairs..let me say it like that...but sometimes it’s also the woman that...goes around...I’ll say....sleeps around....and goes to dances..and..then it looks as if it’s only the men that do it...but women also do it.

Sherine: Now what do the people say about women who do that?

June: She’s bad...she’s bad...and she’s not a good mother for her children [Group: loud talking and calling out different names].

Vicky: And such a woman is terrible...she’s not an example for her husband and children and

Denise: And a girl always looks what her mother does...such a mother....a girl will always...will also act like that towards a man and her children if you don't set an example for your child [Group: mmm].

Zelda: They gossip about you....they say...you are a dirty prosti...prostitute [laughs].

June: They...say you are a wh . . .

Sherine: Ok, you can say it.

June: And you are a dirty whore.

Larry-Anne: Yes and an adulterer...and then they say: "There goes that whore..there she's going to her other man [Group laughter] there's he standing already." [animated all talking together]. (K1P8:134)

According to the participants, when women assert themselves and expect men to do chores, such women are poor role models for their daughters and this could push men to have affairs. In all the focus groups, the girls were unanimous about the sanctions for women who neglect their maternal responsibilities, pursue pleasure or flirt with other men, and how they are stigmatised as “bad” or “terrible” mothers. As Hollway (1989) suggests, the have/hold discourse is also applied here more stringently to women, “with the effect of the well-known ‘double standard’” (p.55), to compel women to comply with the required gender norms. These sanctions possibly serve as a deterrent and inform the girls’ aspirations to be good mothers one day. Coupled with this, above Sandra (extract 36) also explains that being a dutiful mother/wife ensures the husband’s fidelity. Although the girls expressed a wish for reciprocity, that a “*husband must also help where he can*” – this expectation for assistance, seemingly does not stem from a gendered consciousness or an expectation of equity. It seems that men’s assistance in the home would most likely be an act of benevolence rather than one of equity. Thus consistent with benevolent sexism (Glick et al., 2000), when women take up the positions as dutiful wives/mothers and good women, they not only become respectable subjects in their local contexts, but it possibly also rewards them with the faithfulness of their partners/husbands.

Besides their aspirations to be caring wives/mothers, all the girls in this study also articulated the desire to be hardworking and independent women one day. These aspirations seem to stem, not

only from the work ethic instilled by their mothers, but also from their perceptions that men are unreliable and fail to provide for their families.

Extract 39

Chanelle: Ek wil 'n vrou wat goed na haar kinders kyk en nie ontrou is aan haar man is nie

Annamarie: 'n Vrou wat iets bereik het ...ummm...miskien nou ...klaar met skool gemaak en 'n goeie werk het wat sy van hou..... wat sy miskien gedroom het wat sy wil hê

Zelda: 'n Vrou wat op haar voete kan staan...en nie na haar man kyk nie...miskien...sê maar nou haar man los vir haar ...los haar met die kinders...dan kan sy vir haarself werk en nie op haar man staat maak nie.

Nelia: uhhh....sy kan vir haar man wys sy kan vir haarself sorg

Zelda: Ja...hulle maak net kinders en loop aan ...hulle gly met die seep verby [laughter]

Sherine: Hulle gly met die seep verby? Wat beteken dit?

Zelda: Sê nou hulle het klaar kind gemaak dan gaan koop hulle seep en hulle is dan weg..hulle gly met die seep verby.(K3P11:198)

Chanelle: I want to be a woman that cares well for her children and who is not unfaithful to her husband.

Annamarie: A woman who has achieved something...ummm...maybe finished school and has a good job that she likes...that she dreamt about.

Zelda: A woman who can stand on her own feet...and who doesn't look to her man..maybe...say her husband leaves her...leaves her with the children..then she can work for herself and not depend on her man.

Nelia: uhhh...she can show her man that she can care for herself.

Zelda: Yes..they just make children and walk on...they slide away on the soap [laughter].

Sherine: They slide away with the soap? What does that mean?

Zelda: Say now they made the child and then they go and buy soap and then they are gone..they slide away on the soap²¹. (K3P11:198)

Jasmine: Ek wil eendagook 'n hardwerkende vrou wees...en 'n liefdevolle...vrygewende en [Sandra cuts in: behulpsame] bedagsame..behulpsame vrou wees...en ek verwag ook eendag...ek bid ook vir die Here eendag..dat ek ook so...eendag so 'n man kan kry..sodat as ek en hy probleme het...dat ons nou in ons sitkamer gaan dat ons daarvoor praat..soos twee grootmense...en ons verwag nou nie 'n ..'n lekker...ummm...sonder stry huwelik nie..want hulle sê..daar waar daar nie 'n

²¹ This is a local idiom used to describe how men, once they have fathered a child, abandon their partners. In another focus group, the girls spoke about how the men say they are going to buy Kimbies for the baby and then they never return.

gestry in die huwelik is nie is nie ‘n huwelik nie.. of verhouding nie...so ek verwag maar die beste van die slegste..eendag in my verhouding... mens kry min van sulke mansmense vandag...mens kry min... sulke mansmense in die lewe...wat vir jou...omgee...wat vir jou ..vrye tyd gee met jou vriende...wat vir jou vertrou...wat vir jou ook sê: “Nee maar jy is die beste.”...wat vir jou sy pay slippie vir jou bring...en so...mens kry baie min sulke mansmense.... so...die mense wat sulke mansmense het en in die lewe nog gaan kry..moet maar dankbaar wees (L2P2:560)

Jasmine: One day I want to be a hardworking woman...and a loving..giving and [Sandra cuts in: helpful] considerate..helpful woman...and I also expect one day...I also pray to the Lord that one day..that I also...one day get a man like that..so that when we have problems...that we can go into our sitting room and talk about it..like two adults...and we don't expect a...a nice umm..marriage without arguments..because they say..where there are no arguments in a marriage, it is not a marriage or a relationship...so I expect the best of the worst one day in my relationship. One gets a few such men today...one hardly finds any...such men in life...that cares for you...that gives you free time with your friends...that trusts you...who also says to you: “No, but you are the best.” That brings you his pay slip...and so...one hardly finds such men...so...the people who have such men and who will still get such men...should be thankful. (L2P2:560)

In all focus groups, there was much discussion about how men are unreliable and how they neglect their familial duties. In the extracts above, the participants elaborated on how men would spend their money on alcohol and not bring their pay packets home to their wives. Jasmine seems to suggest that there are few “good men” and finding “a man that cares for you” seems to be a matter of divine intervention. In stark contrast to the expressed wish for a man who brings home the pay packet and who “cares for you”, the girls also expressed the wish to be independent, assertive in their future relationships and financially empowered one day.

Extract 40

Julie: Juffrou...ek wil ‘n sterk vrou wees...so juffrou...ek wil nie hê my man moet vir my over power nie..so Juffrou...umm..ek wil ook vir myself kan werk...ek wil voel ek werk vir my geld... so..en ... ek moet vir my koop as ek vir my wil koop...en dan koop ek vir my en my kinders miskien...so..en vir my man

Kathleen: Ek wil ook my stem dik maak vir ‘n man..want hy gaan nie vir my kom uitstel as daar nie iets reg is in die huis is nie

Sandra: Ek wil ‘n sterk en hardwerkende vrou wees...want as ‘n man vir my control... dan wil ek ook mos nou vir hom.. self sê..ek moet my stem dik maak..en sê: “Maar dji kan mos nou nie vir my so lekker kom vertel nie!”...en sulke dinge...maar ek gaan werk in die huis...ek gaan my huis skoonmaak..my kinders gaan ek skoon hou.. vir my gaan ek skoonhou..vir hom gaan ek ook outomaties skoonhou...ja..so (L2P2:638)

Julie: Miss, I want to be a strong woman...so Miss, I don't want my husband to overpower me...so Miss...umm..I also want to work for myself..I want to feel that I work for my money...so..and I must buy for myself when I want to buy..and then I buy for myself and my children perhaps..so..and for my husband

Kathleen: I also want to raise my voice for a man..because he's not going to scold me if something is wrong in the house.

Sandra: I want to be a strong and hardworking woman..because if a man controls me..then I want to tell him...myself..I must raise my voice...and say: "But you can't come and tell me!" and such things...but I'm going to work in the house...I'm going to clean my house..I'll keep my children clean. I'm going to keep myself clean.. and him, I'll automatically keep clean. (L2P2:638)²²

Ursula: Ek wil 'n man hê wat sag is. Ek wil net kyk, dan moet hy weet in watter posisie hy moet wies [laughs] ja, juffrou. Hy moet streng wees saam met my en ek moet streng wees saam met hom. Ek moet net kyk en dan moet hy weet wat moet hy nou doen

Sherine: So hoekom wil jy 'n man hê wat sag is?

Ursula: Ja, juffrou, ek hou nie van 'n man wat vir my slaan nie. Ek hou nie van iemand my slaan nie.

Rose: Ek sal hom terugslaan! (L3P6:192)

Ursula: I want a man who is soft. I just want to look, then he must know in what position he must be [laughs] yes, Miss. He must be strict with me and I must be strict with him. I must just look and then he must know what he must do.

Sherine: So why do you want a man who is soft?

Ursula: Yes Miss, I don't like a man to hit me. I don't like someone who hits me.

Rose: I will hit him back! (L3P6:192)

Above, the girls expressed the desire for future relationships where there is mutuality and where, as Jasmine explained, couples “talk about [their problems] like two adults.” They also expressed the need for agency, financial freedom and the liberty to express their opinions in future intimate relationships. These aspirations are similar to Jewkes and Morrell’s (2012) findings, where some participants also articulated such an “emerging feminist consciousness” for mutual respect and assertiveness in their intimate relationships. Although the girls’ aspirations could be interpreted as

²² In the translations in this thesis, I have tried to capture the essence of the girls’ responses. However, in translation the nuances of what the girls are stating are sometimes lost. In the Afrikaans version Kathleen and Sandra are talking here about asserting themselves and standing up to a man, which is semantically different to raising one’s voice.

them displaying “signs of an emerging ‘feminist’ consciousness which . . . [reflects a] non-acceptability of violence and control and a demand for respect” (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p. 1735), these aspirations seem to emerge from an intention to resist men’s power and control inherent in traditional relationships.

Extract 41

Ivana: Ek wil alleen in my huis bly [Felicia: ek wil ook alleen in ‘n huis bly]...ek wil my eie kar bestuur...my eie besigheid...ek sê net=

Charmaine: =Djy is net die manager...djy moet net so maak (snaps her fingers) dan moet almal spring dan moet almal die kooie opmaak...hulle knieë buig...amper soos slawe=

Julie: =huh..huh..nee...

Sherine: So wat djy nou eintlik sê..is dat wanneer djy groot is eendag, dat djy baie mag oor ander mense wil hêis dit wat djy sê?

Charmaine: Nee..ek gaan nie so wees nie

Sherine: Maar djy sê dan nou..as djy so maak (snapping my fingers)..dan moet die mense spring

Ivana: [laughing and agrees] uhh...dat hulle moet buig

Charmaine: Nee ek wil nie so wees nie..dan voel ek vir hulle jammer...huh huh.. huh huh...ek wil nie vir my sturvy hou eendag as ek groot is nie...ek wil.....ek wil behulpsaam ..um...waar ek miskien waar ek sien..um..mense is miskien swak...dan wil ek instaan..dan wil ek help (L1P4:150)

Ivana: I want to live alone in my house [Felicia cuts in: I also want to live alone in a house] I want to drive my own car....my own business....I just say

Charmaine: You are just the manager...you must just do this (snaps her fingers) then everyone must jump...then everyone will make their beds...bend their knees...almost like slaves.

Julie: huh..huh..no!

Sherine: So what you are actually saying now ...is that you want to have lots of power over other people when you are an adult one day. Is that what you are saying?

Charmaine: No...I’m not going to be like that.

Sherine: But you just said now..when you do this (snapping my fingers) then the people must jump.

Ivana: [laughing and agrees] uhh...that they should bow.

Charmaine: No..I don’t want to be like that..then I’ll feel sorry for them...huh huh.. huh huh...I don’t want to keep myself sturvy (stuck up) one day when I’m an adult...I want..I want to help others...um..perhaps where I see..um people are perhaps weak...then I want to reach out...then I want to help. (L1P4:150)

Here the girls' aspirations for material possessions possibly signify a desire for economic power and its concomitant freedom. However, Charmaine's expressed wish for power over others is in stark contrast to their earlier expressed desires for mutuality in relationships, which suggests power with others. As illustrated above, when I attempted to clarify the nature of this power and Julie resisted this aspiration for control, we see how Charmaine immediately retreats into the nurturing/caring position, synonymous with traditional gender relations.

It is evident from the findings that the girls' aspirations to be caring, hardworking and independent women are saturated with the "fantasy of the perfect mother" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982, p. 65) and that they invoke the "have/hold" discourse (Hollway, 1989) in their perceptions of intimate heterosexual relations. Such discourses tend to perpetuate traditional notions of gender, the domination and control of women by men, and keep women in their place within the patriarchal system. In their narratives, they also portrayed benevolent sexist notions, where the dutiful wife/mother is rewarded with the fidelity of her husband. Yet they also seem to display "an emerging feminist consciousness" (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p. 1735), but this seems to emerge from a site of resistance to masculine power and not from an explicit gendered consciousness.

5.3 Summary

From the findings presented in this theme, it is evident that in their self-definitions of girlhood/womanhood, the girls invoked dichotomous categories when they referred to the experiences of girls/women and boys/men and drew on essentialist notions to clarify their subject positions as girls. It is apparent that girlhood is highly regulated to compel the girls to adhere to the dominant notions of heteronormativity. Through self-policing among the girls, surveillance by their parents, peers and the community members, the good and moral girl is kept intact. In their aspirations, the girls were preoccupied with becoming "good" women one day and these aspirations seem to be grounded in the "fantasy" of perfect motherhood. Minh-ha (1992) also

refers to this as the traditional four virtues that expect women to “manage the household skilfully; maintain a compliant appearance; speak properly and softly; and be faithful and respectful” (p. 201). From the girls’ accounts, it is also evident how prevailing competing, contradictory moral and social discourses and the concomitant social sanctions for lack of compliance to these discourses, seem to inform their understanding of gender and gender relations. The “doubleness” of such discourses illustrate the complexity of doing gender and constructing subjectivities, and how “girls (often) struggle . . . [to make sense] of ‘who they are’ and, following from this, their place in the social order” (Currie et al., 2009, p. 72). Despite the power of these discourses, it is also evident how the girls engage in small acts of resistance to disrupt the traditional notions of girlhood and the inequities in their social contexts. Thus, Shefer (1999) contends that “becoming gendered and heterosexualised . . . winds like a river cutting through a rocky bed, rather than the smooth, linear, gentle flow which is our predominant image of gender development in mainstream psychology” (p. 198).

Chapter 6: Menarche: Becoming a woman

6.1 Introduction

In many contexts, the onset of menarche signifies the rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood, and when girls are initiated into the hierarchical sexualised gender order (Lee, 1994; Ussher, 1989). At menarche parents often draw on the dominant cultural narratives and myths regarding menstruation. Consequently they start imposing restrictions on girls to comply with the expected demands of femininity and gender roles in their contexts. Thurén (1994) states that at menarche girls are usually told, “you are now a woman, and this means that there is something you must NOT do” (p. 221, author’s emphasis). Thus, many girls tend to experience menarche with mixed emotions.

From the findings of this study, the participants seem to be inadequately prepared for menarche/menstruation and they hold onto a number of menstrual myths. Menstruation also seems to be associated with danger and reproduction; consequently at menarche parents also enforce more restrictions for the girls. The material and social changes at menarche seem to evoke ambivalence and initiate them into the “burdens of womanhood”. Table 6.1 presents the thematic map of the sub-themes and categories for this theme.

Table 6.1

Thematic Map of Menarche: Becoming a Woman

Sub-themes	Categories
Preparation for menstruation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menstruation as an illness • Menstrual taboos
The burdens of womanhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menstrual experiences and practices • Menstruation as danger and reproduction

Consistent with previous research, the girls in this study reported that menarche was a salient marker in their developmental process and heralded their transition to womanhood (Lee, 1994; Thurén, 1994; Ussher, 1989). Despite their mothers' intimations that they are now "adult" and can make their own decisions, it appears that at menarche parents impose restrictions on the girls and warn them not to interact with boys.

The findings of this study suggest that the participants are located in a liminal space – no longer a child but not yet quite a woman. Similar to Steenkamp's (2005) findings, they also reported that at menarche girls are not quite women yet, but that they become "young girls". For these participants it seems that there are multiple markers when a girl becomes a woman, such as turning twenty-one or when a girl has a boyfriend. Similar to Steenkamp's (2005) findings, the girls in this study also reported that the 21st birthday is a significant moment in the life of a young girl and signifies the moment when she becomes a woman. All the girls in this study spoke about their parents' expectations that they should strive to reach their 21st birthday, delay romantic relationships and not become pregnant before then.

Extract 1

Sandra: Jou ma hulle verwag dat djy moet jou 21st behaal...Jasmine djy het ook verlede keer vertel van die 21st ...hoe het djy vertel?

Julie: Dan gaan haar ma vir haar alles gee..wat sy wil hê

Sherine: So is die 21st 'n belangrike dag in 'n meisie se lewe?

Jasmine: Ja ..'n baie belangrike dag... om die sleutel te behaal...en om eendag vir jou kinders te wys djy het dit gehaal...wanneer hulle groter word..dan kan hulle dit ook doen

Sherine: So wat beteken die sleutel nou eintlik?

Julie: Amper sooshulle is vrygelaat in die lewe..so

Sherine: Maar 'n mens raak mos een en twintig as jy 'n baba ook het?

Julie: Maar party ma's gee nie vir hul dogters sleutels as hulle 'n baba het nie

Sherine: So net meisies wat nog nie babas het nie kry 'n sleutel...wat beteken dit nou..hoekom is dit so?

Julie: Dis amper soos...ummm...die meisie...sy is nou in die stadium waar die meisie nou vrygelaat word..dan kan sy haar eie besluite maak...so..sê maar miskien..sy wil die huis verlaat..dan kan sy maar die huis verlaat...of so

Sherine: Is daar nog ander redes?

Sandra: Hulle gaan nou noggie in haar pad staan nie...sy is mos nou haar eie groot vrou..sy's haar eie groot vrou...daar word niks vir haar gesê nie (L2P2:476)

Sandra: Your mother, they expect that you must reach your 21st. Jasmine you also spoke about the 21st the last time. How did you say?

Julie: Then her mother will give her everything that she wants

Sherine: So is the 21st an important day in the life of a girl?

Jasmine: Yes..a very important day...to attain the key and to show your children one day that you achieved it ...when they grow up then they can also achieve this.

Sherine: So what does the key actually mean?

Julie: Almost like...they are set free in life...so

Sherine: But one turns twenty-one when you have a baby also?

Julie: But some mothers don't give their daughters keys when they already have a baby.

Sherine: So only girls who don't have babies yet get keys. What does this mean...why is this so?

Julie: It's almost like...ummm...the girl...she is now at the stage where the girl can be set free..then she can make her own decisions...so, say perhaps..she wants to leave home..then she can leave the home..or so.

Sherine: Are there any other reasons?

Sandra: They won't stand in her way now...she is now her own adult woman...she's her own adult woman...they can tell her nothing. (L2P2:476)

Thus, when girls turn twenty-one, it signifies maturity and the transition to adulthood, and they are liberated from all the restrictions of “young girlhood”. Contrary to their mothers’ opinions and Steenkamp’s (2005) findings though, the girls also suggested that a girl is an adult when she has a boyfriend.

Extract 2

Sherine: Nou wanneer dink ‘n meisie dan dat sy nou groot is?

Edna: Wanneer sy vry

Zelma: Wanneer dink djy Erica? Ek weet nie..wanneer sy ‘n outjie het...wanneer dink djy Rosemary?

Rosemary: Nee ek het nie 'n outjie nie

Zelma: Wanneer dink dji jy is groot? Ek dink ek is groot wanneer ek 'n outjie het..dan is ek groot

Erica [sighs]:Wanneer jy 'n outjie gesoen het [laughs]

Sherine: Maar wat sê jou ma vir jou..wanneer is dji groot?

Zelma: Wanneer dji oud genoeg is...wanneer dji 21 of 22 is dan is jy groot...daar rond (K2P10:62)

Sherine: Now when does a girl think that she is an adult?

Edna: When she makes out.

Zelma: Erica, when do you think? I don't know...when she has a boyfriend..when do you think Rosemary?

Rosemary: No, I don't have a boyfriend.

Zelma: When do you think you are adult? I think I'm adult when I have a boyfriend...then I'm an adult.

Erica [sighs]: When you kissed a guy [laughs].

Sherine: But what does your mother say...when are you an adult?

Zelma: When you are old enough..when you are 21 or 22 then you are an adult..about then. (K2P10:62)

The girls' responses above indicate that there seems to be a multiplicity of meanings regarding the transition to adulthood and that becoming a woman is not merely a biological event at menarche.

With the onset of menarche, parents expect girls to change their behaviours and assume more responsibility for their self-presentation. The girls are instructed how to civilize their bodies and to conform to the expected norms of femininity.

Extract 3

Sherine: Hoe leer 'n mens om 'n meisie te wees? Of wie leer vir jou om 'n meisie te wees?

Julie: My ma

Sherine: Jou ma? Um...Nou wat leer sy jou alles?

Jasmine: Veral as ek ..um...miskien nou op die ouderdom kom van.. jongmeisie..dan dan sê sy vir my altyd..ek ..as ek nou...my maandstonde kry..dan moet ek wegbly van seuns af..en ek moet=

Sandra: Seuns mag nie aan jou vat nie=

Jasmine: Seuns mag nie aan jou vat nie..ja...en jy moet jou nou net soos 'n meisie gedra...jy moet nou skoon bly...jy moet nou nie soos djy altyd gemors het nie...so kaalvoete en so nie..want..jou blaas gaan pyn en daar's baie dinge wat ons moet deurgaen (L2P1:383)

Sherine: How does one learn to become a girl? Or who teaches you to be a girl?

Julie: My mother.

Sherine: Your mother..um now what does she teach you?

Jasmine: Especially when I..um..maybe reach that age...of a young girl..then she always says to me..I..when I now..get my period..then I must stay away from boys..and I must=

Sandra: Boys may not touch you=

Jasmine: Boys may not touch you..yes...and you must behave now just like a girl...you must stay clean...you must not mess like you did in the past...not walk barefoot and so...because your bladder will pain and there's lots of stuff that we must go through. (L2P1:383)

In the section that follows, I discuss the participants' experiences of menarche/menstruation as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.2 Preparation for menstruation

In this study, some girls were uncomfortable talking about menstruation and there was much nervous and self-conscious laughter as I tried to explore their experiences of menstruation. Some participants said that they had forgotten everything their mothers told them, which I interpreted as possible discomfort and resistance to discuss the topic. As reported by the Impumelelo (2014) project in South Africa and studies from other resource-poor countries (Ali & Rizvi, 2010; Crichton et al., 2013), most of the girls in this study stated that they were unprepared for the event and that their mothers did not talk to them about menarche/menstruation. Hence, they reported that they were anxious and cried when they started menstruating.

Extract 4

Mercia: Ek het gehuil toe ek die eerste keer periods gekry het.....ek het gehuil. Ek weet nie, juffrou. [lag skamerig] Ek het in die badkamer gesit. Ja, juffrou toe skree ek: Maaaaaa! [roep gemaakt bang uit].

Ursula: Ek was self so...En toe kom kyk my ma

Zena: My trane't geloop, juffrou. Toe sê my ma: "Nee, dis all right", toe sê ek "Nee, ek wil nie dit hê nie. Ek wil nie pads dra het nie. (L3P6:363)

Mercia: I cried the first time I got my period...I cried. I don't know Miss. [laughs shyly] I sat in the bathroom. Yes Miss so I shouted: Maaaaaa! [shouts out like she's afraid]

Ursula: I was also like that and so my mother came to look.

Zena: My tears ran, Miss. So my mother said: "No, it's alright", so I said: "No, I don't want it. I don't want to wear pads". (L3P6:363)

Ebony: My vriendin Mandy het vir my gesê toe sy begin periods gekry het ..het sy haar eerste gewas...toe sien sy die bloed begin loop toe roep sy haar ma ...en toe roep sy: "Mammie kom kyk hier!" (J2P16:18)

Ebony: My friend Mandy told me when she started her periods...she first washed her...so she saw the blood running then she called her mother..and so she called: "Mommy come look here!" (J2P16:18)

While menstruation is a salient moment in a girl's development, it is interesting to note that some girls suggested that it was only necessary to tell their mothers when they start menstruating because they needed sanitary materials.

Extract 5

Sandra: In die begin as d jy jou maanstone kry en dan moet d jy vir jou ouer sê..want annerste gaan jou ouers nie weet wanneer moet sy vir jou pads koop en sulke goed nie. So dis...dis noodsaaklik dat jy vir jou ouers moet sê (L2P1:376)

Sandra: At the start when you get your period then you must tell your parent, else your parents won't know when to buy you pads and such stuff. So it's...it's important that you must tell your parents. (L2P1:376)

Edna: Wanneer d jy jou period kry...dan is d jy 'n jong meisie

Sherine: Ok...nou wat sê hulle vir jou as jy period kry? Praat hulle met jou? Wat sê hulle vir jou?

Zelma: My ma praat nie met my nie

Erica: uhhh..ons ouers praat nie met ons oor sulke goed nie [laughter]

Sherine: Nou wat doen hulle dan as jy jou period vir die eerste kry.....Wat doen hulle?

Zelma: Hulle koop net vir jou 'n pakkie pads...dan sê hulle: "Het djy nou siek geraak?" [group laughs and agrees uhhh] dan sê ek nou net: "Ja mammie" dan's alles verby (K2P10:70)

Edna: When you get your period...then you are a young girl

Sherine: Ok...now what do they tell you when you get your period? Do they talk to you? What do they tell you?

Zelma: My mother doesn't talk to me.

Erica: Uhhh..our parents don't talk to us about such things. [laughter]

Sherine: Now what do they do when you get your period for the first time...what do they do?

Zelma: They just buy you a packet of pads...they they say "Did you get sick now?" [Group laughs and agrees uhhh] then I just say: "Yes mommy" then everything is done. (K2P10:70)

For some girls the information and talk about menstruation merely focused on the technical management and providing "a packet of pads" – rather than the personal experiential dimension of menstruation. These findings are consistent with local and international studies where girls similarly reported that they were unprepared for menstruation and mothers only had a once-off talk with their daughters after the event. Such talks usually focused on the management of the menstrual flow, providing sanitary materials and the dangers associated with menstruation (Jackson & Falmagne, 2013; Lesch & Anthony, 2007; Kissling, 1996; Shefer, 1999; Stubbs, 2008; Teitelman, 2004; White, 2013).

This lack of discussion, researchers suggest, could be attributed to mothers' own lack of knowledge about menstruation, the prevailing cultural taboos, as well as mothers' inclination to transmit the same negative narratives they were taught about menstruation (Britton, 1996; Lovering, 1995; Teitelman, 2004). Crist and Hickenlooper (as cited by Ussher, 1989) also suggests that some mothers' difficulties in openly discussing menstruation might also be attributed to intrapsychic dynamics such as mothers' envy of and reluctance to accept their

daughters' burgeoning sexuality, or the mothers' projections of concerns about their own bodies onto their daughters.

Although the girls in this study reported that their parents did not talk to them about menstruation, their mothers were still the primary source of information after the event. Some also reported that they received some information from their aunts, grannies, or cousins, while a few stated that they heard about menstruation in the Life Orientation class at school. Of all the participants, only two girls stated they could freely talk to their mothers about menstruation and their changing bodies.

Extract 6

Carlene: Dis lekker vir my om 'n meisie te wees want alle goeters wat djy vir jou ma vra oor jou liggaam en goeters.....jou ma verduidelik vir jou alles..en as djy nou vir jou ma vra oor die goed...en julle twee gesels meer lekkerder as die seun saam met die ma

Sherine: Ok...so die meisie praat met haar ma en jy kommunikeer saam met jou ma..is dit vir almal so?

Agnes: Ja...dis lekker om saam met jou ma te praat oor jou liggaam..en so..wanneer iets...soos byvoorbeeld wanneer jy jou.....eerste keer jou maandstonde gekry het en dan kan jy saam met jou ma praat (L1P3:17)

Carlene: For me it's nice to be a girl because everything that you ask your mother about your body...your mother explains everything to you..and if you ask your mother about the stuff..and the two of you talk much more nicer than a boy with the mother.

Sherine: Ok...so the girl talks to her mother and you communicate with your mother..is this so for everyone?

Agnes: Yes..it's nice to talk with your mother about your body..and so...when something..for example, when you..get your first period then you can talk to your mother. (L1P3:17)

Ruby: niemand het met my gepraat nie...niemand het met my gepraat nie...ek het al klaar geweet....want my niggie het al klaar haar periods gehad en my niggie het my al voor die tyd vir my gewys (J1P15:74)

Ruby: Nobody spoke to me..nobody spoke to me..I already knew..because my cousin already had her periods and my cousin showed me before the time. (J1P15:74)

Such supportive and open relationships between mothers and daughters can facilitate positive experiences at menarche (Lee, 2008; Rembeck et al., 2006; Teitelman, 2004). It seems that some mothers also used humour and drew on their own naïve experiences to facilitate the menstrual talk. For example, Ursula related how her mother told her how she “*had put the pad on incorrectly*” (L3P6:351). In the quotation above, Ruby states how her cousin prepared her for menarche, which supports earlier research that peers also teach each other about menstruation (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Kissling, 1996).

Although a few girls had some prior information about menstruation, it was evident that they still felt unprepared for menarche and told negative stories about menstruation. Since most of the girls only spoke to their mothers/carers after menarche and the information they received merely focused on the biological and hygienic aspects of menstruation, it confirms Kissling’s (1996) contention that “information isn’t preparation” (p. 490). Researchers report that by only focusing on the biological and hygienic aspects, and not on the experiential dimension of menstruation, girls are inadequately prepared for menstruation (Martin, 1996; Rierdan, Koff, & Flaherty, 1983, 1986; Teitelman, 2004). This lack of preparation for the diverse experiential aspects of menarche seems to evoke anxiety for girls about their bodies and perpetuates misconceptions about menstruation.

6.2.1 Menstruation as an illness

Kissling (1996) contends that our experiences of our corporeal embodiment are primarily mediated via language; hence, *what* girls learn and *how* they learn about menstruation is important. Therefore, the narratives that mothers/carers use and how they talk about menstruation could significantly influence girls’ experiences of menarche/menstruation. According to Martin (1987), women and girls often invoke a menstruation-as-illness narrative, which she maintains is possibly a consequence of the dominance of the medical model that medicalises and pathologises girls’ and women’s bodies from menarche to menopause. Consequently, girls or women often

seek medical help or self-medicate, which tends to reinforce perceptions that girls'/women's bodies are sick, out of control and need to be disciplined (Golub, 1992; Ussher, 1989).

Similar to Burrows and Johnson's (2005) findings, the girls in this study also referred to menstruation as a maturational event that signified "*fertility and the ability to have babies*". However, they did not frame menstruation as a celebration of health and fertility or as a "discourse of menstrual pleasures of desire" (Lovering, 1995, p. 24).

Extract 7

Merle: Ja, Juffrou. My ma het gesê as jy..as jy..as jy periods kry beteken dit jy word vrugbaar...so as jy nou die eerste keer seks gehad het dan kan jy..kan jy=

Kathleen: =swanger word.

Merle: Ek moet stil wees, Juffrou, as ek siek is...ek moet nie so wild wees nie (L3P6:340)

Merle: Yes, Miss. My mother said said when you..when you..when you get periods it means you are fertile..so when you have sex for the first time then you can..you can=

Kathleen: =become pregnant.

Merle: I must be still Miss, when I am sick..I must not be so wild. (L3P6:340)

Rather, all the girls invoked the menstruation-as-illness and menstruation-as-danger narratives. They used terms such as, sick, cramps, and stomach and bladder pains when they referred to menstruation. These findings support those of Burrows and Johnson (2005) and Oxley (1998), who found that girls/women tend to emphasise negative experiences of aches and pains when they talk about their menstrual experiences. Below, it is evident how the girls in this study also constructed menstruation as an illness. Contrary to Golub's (1992) suggestion that "references to menstrual disability, such as 'being sick' or 'unwell' were common 20 or 30 years ago" (p. 7) and are rarely used nowadays, the girls in this study liberally used these terms when they spoke about menstruation.

Extract 8

Candy: Maar hulle sê dat dit is net tot 'n sekere ouderdom..as ek weet nou...more gaan ek siek raak..dan swem ek die hele dag...dan kom dit nie...maar die next maand...ai jene...dan kan ek nie weer gaan swem nie (J2P16:18)

Candy: But they say it's only till a certain age..when I know..tomorrow I'm going to get sick...then I swim the whole day...then it does not come...but the next month...oh my...then I can't go and swim again. (J2P16:18)

Sherine: Carol, jy het gesê jou antie en jou ouma en jou ma het saam met jou gepraat. Wat het hulle almal alles vir jou gesê?

Carol: Net gesê ek moenie saam met seuns speel nie as ek siek is nie

Sherine: Ok...en Elna? Het jou ma=

Elna: =My ma het vir my gesê as daar seuns aankom en hulle kom speel saam met my dan moet ek wegloop....hulle sê ook jy mag nie met 'n seun praat nie. Jy moet vir jou baie inhou as djy siek is....want dan kan jy baie vloei ..ek worry nie. (L3P6:351)

Sherine: Carol, you said your aunt and your granny and your mother spoke to you. What did they tell you?

Carol: Just said I musn't play with boys when I'm sick.

Sherine: Ok..and Elna? Did your mother=

Elna: =My mother told me when boys come and they want to play with me then I must walk away...they also say you musn't talk to a boy. You must keep yourself still when you are sick..because you can flow heavily...I don't worry. (L3P6:351)

According to Ussher (1989), puberty marks “the beginning of the process which links female reproduction to weakness and debilitation” (p. 13). Similarly, Lovering (1995) states that in “Western society, blood signifies injury and/or attack, and is not connected with health or safety” (p. 26), and adults often engage in talk about the miseries and pain of menstruation. Likewise, in preparing the girls, it appears their mothers also shared narratives of menstruation-as-illness with them. In the quotations above, we see how the girls’ mothers warned them against being physically active as this could exacerbate the menstrual flow. On the other hand, we see how Elna seems to resist her mother’s instructions by saying that she does not “worry” and Candy goes swimming. Although one could interpret Candy’s attempts to control and suppress her period as a

form of disconnection from her body, her physical activity could also be seen as agency and a disruption of the maternal advice to refrain from physical activity.

In addition to framing menstruation as a physical illness, the girls also drew on a stress and worry narrative when talking about menstruation.

Extract 9

Mandy: Juffrou, as ek siek is, dan stress ek baie.

Ursula: Ek ook...ek het baie stress

Mandy: Dan lag ek nie eens nie, Juffrou. Dan's ek bang dit val uit. Dis snaaks.

Sherine: As jy siek is dan=

Mandy: =Ek eet nie. Ek eet nie as ek siek is nie.

Sherine: Nou hoekom stress jy so?

Mandy: Dan stress ek nog meer as ek siek is.

Sherine: Ok, so eet jy glad nie?

Ursula: Ek eet ek eet ek eet, ek is honger (L3P6:345)

Mandy: Miss, when I'm sick I stress a lot.

Ursula: Me too. I have lots of stress.

Mandy: Then I don't even laugh Miss. Then I'm afraid it will fall out. It's strange.

Sherine: When you're sick then=

Mandy: =I don't eat. I don't eat when I'm sick.

Sherine: Now why do you stress so?

Mandy: Then I stress even more when I'm sick.

Sherine: Ok, so don't you eat at all?

Ursula: I eat, I eat, I eat. I am hungry. (L3P6:345)

Jessy: [laughs] Juffrou ek worrie somtyds..as ek miskien 'n maand skip juffrou..dan worrie ek..dan dink ek: "Jho verwag ek nou?" Maar ek weet..ek het nie die ding gedoen nie.[laughter] (J2P16:47)

Jessy: [laughs] Miss, sometimes I worry..when maybe I skip a month Miss..then I worry..then I think: "Yho..am I pregnant now?" But I know..I didn't do the thing [laughter]. (J2P16:47)

The girls' experiences support Burrows and Johnson's (2005) findings where girls also used the word "stressy" synonymously with menstruation. Britton (1996) similarly found women used physical and mental illness narratives to explain changes in their affect and "behaviour that was 'out of character'" (p. 651). In the extract above, both Mandy and Ursula said they have "lots of stress" when they menstruate but each seems to manifest their stress differently. While Ursula seems to have a good appetite and is determined to eat despite her stress, Mandy seems to enact both affective and behavioural changes, namely, anxiety, not laughing and eating. It seems that her stress is related to her anxiety of revealing her menstrual status and one can infer that in this state of hypervigilant body monitoring she is exhausting her cognitive resources to conceal her menstrual status (Roberts & Waters, 2004). When Mandy states, "it is strange" it could possibly indicate that she cannot yet make sense of the changes in her affect and behaviour when menstruating. In the extract above, we see Jessy also worry when she skips her period and wonders whether she could be pregnant. These feelings of anxiety that girls experience while menstruating could also be ascribed to a lack of understanding of menstruation and their changing bodies.

Ussher (1989) states that we should not dismiss or ignore adolescent girls' reports of menstrual pain or discomfort as neurotic, because this could reinforce the disconnection between their bodies and self; but we should rather provide appropriate menstrual education and support. However, she cautions that drawing on physical or mental illness narratives, perpetuates stereotypes of menstruating girls/women as sick and unstable, which in turn are used to isolate, control girls/women and limit their social opportunities. Further, Brooks-Gunn and Ruble (1983) state, often instances of negative affect occur simultaneously with a period and, because of prevailing cultural stereotypes, girls then tend to associate menstruation with mood changes. Thus, researchers state that girls often draw on negative stereotypes from an early age, which

often become self-fulfilling prophecies and are resistant to modification (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1983; Koff & Rierdan, 1996; Ussher, 1989).

6.2.2 Menstrual taboos

Menstruation is not only a personal event, but is socially and culturally embedded; thus, myths, misconceptions and taboos in society influence menstruation narratives and menstrual practices (Britton, 1996; Golub, 1992). The essence of such myths and taboos revolve around “beliefs or superstitions about dangers [and powers] inherent in menstruation” (Stephens as cited by Golub, 1992, p. 2) and menstruating girls/women. Such beliefs and practices are universal and still prevalent in some societies; consequently, communities usually develop practices to protect themselves from menstruating girls/women (Ali & Rizvi, 2010; Golub, 1992; Santina et al., 2013). Occasionally communities also institute these practices to protect women, but all the taboos impose restrictions on women’s activities and mobility (Golub, 1992; Thurén, 1994). In this study, girls also expressed beliefs about the dangers of physical activity, eating certain foodstuffs and interacting with boys when menstruating.

Extract 10

Mandy: Juffrou, dis snaaks, want ek het baie saam met die seunskinders gespeel speletjies.....Nou kan nou kan ‘n mens nie meer so lekker speel nie. Dan roep hulle vir my....dan sê ek nee....nou kan ‘n mens nie so lekker saam met hulle speel nie

Merle: Ek moet stil wees, juffrou, as ek siek is...ek moet nie so wild wees nie. Ek is baie lief vir melk en kaas. My ma sê, ek moenie kaas en melk..koue goed eet nie=

Mandy:=Ek het altyd gehou van sokker met die seuns speel...ek moenie meer so wild wees as ek siek is nie....netnou val dit uit. [group agrees: uhh] Ja, juffrou. Ek trek my dik aan onder. In die Winter uhm...ek trek vir my ‘n dik sweetpak broek aan...dan trek ek ‘n manga aan...en ‘n kort broekie en nog so ‘n kort broekie en ‘n pantie...en tekkies en vier paar sokkies...dan trek ek vir my dik aan, my ma sê ek moet warm bly..en ‘n handdoek om, dan speel ek daar buite...dan as ek huis toe kom, dan is ek sopnat...dan skel my ma my uit.

Rose: Ek moet nie melk en eiers of kaas eet nie, want as jy...as jy...as jy dit eet dan vloei jy baie.

Ursula: Ek..ek mag nie chocolates eet nie...nee, joghurt en chocolates..melk produkte.

Julie: As ek siek is, dan hou ek van rond te loop. As my ma vir my 'n paar sente gee, dan koop ek lekker roomys. As ek ingaan winkel toe, dan koop ek vir my 'n roomys en as ek terug kom dan koop ek nog ene. Ek hou van koue goed en as ek 'n koeldrank gekoop het, dan vat ek 'n straw en dan drink ek daaruit. (L3P6:351)

Mandy: Miss, it's strange, because I used to play a lot with the boys games...now a person can't play so nicely with boys. When they call me, then I say no...now a person can't play so nicely with them.

Merle: I must be still, Miss when I'm sick...I mustn't be so wild. I am fond of milk and cheese. My mother says I mustn't eat milk and cheese...cold stuff=

Mandy: =I always liked playing soccer with the boys...I mustn't be so wild anymore when I'm sick...just now it falls out [Group agrees: uhh]. Yes Miss, I dress myself thick at the bottom. In Winter uhm I put on a thick tracksuit pants...then I put on a manga²³ and a shorts and another shorts and a panty and tackies and four pairs of socks. Then I dress myself thickly. My mother says I must stay warm and put a towel around, then I play outside..then when I come home I'm soaking wet...then my mother scolds me.

Rose: I mustn't eat milk and eggs or cheese, because when you..when you..when you eat it you can flow a lot.

Ursula: I can't eat chocolates...no yoghurt and chocolates..milk products.

Julie: When I'm sick then I like to walk about. When my mother gives me a few cents, then I buy myself ice cream. When I go into the shop, then I buy myself an ice cream and when I come back then I buy myself another one. I like cold stuff and when I buy a cooldrink, then I take a straw and then I sip it. (L3P6:351)

Their mothers' admonishments regarding physical activity and the need to be passive are consistent with previous research indicating myths and misconceptions about a vulnerability to illness when engaging in physical activities while menstruating (Burrows & Johnson, 2005; Moore, 1995). Such negative attitudes towards physical activities could have long-term implications for girls' physical health and restrict the opportunities for social participation (Santina et al., 2013). As Mandy spoke in the group it felt as if she was preparing herself for a battle. Her armour to conceal her menstrual status is somewhat ironic, because playing outside with a towel wrapped around her body could possibly alert others and draw attention to herself. Thurén (1994) refers to such actions as "a kind of symbolic elaboration, making what must be hidden indirectly visible" (p. 222). Thurén illustrates how in Spain people often giggle when a

²³ This is a knee length shorts.

woman refuses an ice cream, because this is taboo for menstruating women. The girls' perceptions that eating eggs and dairy products could possibly exacerbate their menstrual flow are similar to the findings from other countries (Ali & Rizvi, 2010; Santina et al., 2013). These authors caution that the avoidance of these foodstuffs could result in vitamin and calcium deficiencies among adolescent girls.

Contrary to their mothers' instructions, in the passage above, both Mandy and Julie illustrate their refusal to be inactive and Julie ignores the taboos about eating ice cream. Although some women in Thurén's (1994) study still obeyed the "old taboos", Thurén found that when the older women tried to instruct other women about these taboos, some young women would talk back and verbalise that these taboos were irrational. Similarly, here we see how Mandy and Julie are talking back and resisting the taboos, yet most of the girls in this study still seem to adhere to the old taboos and refrain from physical activity, walking barefoot and/or eating dairy products.

6.3 The burdens of womanhood

As discussed earlier, our narratives about menstruation are integral to influencing girls' attitudes and experiences of menarche/menstruation. Golub (1992) states that "the myths and taboos associated with menstruation can readily be seen in the words we use to describe it. Language both reflect and shape the way we see ourselves and the world around us" (p. 6). The research discussed earlier illustrates that the prevailing attitudes towards and experiences of menstruation are primarily negative and could be attributed to girls' own experiences, the inadequate menstrual education and/or their experiences of stigmatisation. Thus Brownmiller (as cited by Kissling, 1996), concludes that for most girls/women "menstruation remains a nasty inconvenience, a dripping, bloating, congestive mess" (p. 497). In this study the girls also regarded menstruation and childbirth as burdens of womanhood. In the following extract, they relate their negative perceptions and how their mothers use negative talk to scare them about the dangers of menstruation and childbirth.

Extract 11

Laura: Ek wil eintlik nie 'n meisie gewees het nie.

Sherine: Ne?.. wat wil djy gewies het?

Laura: Ek wil 'n seunskind gewees ...want die seunskinders verkrag al die meisies..en as djy 'n kind kry dan kry djy seer...dan moet 'n mens op al die masjiene gaan lê dan kry djy seer..ek het gesien [laughter]

Erica: Vroumense se blasé pyn as hulle begin te maandstonde kry en..en..vroumense huil partykeer as hulle blaas pyn..maar mansmense kry nie sulke goed nie..vir vroumense is dit swaar (K2P9:136)

Laura: I actually didn't want to be a girl.

Sherine: Is that so? What did you want to be?

Laura: I wanted to be a boy..because the boys rape all the girls..and if you have a child then you get sore...then a person must lie on all the machines and then you get sore. I saw this [laughter].

Erica: Women's bladders pain when they start to menstruate..and..and..women sometimes cry when their bladders pain...but men don't get such stuff..for women it's hard. (K2P9:136)

Sharon: Oe! Die maandstonde oe!..periods kry..daai pyne!...en umm..die swangerskap wat my ma hulle my so vertel..van hoe dit so seer is...hulle praat 'n mens bang [group all talking together]

Sherine: Ok...so julle sê..die goed wat vroumense moet deurgaen..dis nie lekker nie

Jackie: Dis baie tragies (K1P8:77)

Sharon: Oh! The periods oh! Getting periods..those pains!...and umm..the pregnancy that my mother they tell me about..about how it is so sore..they talk you scared [Group all talking together].

Sherine: Ok...so you say...the things that women must go through...it's not nice.

Jackie: It's very tragic. (K1P8:77)

It is clear that menstruation is a negative, stressful and anxiety provoking experience and when I reflected that it was “not nice”, Jackie response was that it is “very tragic”. This captures for me the extent of the girls’ negativity towards menstruation. This negativity may be grounded in their menstrual experiences and/or inadequate preparation. From the extract above, it is evident how their mothers’ talk seems to contribute towards the girls’ negative attitudes. These findings are consistent with research that mothers’ own experiences of menarche/menstruation, girls’

perceptions of their mothers' negative menstrual experiences and how we talk about menstruation, could significantly influence girls' menstrual experiences (Lovering, 1995; White, 2013). Although the participants in this study valorised motherhood, here we see how they also display negativity towards childbirth and menstruation.

In the above extract, Sharon tells us that their mothers use these negative stories about menstruation and childbirth to instil fear in girls, which could be a strategy to discourage girls from becoming sexually active and to prevent teenage pregnancy. Teitelman (2004) found when family scripts of menarche/menstruation were primarily linked to female reproductive sexuality, that girls often reported emotions such as fear, anger and worry. Teitelman suggests, when menarcheal girls hear, "now you can have babies", they could have difficulty in assimilating this information about their changing bodies as well as the prospect of female reproductive sexuality, and experience it as confusing and anxiety provoking. Similarly, in this study, it is evident that mothers are using narratives of fear and danger in educating their daughters about menstruation, which seems to contribute towards the girls experiencing menstruation as a burden.

6.3.1 Menstrual experiences and practices

Although menarche/menstruation is a universal experience among girls/women, personal biological factors and local socio-cultural narratives influence girls'/women's menstrual experiences. For some girls menarche/menstruation might be stressful, while for others it might be less so. Although the predominant experience of girls in this study towards menstruation was negative, one girl did report a positive experience.

Extract 12

Candy: Dis lekker om jou periods te kry...veral as dit in die Winter is [Group chorus: Nee!] dan lê jy lekker onder die komberse

Jessy: Nee..Juffrou...ek hou nie van daai goed nie

Sherine: So hou julle nie daarvan om julle periods te kry nie? [Group chorus: Ja]

Elze: Nee... ek hou ook nie daarvan nie...my maag kramp

Jessy: Toe my periods begin het..het ek dit nie gevoel nie... my blaas het nie gepyn nie...maar as my periods klaar was...toe...soos ek het baie kaalvoet geloop...toe het my ma vir my gesê dat ek moet nie so baie kaalvoet loop nie want as ek my periods gaan kry dan gaan ek dit swaar kry (J2P16:18)

Candy: It's nice to get your periods...especially when it's in winter [Group chorus: No!] then you lie nicely under the blankets.

Jessy: No..Miss..I don't like that stuff.

Sherine: So don't you like to get your periods? [Group chorus: Yes]

Elze: No...I also don't like it...my stomach cramps.

Jessy: When my periods started...I didn't feel it...my bladder didn't pain..but when my periods were done..so..I used to walk barefoot a lot..so my mother told me that I mustn't walk barefoot so often because when I'll get my periods then I'll get it heavy. (J2P16:18)

Although Candy used menstruation to stay in bed in winter, her positive stance was met with loud disagreement by all the girls in her group. Even though Jessy did not seem to experience menstrual cramps with menarche, she was equally vociferous that she did not “*like that stuff*”. Her negativity could also be influenced by her mother’s warnings that walking barefoot will exacerbate her menstrual flow. Jessy’s response supports previous research that, although menstruation might not be a personally painful experience, girls still seem to internalise the negative narratives associated with menstruation and these tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1983; Koff & Rierdan, 1996).

As highlighted earlier, because of a lack of adequate preparation prior to menarche, the girls experienced a range of emotions such as, fear, anxiety, confusion and ambivalence. I illustrated how the girls expressed fear at the signs of their first period and how Zena’s mother had to comfort her that “it’s alright”. Mandy also related how she was “afraid that it will fall out” and found it “strange” that she could no longer play with boys since she started menstruating, while Jessy worried she could be pregnant when she skipped a period. Likewise, Sandra also voiced her negative experience of menstruation because of the inconvenience of heavy flows sometimes.

Extract 13

Sandra: Periods..dis nie lekker [group laughs] want ons kry mos maandstonde...dis nie lekker nie...want partykeers by die skool ..die bloed kom baie...dan vloei dji regdeur..dan is dit nie lekker nie..ek hou nie daarvan nie (L2P2:153).

Sandra: Periods..that's not nice [Group laughs] because we get periods..that's not nice...because sometimes at school..the blood comes a lot then you flow right through..then it's not nice..I don't like it. (L2P2:153).

From Sandra's statement we can infer that her negativity is probably associated with the shame and embarrassment she could experience should her menstruation become public. The girls' fears of their menstruation becoming visible at school could be psychologically taxing for them and distract their attention from their schoolwork. In the quotation below it is evident how the girls are also subjected to teasing and taunting by the boys at school, which further adds to their humiliation.

Extract 14

Zelda: Sommige seuns wil net oor ougat goed praat

Denise: Soos sommige seuns..het hulle wil net oor pads of tampons praat...dan wil hulle alles wiet..dan vra hulle: "Wat gebruik dji? Gebruik dji pads of tampons? Always?" Dan lag hulle..dan wil hulle wiet..waar kom dit in en of hulle dit kan kom insit (K3P12:131)

Zelda: Some boys just want to talk about precocious stuff.

Denise: Like some boys..they just want to talk about pads or tampons..then they want to know everything..then they ask: "What do you use? Do you use pads or tampons? Always?" Then they laugh..then they want to know..where do you put it in and if they can come and put it in. (K3P12:131)

McMahon et al. (2011) reported that when girls were preoccupied with concealing their menstruation and feared showing signs of menstruating or menstrual stains, teachers found the girls could not concentrate on their schoolwork. Earlier, I also illustrated how Mandy put layers of clothing on to conceal her menstruation, while Ursula also stated: "When one is sick, a person does not know what to wear. I have lots of white clothes" (L3P6:460). Thus we see how the girls

develop strategies, which require deliberate thoughts and actions, to conceal the signs that they are menstruating. Although not explicit, Ursula's reluctance to wear white clothes likely stems from her fear that it could show menstrual stains. Thus, Ursula's reluctance to wearing white clothing and Mandy's protective armour illustrate their attempts to prevent their menstruation from becoming public or being "outed", as well as the power of the narratives of concealment, shame and embarrassment (Jackson & Falmagne, 2013; Lee, 2008). Similar to the findings of McMahon et al. (2011), these participants also feared that their "smelly" bodies could add to their embarrassment and that others might gossip about them.

Extract 15

Eunice: Of hulle sê miskien..nou..as jy miskien nou period kry, miskien jy't nog nie vir jou gewas nie, dit gaan mos nou ruik. Dan sê hulle: "Jirre, het jy geruik hoe ruik daai kind? Jirre, nou kom sit sy nog hier langsaan my." Dan sê ek: "Gaan sit eenkant." (K4P13:654)

Eunice: Or perhaps they say..now..when maybe now you got your period, maybe you didn't wash yet, then obviously it's going to smell. Then they say: "Lord, did you smell how that girl smells? Lord, now she still comes and sits next to me." Then I say: "Go sit one side". (K4P13:654)

This disgust with their bodies Roberts and Waters (2004) suggest is symptomatic of self-objectification, which is "a way of fleeing the culturally threatening, messy body" (p. 11). Thus, to contain their smelly bodies, the participants related how they have to sanitise their bodies.

Extract 16

Sharon: Sy moet vir haar netjies hou..skoon hou...want 'n meisie vrot baie gou [group: Dis waar] al trek dji nou 'n pantie aan..dan môre moet dji daai pantie ..dji moet jou baie was..want dji kan 'n klankie afgee

Sherine: So 'n meisie moet op haar liggaam skoon wees sê julle [group laughter]

June: Die klanke kan kom wanneer hy wil. (K1P8:117)

Sharon: She must keep herself neat..keep herself clean..because a girl can rot quickly [Group: that's true] even if you put on a panty now..then tomorrow that panty...you must wash a lot...because you can give off an odour.

Sherine: So you say a girl must be clean on her body [Group laughter].

June: The odours come whenever he wants to. (K1P8:117)

Consistent with objectification theory it is evident how, through self-consciousness and self-monitoring, the girls tap their cognitive resources to develop “bodily repertoires” to produce a “civilised” body and conceal their menstruation to spare them shame and embarrassment (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Lee, 2008; Roberts & Waters, 2004).

At menarche the girls also seem to experience ambivalence, which tends to contribute towards their negativity towards menstruation. On the one hand they are told that they are “now adult” and can now make “their own choices”.

Extract 17

Merle: Sy [her mother] het gesê ek is nou groot, jy staan, jy staan nou in jou eie skoene..dis nou tyd om my eie besluite te maak..my eie keuses...sy't nog goed gesê, Juffrou, maar ek het alles vergeet (L3P6:387).

Merle: She [her mother] said I am now adult, you stand, you stand now in your own shoes..it's now time to make my own decisions..my own choices..she said more stuff Miss, but I forgot everything. (L3P6:387)

While on the other hand, at menarche, they are given so many instructions regarding listening to their parents and avoiding contact with boys when they start menstruating.

Extract 18

Julie: My ma sê vir my ..wat ek my eerste maandstonde gekry het .. sê my ma vir my ek moet my mooi oppas..ek moet nie ougatter word nie [laughter] en ek moet nog always na haar luister

Sherine: Ok..moenie dink dji's groot nie? Mandy, dji wil nou iets gesê het?

Mandy: umm..hulle sê altyd vir jou ..dji is nou groot...en... dji moet nou nie met seunskinders lol nie..dji moet wag tot dji eendag 21 is en matriek klaargemaak het (L2P1:383)

Julie: My mother says to me...when I got my first period..my mother said to me I must take care of myself..I must not become more precocious [laughter] and I must still always listen to her.

Sherine: Ok..don't think you are adult? Mandy, you wanted to say something?

Mandy: Umm..they always say to you...you are now adult..and..you mustn't bother with boys..you must wait till you become 21 and completed matric. (L2P1:383)

In the extract above, Julie states how her mother tells her to “*take care of herself*”. In the Coloured community, this phrase is a code for instructing girls not to become sexually active, which mothers/carers, other family members and even community members say to girls as a motivation. In this extract, Julie also tells us how her mother explicitly entreats her not to become precocious and how she should still be obedient to her mother. Likewise, Mandy’s statement also illustrates the paradox inherent in their mothers’ instructions at menarche, namely, “*you are now adult [but] you must not bother with boys*” because this seems to belong to the adult world. These requests one could interpret as mothers’ reluctance to accept their daughters’ burgeoning sexuality and their attempts to keep their daughters sexually naïve and in a state of childlike innocence. Similarly, in the quotation below, we see how Leigh’s grandmother advises her to enjoy her childhood days and not yet behave like an adult.

Extract 19

Ashlene: My ouma het vir my gesê: ’n mens moet jou kinderdag geniet terwyl jy kan...en nie vir jou groot hou nie....want as jy groot is...dan

Ruby: Nee ons wil mos speel..... ‘n mens kan nog met poppe speel= [lots of animated talking and loud disagreement]

Sharon: Nou hoekom moet ‘n mens met poppe speel?

Mandy-Lee: Nee...ek het ‘n klomp poppe maar ek speel nie meer met poppe nie

Laura: Nee...’n mens hoef nie met poppe te speel nie

Sharon: ‘n Mens voel mos nie meer om met poppe te speel nie juffrou...’n mens kan jou geniet maar jy hoef nie met poppe te speel nie..

Leigh: Ja juffrou...sy’t nou gesê jy moet jou kinder dag geniet...terwyl jy kan=

Sharon: =Ons geniet ons kinderdag...maar ons voel mos nie meer met poppe te speel nie [group laughter]

Sherine: mmm...maar as jy voel jy wil nie meer met poppe speel nie dan is dit ook orait

Sharon: Ons lyk om te Mixit en Facebook en wat nog?

Leigh: en kry mekaar (J2P14:206)

Ashlene: My grandmother told me: a person must enjoy your childhood days while you can...and not keep yourself big (adult)...because when you are big..then

Ruby: No we want to play..a person can still play with dolls [lots of animated talking and loud disagreement]

Sharon: Now why must a person play with dolls?

Mandy-Lee: No...I have a lot of dolls but I don't play with dolls anymore.

Laura: No...a person don't have to play with dolls.

Sharon: A person don't feel like playing with dolls anymore Miss..a person can enjoy yourself but you don't have to play with dolls.

Leigh: Yes, Miss..she just said now you must enjoy your childhood days..while you can=

Sharon: =We enjoy our childhood days..but we don't feel like playing with dolls anymore [Group laughter].

Sherine: Mmm...but if you feel you don't want to play with dolls then it's also ok.

*Sharon: We like to Mixit and Facebook and what else?=
=and get each other²⁴ (J2P14:206)*

Ruby's statement evoked animated talking in the group and the rest of the girls loudly disagreed with her and Ashlene, so much so that the group silenced them. It is evident that for the rest of the group this was unacceptable and they were quite adamant. It seems that they regarded playing with dolls as inappropriate and childish for adolescent girls. The girls' responses are similar to the participants in Williams' (2002) study who stopped playing with toys when they became teenagers. Gulbrandsen (2003) similarly found that playing with dolls when one is at the cusp of early adolescence is seen as childish and resulted in the disintegration of a long lasting childhood friendship among a group of girls. Thus, messages about enjoying their childhood days and not behaving like an adult could be attempts by their mothers and grandmothers to prolong the girls' sexual naïveté. Such contradictory messages at menarche could evoke ambivalence for the girls. However, in this group most of the girls resisted this and engaged in social interaction via Mxit and Facebook.

²⁴ Mixit, facebook and "get each other" are different forms of social media.

6.3.2 Menstruation as danger and reproduction

Supporting previous research (Martin, 1996; Teitelman, 2004), the participants' ambivalence toward menarche/menstruation tends to be significantly influenced by their mothers' or significant others' reactions to them at menarche. Some of the participants reported that their mothers congratulated them, while others stated that their mothers cried when they told them they started menstruating.

Extract 20

Sherine: Sê maar jy kry jou period vir die eerste keer..wat sal jou ma vir jou sê?

Mandy-Lee: My ma sê: "Djy's nou jongmeisie." Juffrou...dan sê my ma....daai is eers die tyd wat ons in die huis moet bly Juffroumy ma het gehuil....en ek mag nie eers rondloop nie [Groep: Ja and laughter]

Leigh: My ma het weer vir almal gebel en gesê Rooikappie het by my omgekom. My ma het nie gehuil nie..sy't net vir my gesê: "Haai ek is bly! Jy moet nie verkeerde dinge doen nie."

Mandy-Lee: Hulle het gehuil..toe sê sy: "Jy moet jou dingetjie in toom hou." (J1P14:301)

Sherine: Say now you get your period for the first time..what will your mother say to you?

Mandy-Lee: My mother says: "You're a young girl now." Miss then my mother says...that's now the time when we must stay in the house. Miss my mother cried and I may not even walk about [Group: Yes and laughter].

Leigh: My mother phoned everyone and said Red riding hood came around by me. My mother didn't cry..she only told me: "Hey I am glad! You mustn't do wrong things."

Mandy-Lee: They just cried so she said: "You must keep your little thing intact". (J1P14:301)

Although some mothers responded in a celebratory manner to their daughters' first period, some also imparted contradictory messages, which could be confusing for girls. On the one hand they are told menarche signifies they are becoming women, yet they are also told now they must stay indoors and not do "wrong things". Thus it is understandable when Mary states that she responded angrily to her grandmother's celebratory stance.

Extract 21

Mary: Ek is ook sommer kwaad vir my ouma. My ouma klap nog hande..sy sê ek is nou groot. Ek is kwaad toe draai ek by die deur om toe loop ek. (L3P6:438)

Mary: I immediately became angry with my granny. My granny still clapped hands..she said I am now adult. I was cross so I turned around at the door and walked away. (L3P6:438)

Consistent with previous research (Lesch & Anthony, 2007; Shefer, 1999; Teitelman, 2004), at menarche the girls' mothers were also explicit in their warnings that they should stay away from boys, or else they could become pregnant.

Extract 22

Shamiella: As dji miskien nou jou maandstonde kry dan sê jou ma vir die eerste keer..sê jou ma:"Dji lol nie met seuns nie want dji kan pregnant word."

Sherine: Hoekom nie?

Shamiella: want dji kan pregnant word (K3P11:145)

Shamiella: Perhaps when you get your period then your mother says for the first time..your mother says:"You don't worry with boys..because you can get pregnant."

Sherine: Why not?

Shamiella: Because you can become pregnant. (K3P11:145)

Zelma: Hulle koop net vir jou 'n pakkie pads...dan sê hulle: "Het dji nou siek geraak?" [group laughs and agrees uhhh] dan sê ek nou net: "Ja mammie" dan's alles verby

Sherine: So vertel hulle jou niks anders nie?

Edna: Of hulle sê vir jou as dji siek is: "Dji moet nie seks nie."

Erica: Ja...of dji mag ook nie met seuns speel nie

Zelma: of "Trek jou skoene aan."

Edna: uh..ja.....jou blaas kan mos pyn

Sherine: So hoekom kan 'n mens nie met seuns speel nie?

Edna: Hulle kan gruwelike goed doen...hulle kan jou vasdruk

Zelma: Hey! party seuns ne...lyk om dit te doen... jou vasdruk ...party [laughter] (K2P10:77)

Zelma: They just buy you a packet of pads...then they say "Did you get sick now?" [Group laughs and agrees uh] then I just say: "Yes mommy" then everything is done.

Sherine: So don't they tell you anything else?

Edna: Or when you are sick they tell you: "You mustn't sex."

Erica: Yes..or you may not also play with boys.

Zelma: or "Put on your shoes."

Edna: uh..yes..your bladder can pain.

Sherine: So why can't a person play with boys?

Edna: They can do naughty things...they can hold you tight

Zelma: Hey! some boys..like to do that..hold you tight..some [laughter] (K2P10:77)

In the next extracts, we see how Ursula's brother also monitors and "protects" her from his adult male friends and Jasmine explains how parents keep girls indoors because they are afraid that the girls will become pregnant.

Extract 23

Ursula: My broer se vriende..hulle het baie van my gehou....altyd. Toe ek klein was ...was hulle lekker met my...dan kom haal hulle vir my en vat vir my winkel toe..maar nou wat ek groot is nou mag ek nie eers met hulle praat nie...nou sê my broer vir my:"Djy bly weg van hulle af...hulle wil jou net vrou maak." Dan sê ek: "Nee, wat dink jy dan van my? Ek het dan voor hulle grootgeword." En dan..en dan..en dan gee hulle vir my..koop hulle vir my...dan stuur hulle vir my geld, dan kry ek dit nooit..dit kom nooit by my uit nie.

Mary: My broer sê nou dat ek groot is, mag ek nie eens saam met hom winkel toe stap nie..dan klap hy my ek moet huis toe. Of ek loop saam met hom, Juffrou, maar ons gaan nie na een plek toe nie. Dan vra hy: "Waantoe loop djy?" Ek haat dit! Juffrou, ek raak sommer baie kwaad vir my broer. Hy vat net 'n ding en gooi dit sommer. Hulle wil hulle wil net...hulle wil net reg wees. En jy's verkeerd. Alles wat jy doen is net verkeerd. (L3P5:1367)

Ursula: My brother's friends..they liked me a lot..always. When I was small..they were nice to me..then they came and fetched me and took me to the shop..but now that I'm big..I may not even talk to them..now my brother says to me: "You stay away from them..they just want to make a wife of you." Then I say: "No, what do you think of me? I grew up in front of them." And then..and then..and then they give me..buy me..then they send me money, then I never get it..it never gets to me.

Mary: My brother says now that I am big, I may not even walk with him to the shop..then he smacks me and I must go home. Or if I walk with him Miss, but we don't go to the same place, then he asks: "Where are you walking to?" I hate it! Miss, I get very cross with my brother. He just takes a thing and throws it. They just want to...just

want...they just want to be right and you're wrong. Everything that you do is just wrong. (L3P5:1367)

Jasmine: Hoekom hulle die seunskinders voortrek..seker omdat..soos nou..die seuns kan laat uitgaan en so seker omdat..hoekom..dji as meisiekind dji kan nie laat uitgaan nie.. want hulle is bang dji kom swanger..miskien eendag verwagting huis toe..en seuns...seuns is...hoe kan ek sê...seuns is makliker...hulle maak kinders...ek meen...hulle hou mos nie die kinders by hulle huise nie..en dji as meisiekind se ouers..umm.. moet vir jou help om jou kind groot te maak want

hoekom..dji is netso..self 'n kind.. en die seuns neem nie die kinders huistoe nie..die meisiekinders bring kinders in (L2P1:252)

Jasmine: Why they favour the boys..maybe because..like now..the boys can go out late and so probably because..why..you as a girl can't go out late is..because they are afraid that you will come home pregnant..maybe home one day..and boys..boys are..how can I say..boys are easier..they make children...I mean..they don't keep the children at their homes..and you as a girl's parents..umm..must help you to raise the child because why..you are also..just a child..and the boys don't take the children home..the girls bring children in. (L2P1:252)

From the girls' experiences in this study, it is evident how the onset of menstruation tends to be a paradoxical experience, which Ussher (1989) suggests girls could experience as “punishment for [becoming] a woman” (p.25). Above, Ursula voiced her brother's suspicion of his friends' motives and how he explicitly warned her to stay away from them because they could exploit her sexually. These findings support earlier research of how, at menarche, girls' sexuality is framed as dangerous and a risk for pregnancy (Martin, 1996; Shefer, 1999). Martin (1996) further suggests these warnings not only construct boys as dangerous, but also suggest to girls that their own bodies could pose a threat to their well-being. For example, when the girls' mothers tell them “to keep their little things intact” or not to do “wrong” things and try to seclude the girls and restrict their movements, they are explicitly telling the girls that there is something dangerous about their sexuality and it needs to be controlled. Similarly, Mary's brother's surveillance of her movements and his use of threats and physical force to keep her off the streets and control her sexuality, could compound these messages of danger. Shefer (1999) contends that such messages of danger and possible victimisation could evoke confusion for girls and fail to empower them for sexual negotiation. Consistent with previous research, entry into “young girlhood” also signals losses for

girls, such as the curtailment of their movements, their previous camaraderie and friendships with boys that are now replaced with sexual tensions and rigid behavioural restrictions (Lee, 2009; Martin, 1996; Shefer, 1999). Thus supporting the feminist contention that at menarche girls are inserted into the gendered sexual hierarchy; they learn about the restrictions associated with female sexuality that will follow them into their adult lives (Britton, 1996; Lee, 1994; Ussher, 1989).

These narratives of danger and protection at menarche could be grounded in the belief that girls are asexual and that they are too young to be sexually active. Hence girls' sexuality tends to evoke anxiety for parents and society in general (Bhana, 2008; Britton, 1996; Burrows & Johnson, 2005). Consequently, girls are not educated about the links between menstruation and sexuality because of parental fears that girls might become promiscuous. Hence, parents primarily emphasise the dangers of sexual activity and early pregnancy and resort to secluding their daughters. Ussher (1989) states:

Parents who have internalized the double standards themselves and are overcome by fears of pregnancy in their adolescent daughters concentrate their attention on the negative consequences of emerging sexuality, such as early pregnancy or loss of reputation. This instills fear in many girls and adds to the belief that women's sexuality is dangerous and must be surreptitious or denied. (p. 27)

Thus, it follows that mothers are reluctant to talk about romantic relationships with their daughters because they are deemed too young and discouraged from having relationships with boys.

Extract 24

Sherine: Maar wat gesels julle ma's met julle ..wanneer julle oor boyfriends en goed praat?

Group [chorus and laughter]: **Nee...ons kan nie!**

Sherine: So kan julle nie met julle ma's praat oor boyfriends nie?

Ashlene: Ek kan nie oor boyfriends praat nie....huh huh [group laughter]

Leigh [laughing]: Ek kan nie oor sulke goed met my ma praat nie... ek kry nou 'n klap!

Sharon: Juffrou..ek praat met haar..dan sê sy: "Dis niks van outjies nie..dis net vriende."

Mandy-Lee: My ma sê: "Niks van sulke goed nie."

Mandy [laughing]: Ek kan ook nie ...ek kan nie vriende wees met [laughter]

Sherine: So hoekom kan julle nie boyfriends het nie?

Leigh: **Ons is te jonk!** [Group agrees: Ons is nog te jonk!]

Sherine: So....wat is die ouderdom wanneer 'n mens 'n boyfriend kan hê?

Sharon: Van graad 10..so van veertien af

Leigh: Nee dis te laat (J1P15:74)

Sherine: But what does your mothers talk about ..when you talk about boyfriends and stuff?

Group [chorus and laughter]: No..we can't!

Sherine: So can't you talk to your mothers about boyfriends?

Ashlene: I can't talk about boyfriends..huh huh [Group laughter].

Leigh [laughing]: I also can't talk about such stuff to my mother..I get a smack now!

Sharon: Miss..I talk to her..then she says: "It's nothing about boyfriends..it's just friends."

Mandy-Lee: My mother says: "Nothing about such stuff."

Mandy [laughing]: I can't also...I can't be friends with [laughter]

Sherine: So why can't you have boyfriends?

Leigh: We are too young! [Group agrees: We are too young!]

Sherine: So what is the age when one can have a boyfriend?

Sharon: From grade 10 or so from about fourteen.

Leigh: No it's too late. (J1P15:74)

Consequently, when girls attempt to broach such conversations, they are met with resistance or even a "smack". In cases where the girls had a boyfriend or interacted with boys, their parents or grandparents seriously reprimanded them.

Extract 25

Ursula: Juffrou, ‘n mens se ouers is so...jou ma en jou pa praat saam met jou of jou ma praat saam met jou en jy sê miskien...en jou ma vra vir jou “Het dit al met jou gebeur?” So juffrou..sê maar jy’t ‘n outjie gehad..juffrou en die outjie het vir jou gelos of so..dan skel jou ma vir jou uit en dan sê sy vir jou “Jy weet, dit sou gebeur het.”

Sherine: Ok. So sê jy sy wil nie hê jy moet uitgaan nie, of wat?

Ursula: Nee, sy wil nie hê nie.

Sherine: So kan julle boyfriends hê?

Ursula: Nee, juffrou.

Mercia: Ek het ‘n boyfriend gehad..toe’t ek het vir my ma gesê. My ma was kwaad gewees..sy was disappointed..want my ma’t gesê toe my ma vyftien gewees het, het my ma niks geworry oor boyfriends en sulke goed nie.

Ursula: Sy jok. Sy’t al lankal ‘n eye gehad op iemand..my ma sê sy het nog met poppe gespeel..nog tot sy nog een-en-twintig geword het. Dan sê ek: “Mammie moet ophou jok.” Vir my is dit so..hulle het hulle jong dae gehad.[Zena cuts in: Is ja] ons, ons weet ons moet reg lewe..maar hulle sê elke dag vir ons, Juffrou. Dit raak irriterend as jou ouers vir jou elke dag sê, jy moet dit doen, jy moet dat doen.

Sherine: So sê vir my, soos wat moet julle doen?

Ursula: Soos byvoorbeeld, my ma sê vir my, juffrou, ek kan nie ‘n outjie het nie. Ek mag nie saam met ‘n seunskind loop nie, Juffrou. Ek kan nie saam met...uhm...ek het vriende, juffrou wat al op die hoërskool is of so. Ek kan nie saam met hulle loop nie, Juffrou. En as ek uitgaan saam met my vriende, dan dink my ma altyd ons doen verkeerde dinge..ons drink en sulke goeters..en ons het boyfriends en so.

Sherine: So wat wat dink julle is die rede hoekom sy so is?

Ursula: Sy wil maar net vir jou beskerm, Juffrou. [Carol: Sy’s bang dji word verkrag] maar sommige kere..dan sommige kere, dan raak dit te veel vir die kind, Juffrou. En dan as jou ma aanmekeer vir jou dieselfde ding oor en oor sê.

Sherine: mmm. So dit raak irriterend, sê jy.

Carol: Ek mag net met meisies loop.

Zena: Daar by my ouma, Juffrou..ek kon die langnaweek daar gebly, daar gekuier het, Juffrou. Toe het ons met seunskinders geloop..toe kom ons half nege huistoe..toe is ons darem lelik uitgeskel, Juffrou. “Julle hou vir julle jas! Hoekom loop julle met seunskinders?” [uitbundige gelag] Ons hou vir ons jas. (L3P5:835)

Ursula: Miss, one’s parents are like this..your mother and father talk to you or your mother talks to you and perhaps you say..and your mother asks you: “Did it already happen to you?” So Miss..say you had a boyfriend...Miss and the guy left you...then your mother scolds you and tells you: “You know this would happen.”

Sherine: Ok. So do you say that she doesn’t want you to go out or what?

Ursula: No, she doesn’t want you to

Sherine: So can you have boyfriends?

Ursula: No Miss.

Mercia: I had a boyfriend...so I told my mother. My mother was angry..she was disappointed..because my mother said when she was fifteen she didn't worry about boyfriends and such stuff.

Ursula: She lies! She already had an eye on someone..my mother says she still played with dolls..till she turned twenty one. Then I say: "Mommy must stop lying." For me it's like this..they had their youth [Zena cuts in: It is so] we, we know we must live right..but they tell us every day, Miss. It becomes irritating when your parents tell you every day you must do this and you must do that.

Sherine: So tell me, what is it that you must do?

Ursula: For example, my mother tells me I can't have a boyfriend Miss. I can't walk with boys Miss. I can't be with..uhm..I have friends Miss who are already at high school or so. I can't walk with them Miss. And when I go out with my friends, then my mother always thinks that we always do wrong things..we drink and such stuff..and we have boyfriends or so.

Sherine: So what do you think is the reason why she's like this?

Ursula: She just wants to protect you Miss [Carol: She's scared you could be raped] but sometimes..then sometimes it just become too much for the child Miss. And when your mother tells you the same thing over and over.

Sherine: Mmm..so you say it becomes irritating.

Carol: I can only walk with girls.

Zena: There at my granny's house, Miss..I could stay there the long weekend, I visited there Miss. So we walked with boys..so we came home half past eight...so we were scolded badly Miss. "You keep yourself randy! Why do you walk with boys?" [raucous laughter] We keep ourselves randy. (L3P5:835)

Given the contextual risks for sexual violence and teenage pregnancy, the girls understand their parents' concerns. However, in the extract above it is evident that the girls were resistant to their parents' constant warnings of danger and experienced it as irritating. In another instance, for example, I asked the girls what would they like to become one day and Ashlene spontaneously responded:

Extract 26

Ashlene: My pa wil hê ek moet 'n non word

Sherine: Jou pa wil hê dji moet 'n non word? Hoekom wil hy hê dji moet 'n non word..het dji hom al gevra?

Ashlene: Nee..ek weet nie..my pa bly nie by ons nie (J1P14:352)

Ashlene: My father wants me to become a nun

Sherine: Your father wants you to become a nun? Why does he want you to become a nun..have you already asked him?

Ashlene: No...I don't know..my father doesn't stay with us. (J1P14:352)

Ashlene's father's statement was probably expressed in jest, but it symbolised for me the reluctance of parents to see their daughters as sexual subjects. Teitelman (2004) suggests that narratives of risk and danger prevent girls from seeing themselves as sexual subjects, who have sexual feelings, and as sexual actors who can exercise control over their sexual actions. She also contends that to promote sexual health and empowerment among girls, it is imperative that parents acknowledge girls' sexual subjectivity and have open discussions about romantic relationships, pleasure and sexual safety. Failing this "parents might be reinforcing passive notions of female sexuality, in which risk is associated with victimization" (Teitelman, 2004, p. 1304) and sexual disempowerment. Further, Ussher (1989) suggests the preoccupation with the prevention of teenage pregnancy and early motherhood is also grounded in the ideology that a woman is "ruled by her womb" and primarily defined in terms of her sexual and reproductive capabilities.

6.4 Summary

In this theme I illustrated how menarche was a salient marker for these girls in the process of becoming young women, how they seem ill-prepared for menarche/menstruation and experienced this event with ambivalence. Contrary to the existing research that girls turn to their parents for information about menstruation (Gillooly, 2004; Koff & Rierdan, 1996), in this study the participants reported that their mothers/carers failed to equip them with knowledge of the experiential aspects of menstruation, but rather focused on the dangers and risks associated with menstruation. In contexts with such menstrual poverty (Crichton et al., 2013), factors such as the taboos, narratives of shame and concealment, and restrictive gender norms regarding menstruation are barriers to girls establishing a healthy sexual identity. Allied to this, negative psychosocial factors, such as the lack of preparation and guidance from their mothers or significant others prior

to and post menstruation, seem to promote a thriving climate for the girls to experience alienation and disconnection from their bodies (Martin, 1987). Gillooly (2004) suggests that having early, open intimate discussions with our daughters about the physical and experiential facets of menstruation, their changing bodies and romantic relationships, can foster the mother-daughter relationship, lay the foundations for a healthy self- and body-image, and allay girls' anxieties and fears about menstruation.

The girls also reported that at menarche their mothers imparted menstrual narratives of illness, danger and vulnerability, and secluded and restricted them to protect their daughters. Consequently, the girls are confined to the menstrual closet (Young, 2005) and tend to engage in self-objectification strategies, such as self-consciousness and monitoring their bodies to conceal any signs of menstruation and to ward off menstrual stigma. Allied to this, the girls also tend to experience anxiety and frustration because of the restrictions imposed on them at menarche. These negative outcomes feminists contend are the consequence of growing up in a patriarchal society where females are devalued, and where girls/women consequently engage in habitual self-monitoring as a "survival strategy in a sexually objectifying culture" (Roberts & Waters, 2004, p. 10). Despite their ambivalence about menstruation, the girls valorised their reproductive capabilities and motherhood, and regarded menstruation as a defining characteristic in their self-definition of womanhood. These discourses of motherhood and womanhood played a significant role in their experiences of gender and gender relations in the home.

Chapter 7: Gender relationships at home and with peers

7.1 Introduction

Consistent with social constructionism, the girls' experiences illustrate how we do not construct our identities in a vacuum. Rather, identity formation is a complex, dynamic process where we draw from the prevailing cultural discourses and social practices in the contexts in which we are embedded. Phillips (2000) states "it is not so much the case that discourses are imposed *on* young women, but rather that they operate *through* them. Individuals are 'carriers' of cultural discourses, both producing and reproducing them through our language, beliefs and social practices" (p. 19). In this study the girls' stories illustrate how they construct their gendered identities and "how they experience themselves in [their] relational landscape[s]" (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p. 16) in the home and with peers. We further see how the girls draw on and/or resist what is regarded as "normal, natural, or simply 'the way things are' or the way they 'should be'" (Phillips, 2000, p. 37).

Earlier I discussed how the participants are situated in highly gendered contexts where patriarchal narratives are the norm, and how the girls drew on these discourses, valorised motherhood, took pride in their competence in household chores and regarded these capabilities as integral to their aspirations to become "good" mothers/women. Despite their pride in these competencies, the inequity and privilege of men/boys in the home were sources of much discontent among the girls. This illustrates how the girls straddle ambivalent positions and simultaneously draw on and resist the dominant narratives of gender. In this next theme, I present the girls' experiences of gender relations in the home. Elaborating on their experiences of inequity, I illustrate how they experienced the inequity as a matter of injustice and discuss their resistance to the power and privilege of boys/men. I also report here about their experiences of their relationships with their

peers and how they negotiate these relationships. Table 7.1 illustrates the thematic map of the sub-themes and categories for this theme.

Table 7.1

Thematic Map: Gender Relationships at Home and with Peers

Sub-themes	Categories
Experiences of gender relations in the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is nice to be a man – he’s the boss in the home • Girls are compliant and responsible • Boys have more privileges and girls get no name brands • Girls’ strategies of resistance and felt experiences of the inequity
Girls’ relationships with their peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer relationships with girls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indirect aggression ○ Direct aggression • Peer relationships with boys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Platonic friendships ○ Romantic relationships

In the next section, I discuss the sub-themes and categories shown in Table 7.1.

7.2 Experiences of gender relations in the home

In the focus groups, the girls spent much time discussing the burden of care by women and girls in the home. They related how their parents enforced traditional notions of gender and taught them that a girl’s worth is measured by her ability to do household and caring tasks.

Extract 1

Jessy: Juffrou...my ma bly vir my sê..ek moet werk so as sy die dag...eendag doodgaan....as sy die dag eendag doodgaan dan wil niemand vir my hê nie...want ek is sleg ek kan nie huiswerk doen nie...en so...sy het vir my gesê..ek moet werk..eendag as sy doodgaan dan wil almal vir my hê..want ek kan werk. (J2P16:227)

Jessy: Miss, my mother keeps telling me..I must work because when she dies one day..when she dies one day then nobody wants me...because I am bad because I can't do housework..and so..she said to me..I must work...one day when she dies then everybody wants me... because I can work. (J2P16:227)

Mary: Juffrou, meeste van die meisies se ma's, juffrou, wil hê die meisie moet wees soos wat haar ma gewees het..is so..ja..soos my ma.....juffrou. My ma is vroeg uit die skool uit. My ma was nog op laerskool toe sy uit die skool uitgegaan het..toe werk my ma...juffrou en my ma was Graad twee of Graad drie..juffrou..toe was my ma uit die skool uit. Van daai tyd af werk my werk, tot nou toe nog werk my ma, juffrou. Ek moet hard werk..alles doen in die huis in...juffrou. (L3P5:0804)

Mary. Miss, most of the girls' mothers want their daughters to be like their mothers were..it is so..yes..like my mother..Miss. My mother left school early. My mother was still at primary school when she left school..so my mother worked..Miss and my mother was in Grade 2 or Grade 3..Miss..when my mother left school. From that time my mother's been working, till now my mother is still working Miss. I must work hard..do everything in the home Miss. (L3P5:0804)

Similarly, Ursula also reported how, despite her resistance, her brother threatened and forced her to do chores. Consequently, her mother's support for her brother seems to entrench traditional notions of gender that keeps Ursula in her place.

Extract 2

Ursula: Nee..ek sê elke keer vir my broer: "Jy wil net so sit en niks doen nie!" Dan sê hy: "Ja, hulle sê 'n mens moet die boompie buig terwyl hy nog jonk is." Dan sê ek: "Maar ek is nie 'n boom nie, ek is 'n mens." Dan sê hy vir my, "Ek sê mos vir jou..jy moet dit doen en klaar." Dan moet ek dit maar doen of hy..hy slaan my. Ruk en pluk my in die rondte en as ek vir my ma sê, dan sê hy "Sy bly jok! Wat het ek nou weer gemaak?" Dan glo my ma vir hom instead van vir my glo.

Sherine: Maar nou, wat meen hy nou? Is dit nou omdat jy 'n meisie is?

Ursula: Ja, juffrou. Hy sê vroumense moet die werk in die huis doen en die man moet werk vir geld. (L3P5:223)

Ursula: No..I tell my brother every time: "You just want to sit and do nothing!" Then he says: "Yes, they say one must bend the tree while it is still young." Then I say: "But I'm not a tree, I'm a person." Then he says to me: "I'm telling you...you just do it." Then I must do it or he..he hits me. Pulls and pushes me around and if I tell my mother, then he says: "She keeps on lying! What did I do now?" Then my mother believes him instead of me.

Sherine: But now what does he mean? Is it because you're a girl?

Ursula: Yes, Miss. He says women must do the work in the home and the man must work for money. (L3P5:223)

Below we also see how, when Erica's mother tried to involve her brother with chores, her father reprimanded her mother because washing the dishes is girls' work and could emasculate her brother. Thus, as the head of the household, Erica's father is maintaining the gender order in their home by policing the boundaries of and threats to masculinity.

Extract 3

Erica: Maar partykeer is dit nie lekker nie want dan sê hulle vir my: "Gaan was die skottelgoed op want dji's die meisie."

Edna: mm mm...en ek oek hoeka

Sherine: Wie sê vir jou so?

Erica: My pa, hy wat vir my sê...ek moet die skottelgoed gaan was want ek is die meisie

Sherine:Nou hoekom moet die meisie die skottelgoed opwas?

Laura: Want dis haar werk

Edna: huh huh....die seuns kan ook skottelgoed was [Group: Ja]

Erica: Sê maar my ma sê nou vir my broer hy moet uitvee dan sê my pa: "Laat Erica dit doen want sy's die meisie. Hou op om van hom 'n moffie maak." (K2P9:163)

Erica: But sometimes it's not nice because then they tell me: "Go wash the dishes because you're the girl."

Edna: Mm mmm...and me too.

Sherine: Who says this to you?

Erica: My father...he tells me...I must go and wash the dishes because I'm the girl.

Sherine: Now why must the girl wash the dishes?

Laura: Because it's her work.

Edna: Huh huh....the boys can also wash dishes [Group: Ja].

Erica: When my mother tells my brother that he must sweep, then my father says: "Let Erica do it because she's the girl. Stop making him a moffie". (K2P9:163)

Although this was a dominant narrative in this study, there were some cases where parents tried to implement gender equity in the home. Below Ursula tells us how her father helped her mother and Jackie reports how her brothers are expected to help with the chores.

Extract 4

Ursula: My pa is nie so erg nie, hy help my ma. My stiefpa...hy help my ma..my pa sal ook iets doen as dit vir hom is wat hy dit moet doen. Sê maar..uhm...my ma stryk miskien uhm my sustertjie se klere en my broer se klere, Juffrou..en dan ek..ek stryk my eie klere, juffrou en miskien my sustertjie se klere en my tweede oudste broer se klere, juffrou. En dan stryk ek dit. Maar as ek by my pa se goed kom..dan los ek dit Juffrou...want my pa..my pa stryk ook my pa se eie klere, juffrou. (L3P5: 780)

Ursula: My father is not so bad, he helps my mother. My stepfather, he helps my mother..my father will also do something if it is for himself. Say for example...uhm..my mother perhaps iron uhm my little sister's clothes and my brother's clothes, Miss..and then I..I iron my own clothes, Miss and maybe my little sister's clothes and my second eldest brother's clothes also Miss. And then I iron it. But if I get to my father's stuff..then I leave it Miss...because my father..my father also irons his own clothes Miss. (L3P5: 780)

Jackie: Maar die seunskinders kan nog altyd help in die huis...my ma sê vir Garth en vir Isaac: "Julle moet help..want dis meisie kinders die...is nie net hulle wat moet skoonmaak nie, julle moet ook skoonmaak...julle kan nie net eet en slaap en was nie."

June: Dis waar

Vicky: 'n Mens kry baie min seuns soos haar broers [group: mmm] jy kry baie min seuns soos dit

Sherine: So hulle is buitengewoon...jou broers, want jou ma

Jackie: My ma en my pa sê vir hulle...hulle moet skoon maak waar hulle gemors het...hulle moet skottelgoed was...elkeen kry 'n beurt om skottelgoed te was (K1P8:031)

Jackie: But the boys can always help in the home..my mother says to Garth and to Isaac: "You must help..these are girls..it's not just them that must clean, you must also help...you can't just eat and sleep and wash."

June: That's true.

Vicky: One finds a few boys like her brothers [Group: mmm] you find a few boys like that.

Sherine: So they are unusual...your brothers, because your mother

Jackie: My mother and father tell them...they must clean up where they messed..they must wash dishes...each one gets a turn to wash dishes. (K1P8:031)

The girls in the group supported Vicky's stance that there are few boys like Jackie's brothers. It is evident that parents regard it as their duty to prepare their daughters and sons for their future roles as carers/nurturers and providers/protectors. According to Ussher (1989), this is typical of

patriarchal contexts where “the majority of mothers prepare their daughters for the restrictions which they themselves have lived by in order that their daughters are not misfits” (p. 33). Thus, we see how through explicit teachings and threats/violence patriarchal ideologies are policed and sustained, thereby perpetuating male privilege, female subservience and limiting the opportunities for girls’ and boys’ development.

7.2.1 It is nice to be a man – he’s the boss in the home

In all the focus groups, the girls related experiences of how their fathers were like bosses in the home, refused to participate in the mundane tasks and how men controlled the women and children. The following extracts illustrate how men were absent from the home and how violence ensued when the women challenged male authority.

Extract 5

Charmaine: Dis lekker om ‘n man te wies..want hy doen mos alles wat hy wil doen..niemand sê vir hom nie

Ivana: Want hy is mos daai ou...hy wil mos nou net doen en sê=

Carlene: Hy is mos die baas in die huis...hy kan kom wanneer hy wil...hy kan naweke...wanneer dit Vrydags kom dan kan hy uitgaan..slaap uit..volgende week kom hy huis toe..alles..hulle is geskei vir die naweek

Sherine: Ok...so dit lyk vir my mans kan maak en kom en gaan soos hulle wil

Agnes: Dis waar juffrou, want as ‘n vrou laat by die huis kom..dan moet sy nou vir die pa sê waar sy vandaan kom en as die pa laat by die huis kom dan moet die vrou nie vra nie...want dan gaan sy geslaan word

Sherine: So Agnes sê..dat as ‘n vrou uitgaan dan moet sy amper verslag doen en as die man=

Carlene: uhh..sy moet verslag doen..sy moet sê waar sy vandaan kom..maar as hy inkom dan kan dji nie vra nie...hulle sê sommer vir jou=

Julie: “Hou jou mond!”...uh..of “Vir wat is dji so besig?”=

Ivana: Ek sal vir hom vra..want hy kan nie vir my kom sê nie..hoekom...as ek wil uitgaan dan wil hy alles weet..maar as hy uitgaan dan kan ek nie vra nie...ek sal=

Carlene: Nee..dji dink dji vra..dan lê dji....dan lê dji op die grond [group laughter] (L1P4:079)

Charmaine: It's nice to be a man...because he does everything he wants to do..nobody can tell him.

Ivana: Because he's that guy...he just wants to do and say=

Carlene: =He's the boss in the home...he can come when he wants to...weekends he can...when its Fridays then he can go out...sleep out..next week he comes home...everything..they are divorced for the weekend.

Sherine: Ok...so it seems the men can do and come as they please.

Agnes: It's true Miss, because when a woman comes home late...then she must tell the father where she comes from and when the father comes home late then she mustn't ask...because then she gets beaten.

Sherine: So Agnes says..that when a woman goes out then she almost has to report to the man=

Carlene: =Uhh..she must report...she must say where she comes from..but when he comes in then you can't ask...they'll tell you=

Julie: =“Shut your mouth!”...uh or “Why are you so busy?”=

Ivana: =I will ask him...because he can't come and tell me...why...when I want to go out then he wants to know everything...but when he wants to go out then I can't ask..I will=

Carlene: =No..you think you'll ask..then you'll lie..then you'll lie on the ground [laughter]. (L1P4:079)

Consistent with patriarchal discourses, in the following extracts, the girls also relate how men exerted power in different facets of women's lives and how it compromises women's autonomy and life choices. This seems to cast women in childlike and dependent roles and not as partners and equals.

Extract 6

Mandy: Die mansmense..want djy as vrou en kind..bly onder sy dak..djy moet alles vir hom vra...hy wil oek alles weet..alles wat in die huis gebeur..wil hy weet...djy moet alles vir hom vertel...djy moet vir hom sê..wat gaan aan..vra om iets te doen

Sandra: Ja...want hulle wil net sterk wees....hulle wil net...as djy iets moet doen...dan moet djy dit doen...anderste word djy sommer nou geklap

Sherine: Ok

Mandy: Hulle wil jou altyd overpower....en..besluite vir jou neem...djy kan nie jou eie besluite neem nie...as djy 'n werk wil hê wat vir jou beter is..dan sê hulle..nee..dis lekker op die plaas...en so...maar djy wil 'n goeie toekoms vir jou bepaal

Sherine: So dit lyk vir my die mans... bepaal baie hoe die vrouens se lewens is..soos wat julle nou vir my verduidelik..nou hoekom laat die vroumense dit toe?

Sandra: Omdat hulle bang is...hulle wil nie praat nie...hulle is bang hulle word geslaan..as die man iets sê..sy moet iets doen..dan doen sy dit...want

Jasmine: Sy is bang die man slaan haar...die man maak net so maak (clicks her finger) dan spring hulle..of as hy net iets sê..dan doen hulle dit

Julie: Of hulle is bang die mansense los hulle miskien nou (L2P2:515)

Mandy: The men..because you as a woman and child..live under his roof..you must ask him everything...he also wants to know everything..everything that happens in the home..he wants to know...you must tell him everything...you must tell him..what's going on..ask permission to do something.

Sandra: Yes..because they just want to be strong....they just want to...when you must do something...then you must do it...else you get a smack just now.

Sherine: Ok.

Mandy: They always want to overpower you....and..make choices for you...you can't make your own decisions...if you want a job that is better for you..then they say: "No..it's nice on the farm"..and so...but you want to determine a good future for yourself.

Sherine: So it seems to me the men...determine how the women's lives are..as you are explaining to me now...now why do the women allow this?

Sandra: Because they are afraid...they don't want to talk...they are afraid that they will be beaten..if the man says something..she must do something..then she must do it...because=

Jasmine: =She is scared the man will beat her...the man just do this (snaps her finger) then they jump..or if he says something..then they do it.

Julie: Or they are afraid the men will perhaps leave them. (L2P2:515)

Kathleen: Die man wil nie hê die vrou moet werk nie..en hy wil hê die vrou moet net by die huis bly...hy wil alleen werk...as hy in die aande huis toe kom...en dan moet die vrou..sy moet alles vir hom vra...wat sy nou wil hê..en wat sy nou moet maak

Sherine: So Kathleen sê dji...sommige mans wil nie hê vroumense moet nie werk nie?

Kathleen: Ja

Sherine: Ek wonder nou hoekom is dit so

Jasmine: Hy wil die vrou regeer..ja..jou geld moet na hom toe kom...en hy hou ook self sy geld...in plaas van..dat hy sy pay slippie na jou toe te bring..en so en so en so..en dan moet hy nou ...vra nou ... vir jou vra..vir sy geld vir sy skuld...en dji haal nou geld uit vir jou skuld...en dan werk julle altwee met die geld saamnee...hy wil jou geld hê...hy wil gebruik maak van jou geld....en dit opsuip...en tekere gaan

Sandra: Want sodra hy sy pay pakkie kry..dan stap hy kantien toe...dan gaan drink hy nou sy geld uit...en wanneer die vrou vra..umm... "Waarvandaan kom dji nou?" [dan sê hy] "Dji vra my niks." en die vrou vra: "Waar is die kosgeld?" dan sê hy "Sien dji ek het enige fokken kosgeld?"

Jasmine: "Ek het gewerk vir my geld."...ja

Sherine: Kathleen het gesê dat sommige mans wil nie hê dat vroumense moet werk nie..want dit lyk vir my mans wil vrouens rule

Jasmine: Overpower

Sherine: Overpower is die woord wat djy sê...ok

Mandy: Of partykeers is dit so...die man wil nie hê die vrou moet werk nie..want ..hy wil wys hy.. wil 'n man wees..hy wil..hy wil.. kan sien mense sê.. “Maar..umm..djy’s nogals ‘n lekker man.. djy ..djy laat nie jou vrou werk nie...djy werk nogal lekker vir die huis.”...en so aan...hy wil ..hy wil sy vrou wys...dat hy lief is vir haar. (L2P2:550)

Kathleen: The man doesn't want the woman to work...and he wants the woman just to stay at home...he wants to work alone..when he comes home at night...and then the woman must..she must ask him for everything..what she wants..and what she has to

Sherine: So Kathleen are you saying...some men don't want the women to work?

Kathleen: Yes.

Sherine: I'm wondering now why it's like that?

Jasmine: He wants to rule the woman..yes..your money must come to him..and he also keeps his own money...instead...that he brings his paypacket to you..and so and so..and then he must..ask you for money to pay his debt..and you take out money for your debt...and then both of you work with the money...no...now he wants your money...he wants to use your money...and spend it on drinking...and going about.

Sandra: Because as soon as he gets his paypacket..then he walks to the bottle store...then he spends his money on wine...and when the woman asks...umm.. “Where do you come from now?” [then he says] “Don't you ask me anything?” and the woman asks: “Where is the money for food?” then he says “Do I have any fucking money for food?”

Jasmine: “I worked for my money.” Yes.

Sherine: Kathleen said that some men don't want the women to work...because it seems to me as if men want to rule the

Jasmine: Overpower.

Sherine: Overpower is the word that you're using...ok.

Mandy: Or sometimes it's like this...the man doesn't want the woman to work...because..he wants to show...he wants to be a man...he wants..he wants to see people say: “But..umm..you're actually a nice man.. you ..you don't let your wife work...you're actually working well for the home.”...and so...he wants ..he wants to show his wife...that he loves her. (L2P2:550)

This control and dominance of women seems to worsen at weekends when there is alcohol abuse, which results in dysfunction and violence.

Extract 7

Chalene: Die mans...in die week dan is dit nou reg...dan maak hulle altwee besluite in die week...maar Vrydagsaande en hy drink...dan wil hy haar vertel: “**Die is my huis**...as dji wil uitgaan dan kan dji maar gaan...maar hier in die huis is ek die baas...en ek maak besluite.” Sy kan niks sê nie.

Julie: En as die man dronk is...dan sit hy sommer die vrou en die kinders uit die huis...dan moet hulle buitekant in die koue staan

Chalene: Of hy jaag die vrou..of hy slat die vrou...die vrou is bang vir hom...dan hardloop die vrou die hele plaas rond [laughter]

Charmaine: Dan moet sy huis besoek doen...dan hardloop sy..en sy slaap daar waar sy kan...dan in die week kan sy weer terugkom...dan is die fight oor (L1P4:131)

*Carlene: The men...in the week then it is alright...in the week then they both make decisions...but Friday evenings and he drinks...the he wants to tell her: “**This is my house**...if you want to go out then you can...but here in this house I am the boss..and I make the decisions.” She can’t say anything.*

Julie: And if the man is drunk..then he puts his wife and children out...then they must stand outside in the cold.

Carlene: Or he chases the woman..or he hits the woman..the woman is afraid of him..then she runs around on the farm [laughter].

Charmaine: Then she must do home visits..then she runs..and she sleeps where she can...then in the week she can come back again...then the fight is over. (L1P4: 131)

Zena: Dan sê ek vir my pa: “Jy slat nie my ma nie. Jy slat nie my ma nie.” En as my ma slat: “Jy slat nie my pa nie, jy slat nie my pa nie.” Nou my pa het mos ‘n kar. Nou partykeer, dan sit ek hom altyd uit. Dan sit ek hom uit..dan sê ek: “Jy bly nie meer hier nie.” Want hy’t mos nie daar gewerk nie...my ma’t mos gewerk vir die huis. Dan sê ek: “Jy bly nie meer hier nie, jy moet gaan.” Dan wil hy nie gaan nie..hy wil my slat. Dan staan ek so, dan sê ek: “Raak aan my! Raak aan my!” [uitdagend] My uncle bly mos daar. Dan sê ek: “Raak aan my.” Dan raak hy nie aan my nie. Dan sê ek: “Gaan met die kar!” Dan sê my ma ek moet die poeliese bel, dan bel ek die poeliese..dan sê hulle vir hom..hy moet gaan. Dan gaan hy. As hulle weg is..dan kom hy weer. En dan sê ek vir hom..hy moet gaan. Hy soek mos net skoor daar. Die huis is deurmekaar alles is nou deurmekaar..die banke en goed is omgedolwe. (L3P5:1469)

Zena: Then I say to my father: “You don’t hit my mother. You don’t hit my mother.” And when my mother hits: “You don’t hit my father! You don’t hit my father!” Now my father has a car. Now sometimes, I always put him out. Then I put him out..then I say: “You don’t live here anymore.” Because he didn’t work...my mother worked for the house. Then I say: “You don’t live here anymore, you must go.” Then he doesn’t want to go..he wants to hit me. Then I stand like this, then I say: “Touch me! Touch me!” [challenging] My uncle lives with us. Then I say: “Touch me!” Then he doesn’t touch me. Then I say: “Go with the the car.” Then my mother says I must phone the police, then I phone the police..then they tell him...he must go. He’s just looking for

trouble. The house is upside down, everything is a mess..the benches and stuff are turned upside down. (L3P5:1469)

The girls' experiences of the power dynamics in gender relations and the subservience of women/girls in their homes are consistent with the findings of other local studies (Abrahams et al., 1999; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003, 2004; Shefer et al., 2008). These authors similarly found traditional roles were normative and their participants invoked discourses of culture and tradition to explain the power relations and gender roles in their relationships. From the quotations above, it is evident that the girls' fathers and the men in their contexts similarly draw on patriarchal discourses of masculinities that define men as the head of the household, where authority and power over their families are integral to their understanding of what it means to be a father/husband/man. As Abrahams et al. (1999) and Boonzaier and De La Rey (2003, 2004) found, here we similarly see how men control women and how failure to comply with his rules and regulations, or even attempts to undermine his authority could result in violence. In situations where men were unemployed, the girls reported that men still exercised control and conflict often arose over the women's earnings. In the quotation below, Ivana uses a powerful metaphor to describe how women have to care for men because they "*lie on her breast*".

Extract 8

Ivana: Die vrou moet...sy...sommige tye dan doen die vrou alleen die werk en so...sy werk...en die man...so...sommige tye lê die man net by die huis...lê op haar bors..en wag vir haar geld...maak staat op haar geld..hy werk nie..en hy is nog lui om die huis skoon te maak..hy wil nie na die kinders kyk nie...die vrou moet net alleen na die kinders kyk...die kinders skoonmaak...die huis skoonmaak

Lauren: Dis nie lekker om 'n vrou te wees nie..'n vrou...moet alles doen in die huis..en...sy is ook daar..sy is ook daar..om kinders voor te bring...en dis ook nie lekker vir 'n vroumens om kinders voor te bring nie...en party vroumense kry baie swaar want hulle manne werk nie...en hulle...moet alles doen...hulle werk...hulle moet vir hulle kinders sorg...die man wil niks doen nie..hy lê net by die huis en wag nou vir die vrou se geld..en dan slaat hulle ook die vrouens vir hulle geld

Charmaine: Is nie lekker om 'n vrou deesdae te wees nie...want 'n man..want hy sien hy is die man..wil hy meer mag oor die vrou hê..hy wil net vir die vrou besluit...en..hy is ook nie altyd een wat wil werk nie...hy wil..as die vrou uit die....miskien..is die einde van die maand en die vrou pay..dan wil hy omtrent die meeste hê..nie eers die

helfte nie..maar die meeste...maar die vrou het hard gewerk en hy lê by die huis.. want die man doen niks...hy lê net (L1P4:19)

Ivana: The woman must...she...sometimes the woman does the work alone and so...she works...and the man...so...sometimes the man just lie at home...lies on her breast..and waits for her money...depends on her money..he doesn't work..and he is still lazy to clean the house..he doesn't want to take care of the children...the woman must just look after the children alone...clean the children...clean the house.

Lauren: It's not nice to be a woman...a woman...must do everything in the house..and...she is also there....she is also there...to bear children...and it's not nice for a woman to bear children...and some women struggle because their men don't work...and they...must do everything...they work...they must care for the children...the man wants to do nothing..he lies at home and waits for the woman's money..and then they also hit the women for their money.

Charmaine: It's not nice to be a woman nowadays...because a man..because he sees he is the man..he wants more power over the woman..he just wants to decide for the woman...and...sometimes he's not also one that wants to work...he wants..when the woman comes from....maybe..it's the end of the month and the woman was paid..then he almost wants the most..not even the half..but the most...but the woman worked hard and he lies at home..because the man does nothing...he just lies. (L1P4:19)

Above, Mandy (L2P2:550) states that sometimes a man does not want a woman to work because he wants to show that he loves her and he wants other people to say that he is “*actually a nice man ...you're actually working well for the home*”. Her statement suggests how the performance of masculinities, what it means to be a man, is a social process that is constructed and validated within communities of practice. This is consistent with previous studies (Boonzaier, 2005; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003; Dworkin et al., 2012; Mkhize, 2006) that illustrate how being a good provider is synonymous with successful masculinities and affirms men's self-respect and self-worth. Consequently, when men are unemployed and their partners are the primary breadwinners, researchers found men often experienced this as emasculation, a loss of their dignity and status as head of the home, and the respect of others as they were unable to provide for their families materially (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003; Dworkin et al., 2012; Mkhize, 2006). This disrupts traditional gender roles hence men often use violence “not just to maintain control and dominance but to counter real or imagined threats to ‘manhood’” (Abrahams et al., 1999, p. 16).

From the extracts above, it is evident that some men perpetrated economic and physical violence, while some acted out of self-interest by spending their wages on alcohol and disappearing from the home for extended periods. One could also interpret this as their attempts to enforce control and maintain their masculinity and unemployed men's strategies to contain their feelings of vulnerability for being "dependent" on their wives. Morrell (2006) maintains that such "toxic masculinities" are not only detrimental to the well-being of women and children and perpetuate gender oppression, but it also disconnects men from their families and from themselves. He suggests that it limits the opportunities for men to explore the nurturing and relational facets of themselves and their relationships.

The few cases reported in this study, where some men participated in household chores, are consistent with other studies suggesting a changing trend in gender relations in South Africa (Dworkin et al., 2012; Morrell & Richter, 2006). However, the dominant narrative of this study suggests that patriarchal ideologies still inform gender relations in the homes of these participants. This manifested in traditional notions of gender roles and the dominance and control of men in their homes. Zena's statement, "*it seems sometimes as if there's no father in the house*" (L3P5:62) is also significant because it illustrates how fathers, despite their physical presence, could also be emotionally absent from the home. Consequently, the burden of care for the home and the children chiefly rested on the shoulders of women. Below, the girls relate how their mothers take on the "second shift" (Hochschild & Machung, 2012), while their fathers exercised "privileged irresponsibility" and spent time on leisure and socialising with their friends.

Extract 9

Julie: Djy [vrouens] het 'n klomp verantwoordelikhede...umm..djy moet sorg dat jou kos reg is op die regte tyd...djy moet die huis skoonmaak, miskien het djy nog kleinkinders..en nou moet djy nog miskien jou umm wasgoed was..en baie dinge..miskien kom djy nou laat uit die werk uit dan moet djy nog kosmaak en dan, djy is mos moeg ook nog...as djy van die werk af kom...die mansmense wil net so daar sit..hulle sal nog nie dink om die kinders te was en so nie

Sandra: uhh...die mans wil net so heeldag lê en ontvang...ontbyt..en sulke goeter..hulle wil net TV kyk heeldag..kyk vir Days en vir Sewende Laan...die manne hulle wil niks doen nie..die vrou moet heeldag voor die kospotte staan..en hulle kyk vir Days..lekker heel agteroor sit..die vrou is net so moeg soos hy

Jasmine: jho!...hulle doen eintlik niks nie, maar hy het sulke baie pligte om te doen...soos djy as vrou...hy moet eintlik tuin skoonmaak, maar djy as vrou moet deesdae self die..jou tuin skoonmaak..en sulke goeters doen wat die mans moet doen..djy moet self daai goeters doen wat die mans moet doen..hy wil niks doen nie. En as dinge nie reg lyk na hulle sin nie dan, stress hulle of dan raak hulle dinge kwyd..umm..vloek vir jou...jy's nie goed genoeg nie...jy kan gerus vir jou 'n ander man kry...en beginne sommer aan die vroumense te slaan..en so...ja..hulle is baie vermakerig (L2P2:161)

Julie: You [women] have many responsibilities..umm..you must see that your food is ready on time..you must clean the house, maybe you still have small children...and now maybe you must still do your washing..and many things..maybe you come late from work and you must still cook and then, you are also tired..when you come from work...the men just want to sit..they won't think to wash the children.

Sandra: Uhh...the men just want to lie the whole day and receive..breakfast and things like that..they just want to watch TV the whole day..watch Days and Seventh Avenue²⁵...the men, they want to do nothing..the woman must stand in front of the stove the whole day..and they watch Days..sit back nicely..the woman is just as tired as he is.

Jasmine: Gee! They actually do nothing, but he has just as many tasks as the woman..he must actually clean the garden..but nowadays as a woman you must clean the ...your garden yourself and the things a man must do..he wants to do nothing. And if things don't look right to their liking, then they stress or say lots of things..umm..swears at you..you're not good enough..you might as well take another man..and starts hitting the women..and so...yes, they are very spiteful. (L2P2:161)

Lauren: Byvoorbeeld..umm...wanneer 'n vrou en die man nou by die huis kom...sy gaan nou haar kos doen...en dan...sê hy..hy gaan die tuin regmaak..en dan doen hy dit nie..dan gaan hy miskien nou.. na sy ander tjommies toe..en dan sit hulle daar en hulle praat ..miskien nou oor hulle dinge..en dan besluit die een mos nou hulle gaan vanaand... 'n bier koop...of nou iets om te drink...vir hulle te koop...en dan vergeet die man ook om daai werk te doen. (L1P4:31)

Lauren: For example..umm..when a woman and a man come home..she goes and does her food..and then..say he..he goes and fixes the garden..and then he doesn't do it..then perhaps he goes..to his other friends..and then they sit and talk..maybe now about their things..and then one decides tonight they're going to..buy a beer..or something to drink..and then the man forgets to do that work. (L1P4:31)

Thus, their mothers not only manage all the caring tasks in the home, they also sometimes take on the tasks men are supposed to do. Added to this, their fathers expected their wives and daughters

²⁵ Days of Our Lives and Seventh Avenue are soap operas on television.

to serve them and if the women failed to meet their needs, the men denigrated and became abusive towards their wives or daughters.

Extract 10

Zelma: mmm...ja soos...as my ma uit die werk kom dan moet sy nog kom kosmaak...um..my ma het gewerk en my pa het gewerk..dan wil my pa nog hê my ma moet vir **hom** nog koffie maak..dan skel my ma..[Edna: dis waar] want hulle altwee het gewerk..dan sê my ma sy het nie by die huis gesit nie...en my ma werk nog swaarder as wat my pa werk..my pa...hy sit onder die koelte boompies..maar my ma werk in 'n warme fabriek (K2P9:393)

*Zelma: Mm..yes like..when my mother comes from work then she must still come and cook..my mother worked and my father worked..then my father expects my mother to still make **him** coffee..then my mother scolds..[Edna: that's true] because they both worked..then my mother says she didn't sit at home..and my mother still works harder than my father..my father sits under the shade trees...but my mother works in a warm factory. (K2KP9:393)*

Thandi: Die man kom sit net voor die TV, “Maak vir my koffie” of hy lees koerant of hy sit...dan skree hy: “Thandi, kom trek uit my skoene!” Dis baie lekker om 'n man te wees, hy sit met 'n bier in die hand en kyk die sokker (laughter)

Sherine: So die meisie kinders moet die pa se skoene ook uittrek en as julle dit nie wil doen nie?

Thandi: Dan skel hulle jou...jy's lui...dan kry jy nie sakgeld nie....dan is jy sommer ingehok vir 'n hele maand...dan kan jy nie loop nie [group: uhhh dis waar] (K3P12:107)

Thandi: The man comes sits in front of the TV, “Make me coffee” or he reads the newspaper or he sits..then he shouts: “Thandi...come take off my shoes!” It's very nice to be a man, he sits with a beer in the hand and watches soccer [laughter].

Sherine: So the girls must take off their father's shoes and if you don't want to do it?

Thandi: Then they scold you..you are lazy..then you don't get pocket money...then you're grounded for a whole month...then you can't walk [Group: uhh that's true]. (K3P12:107)

In this category, I illustrated how the girls experienced their fathers' lack of sharing the household chores as a means of dominance, expressing their authority and status as head of the home. The men's reported behaviours are consistent with patriarchal ideologies of “masculinity and femininity [that] permit men to avoid having to take, or to think much about, the responsibilities for the caring tasks assigned to women” (Tronto, 2013, p. 68). Tronto posits that

patriarchy gives men the “production [provider] and protection pass” because their primary function is to demonstrate their care for their families by providing for them materially and protecting them. From the girls’ stories, it is also evident that narratives of patriarchy and violence reproduce and keep the boundaries of the different forms of care work intact; men in the public domain and women in the private domain. This maintains the privilege and power of men in the home. Consequently, the girls’ brothers also seem to play a significant role in perpetuating these narratives of control and traditional gender ideologies.

7.2.2 Girls are compliant and responsible

Another difference the participants highlighted revolved around boys’ laziness. Most of the girls portrayed their brothers, and boys in general, as defiant and free to come and go and do as they please. On the other hand, they constructed girls as passive, compliant and hardworking. The girls were resentful that their parents expected them to shoulder most of the chores in the home and to be obedient.

Extract 11

Mandy: En ons meisies is baie sag.....as ons ouers miskien met ons praat dan huil ons altyd dan gaan ons in ons kamer en huil.....hulle.....gee tale terug

Ivana: Soos by my ouma...ek bly mos by my ouma..as my ouma vir my nefie sê om iets te doen..dan gaan hy dit nie nou doen nie...dan loop hy..dan kom hy laat vanaand se kante.. kom hy in...dan vra my ouma: “Het jy dit gedoen?”..dan sê hy.. nee, hy het dit nog nie gedoen nie...dan skel my ouma nie vir hom nie...dan sê sy hy kan dit maar môre doen...maar as dit nou **ek** was wat dit nou nie doen nie..dan word dit op my kop gekerm dan moet ek dit **nou** doen..en ek loop mos nou nie rond nie..dan moet ek maar in die huis bly en dit maar doen

Charmaine: As ‘n seunskind miskien...byvoorbeeld..my pa sê vir hom hy moet in die tuin gaan werk..dan gaan hy dit nie dadelik doen nie...hy gaan eerste sê..nee hy wil eerste nog sokker gaan speel..hy wil eers na sy tjomies toe gaan...hy gaan vergeet van daai werk..maar die meisiekind..[Ivana cuts in: Sy moet dit dadelik doen] sy moet onthou sy moet daai werk doen ..hulle worry nie meer van die seunskind nie

Sherine: So wat is die algemene probleme wat julle as meisies het daar waar julle bly?

Ivana: Die meisies kan nie sê nie ... soos hulle wil nie... maar die seuns kan maak soos hulle wil ..hulle sê wat hulle wil

Agnes: uhh..hulle het meer voorregte. (L1P3:40)

Mandy: And us girls are very soft...perhaps when our parents scold us then we always cry then we go to our rooms and cry...but they...back chat.

*Ivana: Like at my granny's house...I live with my granny..when my granny tells my cousin to do something..then he won't do it immediately..then he walks...and then late tonight he comes in...then my granny asks: "Did you do it?"..then he says no, he did not do it yet...then my granny does not scold him..then she says he can do it tomorrow..but if it was **me** who didn't do it..then she nags on my head and then I must do it **now**...and I don't walk around..then I must stay indoors and just do it.*

Charmaine: When a son perhaps..for example...my father says to him he must go work in the garden...then he does not do it immediately...he will first say...no, he first wants to go and play soccer..he first wants to go to his friends..then he forgets about that work...but the girl..[Ivana cuts in: She must do it immediately] she must remember she must do that work..they don't worry about the boys any more.

Sherine: So what are the common problems that you as girls have where you stay?

Ivana: The girls can't say...what they like...but the boys can do as they please..they say what they like.

Agnes: Uhh..they have more privileges. (L1P3:40)

Mandy's quotation above illustrates some of the polarised strategies that girls and boys seem to adopt in response to the parental authority and the double standards in their homes. As Ivana spoke, she raised her voice and became visibly angry about these double standards. This frustration was also prevalent among the majority of the girls in all the focus groups. It was apparent that most girls do not challenge the status quo or express their needs. Most of them seem to vent their frustrations by crying or retreating in silence. The following quotations illustrate how the girls are compelled to follow their parents'/carers' instructions.

Extract 12

Sherine: Nou wat doen jou ma as julle kla?

Ashlene: Sy skel my uit...dan sy sê ek moet ophou kla...ons is meisies...eendag as ons 'n man gaan vat dan moet ons kan sorg vir ons man en werk vir hulle

Leigh: Juffrou, by ons huis is daar beurte...elke aand kry ons 'n kans om skottelgoed te was...maar as dit my broer se beurt is dan wil hy dit nie doen nie ...umm..dan moet ek dit doen...dan sê my ma ek moet dit net doen....ek sal nie doodgaan van opwas nie (J1P14:29)

Sherine: So wat sal jou ma sê as djy kla?

Ivana: Dan sê my ma vir my ek **moet dit doen** want sy sê vir my ek moet dit doen....sy vra nie vir daai persoon nie, want sy wil hê ek moet dit doen want ek is haar dogter ek moet dit net doen

Sherine: En as djy sê djy wil dit nie doen nie...wat gebeur dan?

Carlene: Djy kry nie geld nie of

Ivana: Sy koop nie vir my wat ek wil hê nie..en dan **sê sy vir** my...sy gaan nie vir my koop nie..want sy wil hê ek moet daai werk doen...dan kry ek dit nou nie as ek dorp toe gaan nie...of sy skel my uit.... dan sê sy vir my: “Jy’s lui.” en sulke goed [laughs].. “Julle wil so alles hê maar julle wil niks doen nie.”.....hulle skel ‘n mens uit...hulle slaan ‘n mens sommige tye (L1P3:45)

Sherine: Now what does your mother do when you complain?

Ashlene: She scolds me...then she says I must stop complaining...we are girls...one day when we take a man then we must be able to care for our man and work for them.

Leigh: Miss, at our home there are turns..every evening you get a turn to wash the dishes...but when it comes to my brother’s turn then he does not want to do it..umm..then I must do it..then my mother says I must just do it..I won’t die from washing up. (J1P14:29)

Sherine: So what will your mother say when you complain?

*Ivana: Then my mother says to me I **must just do it** because she’s telling me to do it..she’s not asking another person, because she wants me to do it because I am her daughter and I must just do it*

Sherine: And if you say you don’t want to do it..what happens then?

Carlene: You don’t get money or

*Ivana: She won’t buy me what I want..and then **she tells me**...she won’t buy me things..because she wants me to do that work..then I won’t get anything when we go to town..or she scolds me..then she tells me: “You are lazy.” and such things [laughs]: “You want everything but you want to do nothing.” They scold a person..sometimes they hit a person. (L1P3:45)*

Sherine: Nou, nou kry die broers en die meisies...het julle dieselfde...word die pligte verdeel in die huis?

Ursula: Nee, Juffrou! Nee Juffrou. Net om die jaart skoon te maak is al werk wat hulle doen. Die meisies doen as en hulle doen absoluut niks. Niks, niks, niks!.....al wat hulle doen is geraas maak.....hulle speel net die hele dag.

Zena: Juffrou, as my broer uit die skool uitkom, dan sit hy net sy sakkie neer, en dan eet hy... en dan as hy klaar geëet het, dan slaap hy. En as hy opgestaan het, dan loop hy...dan loop hy...sy way in.

Sherine: So...en en jou ma? Wat doen jou ma?

Zena: My ma doen niks nie, juffrou.

Sherine: Nou wat dink julle is die redes hiervoor?

Ursula: Hulle dink hulle is groot.

Merle: My ma skel partykeers vir my broer as hy gaan en hy kom....en hy gaan en hy kom....en hy eet en hy gaan en hy kom en hy eet, maar hy doen niks om te gaan en kom en eet nie. Al wat hy doen is loop en mors....en slaap. (L3P5:128)

Sherine: Now do the brothers and the girls...have you the same..are the chores shared in the home?

Ursula: No Miss..No Miss. Just to clean the yard, that is the only work they have to do. The girls do everything and they do absolutely nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing! All that they do is make a noise....they play the whole day.

Zena: Miss, when my brother comes from school, then he puts down his bag and then he eats...and when he's finished eating, then he sleeps. And when he stands up then he walks. He walks his own way.

Sherine: So..and your mother? What does your mother do?

Zena: My mother does nothing, Miss.

Sherine: Now what do you think are the reasons for this?

Ursula: They think they are big.

Merle: Sometimes my mother scolds my brother when he comes and goes...and he comes and goes...and he eats and goes and he comes and he eats, but he does nothing to come and go and to eat. All he does is walk and mess and sleep. (L3P5:128)

From their stories, it appears that girlhood seems to be the period for grooming and preparing girls for their future gender roles. In contrast, Merle's reference to her brother's coming and going illustrates the freedom boys have and how they seem to shirk their responsibilities in the home. All the participants in this study supported this position and portrayed their brothers as lazy and defiant. Jackie's emphatic statement, "*The girls do everything and they do absolutely nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing!*" captures the inequity and double standards in their homes. Parents do not seem to consistently discipline or hold the boys accountable for not doing their household chores. Consequently, the girls must take on their brother's chores, thus limiting the girls' freedom, recreation time and opportunities to have fun.

In contrast to the girls' responses, by refusing to do chores and back chatting, the boys seem to be asserting their power and challenging authority. Although there seems to be an intention of equity regarding chores, the parents/carers are apparently providing the boys more latitude. These

findings are consistent with previous research where girls are allocated more domestic chores compared to boys (Hillbrecht, Zuzanek, & Mannell, 2008; Williams, 2002). Williams similarly found that parents silenced adolescent girls when they complained about the inequity.

In the focus groups, the participants eloquently verbalised their dissatisfaction, however, most of them seem to refrain from expressing their dissent at home. These findings are consistent with those of Gaganakis (2003). Gaganakis found that on a verbal level, the girls in her study eloquently resisted traditional notions of gender, but in practice they were compliant and shouldered most of the household chores and cared for their siblings. For the girls in the current study, there appear to be direct emotional and material consequences when they verbalise their dissent and/or resist the inequity. Besides physical punishment, they also risk being branded as lazy, and/or their mothers/carers would withdraw their material privileges, such as their pocket money or buying them goods. Although most of the girls in the current study were compliant, a few girls resisted the double standards and inequity in the home and actually voiced their dissent against the preferential treatment their brothers received. However, the girls reported that their resistance seems to be futile, as their complaining does not yield any results. Instead, their parents respond to their resistance with admonishments about their future gender roles and/or physical punishment. Consequently, they grudgingly shoulder a larger share of the household chores, while their brothers on the other hand, display “privileged irresponsibility” (Tronto, 1993). Consequently, some girls tend to enact psychological resistance (Brown & Gilligan, 1993) by self-silencing and complying with their parents’ demands.

According to Gilligan (1993), during adolescence girls tend to lose their voices when they consciously silence themselves and refrain from expressing opinions that could hurt others and/or negatively affect their relationships. Through their self-silencing girls bring “an inauthentic self into [their] relationships with others” (Tolman & Porche, 2000, p. 365). Jack (2011) posits that, although self-silencing on the surface seems to maintain harmonious relationships, persistent self-

silencing is counter-productive and could result in low self-esteem, loss of voice and depression among girls. She further suggests that it not only “brings disconnection where harmony is sought” (p. 525), but also limits self-development and results in “feelings of entrapment, isolation, and hopelessness” (p.525).

Kimmel (2000) contends that it is through such everyday activities in families that “children learn what it means to be boys or girls, and it is through those same events that gender inequality is reproduced between grown up women and men” (p. 126). The boys’ privileged irresponsibility, Tronto (1993; 2013) argues, is a consequence of a hierarchical system of privilege and entitlement where boys/men regard household duties or care work as the female domain, while boys/men have other responsibilities that are more “important”. In the afore-mentioned discussion, we see how mothers sanction the girls’ resistance to conform to the gendered expectations and inequity. It is evident how the seeds of girls’ subservience in the gender order are planted and entrenched. Although the boys’ refusal to do their chores is construed as “laziness”, it could also be viewed as a form of resistance to doing “women’s” work and avoiding anything that is considered feminine (Kimmel, 2000). Thus, this resistance, back chatting and refusal to do their chores, could be classed as a display of power, “some form of ‘muscular masculinity’: ways of being that require the public flexing of real or metaphorical muscles as part of a demonstration of their maleness” (Paechter, 2007, p. 79), thereby perpetuating male privilege.

7.2.3 Boys have more privileges and girls get no name brands

Kimmel (2000) states, “boys tend to acquire masculinity as much by avoiding anything feminine as by imitating men directly” (p. 125). In this category I present the girls’ experiences of how their brothers were not only privileged in terms of chores, but were also allowed to eat more food, had more free time and received more material resources than the girls.

Extract 13

Sherine: Ok, so wat is daar nog wat vir julle by die huis kwaad maak..besides die werk nou?

Ursula: Ons mag nie so baie eet nie.

Sherine: Mag julle nie..wat sê djy Mercia?

Mercia: Ons kan nie so baie eet soos die seuns by die huis nie...my ma gee byvoorbeeld vir my broer twee dye en vir my twee boudjies. Ek wil nie so min vleis hê nie

Sherine: So daar’s selfs onregverdigheid by die kos ook? (L3P5:249)

Sherine: Ok, so what else is there that makes you cross at home...besides the chores now?

Ursula: We are not allowed to eat a lot.

Sherine: You can’t...what are you saying Mercia?

Mercia: At home we can’t eat as much as the boys. For example my mother gives my brother two thighs and me two drumsticks²⁶. I don’t want such a little meat.

Sherine: So there’s unfairness with food also? (L3P5:249)

Candy: Juffrou ek wil iets sê..my broer..ek mag nie so baie eet soos hy nie...ek is ook mos honger..hy eet die meeste van die brood op..en hy eet sommer 3 snytjies....en die melk...hy drink die meeste melk....dan sê ek: “Huh huh, moet nie die melk so mors nie.” Daai is nie lekker nie en hy sê altyd: “Ek gaan voor jou shower.” Dan kry hy dit net reg..hy wil niks doen nie...hy lê healtyd.

Sherine: Nou wat sê jou ma as hy nie sy pligte doen nie?

Candy: Hy moet die shower skoongemaak het..en dan wil hy nie...en my ma....sy sê niks nie...ek het vir haar gesê: “Hy gaan nog moord maak dan is dit ekke.”

Berne: Ek het ook ‘n broer...hy kry alles wat ek nie kry nie...my ouma het ‘n winkeltjie....hy gaan net in dan kom hy met ‘n bombie uit, maar as ek gaan vra..dan sê my ouma: “Nee, waar is jou geld?” (J2P16:59)

²⁶ Mercia’s referring to the chicken portions.

Candy: Miss, I want to say something..my brother..I'm not allowed to eat as much as he is allowed to. I am also hungry..he eats most of the bread..and he just eats 3 slices..and the milk..he drinks the most milk..then I say: "No, don't waste the milk." That's not nice and he always says: "I'm going to shower before you." Then he just gets it right..he wants to do nothing..he just lies around the whole time.

Sherine: Now what does your mother say when he doesn't do his chores?

Candy: He must clean the shower..then he doesn't want to..and my mother..she says nothing..I told her: "He's still going to commit murder then it's me."

Berne: I also have a brother..he gets everything that I don't get..my granny has a little shop..he just goes in then he comes out with an ice lolly, but if I go and ask...then my granny says: "No, where is your money?" (J2P16:59)

In the extract below, Sharon relates how her mother indulges her brother and how she has to do favours for her brother.

Extract 14

Sharon: Juffrou, ek werk alleen in die huis...my broer doen niks...my broer is sestien.. hy wil heeldag net voor die computer sit..hy doen niks en ek moet net goed agter hom aandra..hy is lui..my ma sê dis omdat ek 'n meisie is....dis hoekom ek dit moet doen

[Girls all talking together loudly:???? inaudible]

Mona: Hy is lui juffrou...my broer wil net hê ek moet goed vir hom doen...maar as ek vir hom vra om iets vir my te doen dan wil hy nie

Sherine: Nou hoekom dink julle is dit so? Het julle al gewonder...hoekom trek die ouers die seuns voor?

Leigh: Want hulle is die mansmense in die huis...en die mans moet die meisies beskerm (J1P14:16)

Sharon: Miss, I work alone in the home..my brother does nothing..my brother is sixteen..he just wants to sit at the computer the whole day..he does nothing and I must just bring him stuff...he's lazy..my mother says it's because I'm a girl..that's why I must do it.

[Girls all talking together loudly, inaudible]

Mona: He's lazy Miss..my brother just want me to do things for him..but if I ask him to do something for me, then he refuses.

Sherine: Now why do you think it's like this? Have you wondered...why parents favour the boys?

Leigh: Because they are the men in the house...and the men must protect the girls. (J1P14:16)

Similarly Zelda relates how her brother lies about while she has to make him breakfast and Mercia states she has to clean the bath after her brother has bathed. Despite Jackie's previous statement that her parents expected her brothers to share the household chores, it seems she also experienced some material inequity.

Extract 15

Zelda: Hulle kry al die voorregte..in ons huis kry die mans al die voorregte ...oe..vernaam my broer...hy werk nie..as hy 253oe no..dan lê hy..my ma maak hom niks nie...my ma maak hom niks nie...en dan lê ons nou net...dan sê sy: "Julle moet opstaan...julle lê soos ou meire. Julle meire wil net so lê." Maar my ma maak hom niks nie...hy sal die heelyd lê, dan sê hy: "Zelda maak vir my brekfis," dan moet ek vir hom brekfis maak

Sherine: So jy sê umm...jou ma laat dit toe dat

Zelda: My ma laat my broer **AL-LES** doen, as hy 'n ding wil hê...dan koop my ma dit vir hom...maar vir my...nee...ek moet 'n jaar wag...ek moet die heel jaar huis skoon maak...maar daai klong...maar ek moet nou eers wag..hy kry net

Jackie: Dis waar...Garth ook...umm...as Garth..as Garth vra...dan kry Garth...Garth gaan nie eers...my ma gaan nie eers twee keer dink om vir Garth te koop nie

Carlene: As hy nie...as my broer nie 'n ding kry nie...hy's kwaad vir my ma vir 'n hele ses maande, hy weet...as hy kwaad is vir my ma....dan 253oe nom mos...my ma moet iets 253oe nom weer...op te maak...my ma kan maar 'n joke maak daar voor hom...hy gaan nie eers lag daarvoor nie...my ma moet 'n ding vir hom koop voor hy vir my ma gaan lag. (K1P8:83)

Zelda: They get all the privileges...in our home the men get all the privileges...oh...especially my brother..he doesn't work..if he wants to lie down..then he lies down...my mother does nothing to him..and when we lie down..then she says: "You must stand up..you lie like old women. You girls just want to lie down." But my mother does nothing to him...he will lie down the whole time, then he says: "Zelda, make me breakfast," then I must make him breakfast.

Sherine: So you say umm...your mother allows this.

*Zelda: My mother lets my brother do **EVERY-THING**, when he wants something...then my mother buys it for him...but for me..no..I must wait a year..I must first clean the house for a whole year..but that guy...but I must first wait...but he just gets.*

Jackie: That's true...Garth also...umm...if Garth..if Garth asks...then Garth gets...Garth won't even...my mother won't think twice to buy for Garth.

Carlene: When he doesn't...when my brother doesn't get something...he'll be cross with my mother for a whole six months, he knows...if he's cross with my mother....then he knows...my mother must do something to make up with him...my mother can make a joke in front of him...he won't even laugh at it...my mother must buy him something before he laughs with my mother. (K1P8:83)

Mercia: En wat ek haat, juffrou, hy was..hy gooi vuil wasgoed in die was, maar dis nie eens vuil nie [aggrieved]. En as en as hy was dan's die bad se rand, dan is daar 'n rand om die bad, dan maak hy dit nie skoon nie. Dan gee my ma vir my 'n Jik lap..en dan gee sy vir my 'n skropborsel en dan tap sy warm water in die bad, dan moet ek self die bad skoonmaak. (L3P5:132)

Mercia: And what I hate Miss, he baths..he throws the dirty washing in the wash and then it's not even dirty [aggrieved]. And when he baths then there's a ring around the bath, then he doesn't clean it. Then my mother gives me a Jik²⁷ cloth..and she gives me a scrubbing brush and runs warm water in the bath, then I must clean the bath myself. (L3P5:132)

In all the different focus groups, all the girls also complained that their parents bought their brothers more expensive clothing and gave them more pocket money, while the girls had to work in the home to earn a new t-shirt or sneakers.

Extract 16

Sharon: Die ma's is meer oor die seuns...hulle kry ook net al die duurder klere as ons...hulle tekkies is duur...en dan kry ons maar net goedkoop goed ..soos t-shirts van Pep [Group agrees and all talking loudly together]

Sherine: So die seuns kry label klere...nou hoekom word die seuns=

Kim: =Ja ..hulle spoil die seuns...die ma's spoil hulle...dan moet ons eerste wag...en as hy sê hy wil 'n t-shirt hê dan kry hy dit

Leigh: Ja...ons moet elke keer wag..maar as hy vra dan kry hy dit soos môre...ek moet soos 'n maand wag

Kim: Of ons moet werk vir geld....en hulle kry ook baie meer sakgeld

Sherine: Nou hoekom kry die seuns meer geld?

Ashlene: Omdat hy ouer is (J1P14:43)

Sharon: The mothers are more over their sons...they just get the more expensive clothes than us...their sneakers are more expensive..and then we get the cheap stuff..like t-shirts from Pep²⁸ [Group agrees and all talking loudly together].

Sherine: So the boys get brand label clothes...now why are the sons=

Kim: =Yes..they spoil the boys..the mothers spoil them..then we must first wait..and when he says he wants a t-shirt then he gets it.

²⁷ Jik is a brand of household bleach.

²⁸ Pep store is a low-cost departmental store in South Africa.

Leigh: Yes..we must wait each time..but if he asks then he gets it like tomorrow..I must wait like a month.

Kim: Or we must work for money...and they get more pocket money.

Sherine: Now why do the boys get more pocket money?

Ashlene: Because he's older. (J1P14:43)

Mercia As jy iets wil hê dan moet jy werk daarvoor in die huis in. Of as jou ma iets vra dan moet jy dit doen. Of sommer iets uit jou eie wil dit doen. Ek het vir my ma gesê ek soek nie All Stars nie, ek soek..ek soek 'n Nike, maar ek soek ook nie 'n fake Nike nie. Toe sê sy... maar as ek paar maande lekker werk in die huis in en dan gaan sy vir my 'n paar Nikes koop. Maar my broer is gelukkig, hy't 'n ma wat vir hom sorg en my ma doen **alles** vir hom. Op 'n tyd het my broer nie gewerk nie. Hy hou van Grass Hoppers..dan koop sy dit vir hom. As ek vir my ma vra: "Maar mammië, ek soek 'n nuwe top" of..of ek soek net 'n jean of iets om myself mee te spoiel, dan sê sy: "Nee, Mercia, jy weet ek werk nie." of "Ek werk, maar ek kry nie baie geld nie." En dan sê ek:"Ja, maar mammië koop dan vir boetie," dan sê sy: "Ja, jy moet dit altyd aanmekaar voor gooi...jy doen niks." Dan sê ek: "Maar hy doen **self** niks nie." Toe sê sy "Ja, maar hy's my oudste kind". Toe sê ek "Nou wat van my? Al is ek die kleintjie, ek..ek..ek..het net soveel voordele soos hy." [raising her voice] (L3P5:198)

*Mercia: When you want something then you must work in the home. Or if your mother asks you to do something then you must do it. Or just do something yourself. I told my mother, I'm not looking for All Stars, I'm looking for a Nike, but I'm not looking for a fake Nike. So she said..if I work nicely for a few months in the home, then she will buy me a pair of Nikes. But my brother he's lucky, he's got a mother that provides for him and my mother does **everything** for him. Once my brother didn't work..he likes Grass Hoppers..then she buys it for him. When I ask my mother: "But mommy, I'm looking for a new top" or..or I'm just looking for a jean or something to spoil myself, then she says: "No, Mercia, you know I don't work." or "I'm working but I don't get a lot of money." Then I say: "Yes, but mommy buys for boetie (brother)," then she says: "Yes, must you always remind me of this...you do nothing." Then I say: "But he also does nothing." So she said: "Yes, but he is my eldest child." So I said: "Now what about me? Even if I'm the smallest, I..I..I..have just as many privileges as him" [raising her voice]. (L3P5:198)*

As Mercia spoke, she became visibly angry about the unfairness of her mother privileging her brother. In the following extract, Sharon states that the girls always have to be satisfied with the leftovers, such as the old cell phones while the boys get the new cell phones.

Extract 17

Sharon: En.. djy moet altyd die oorskiepsels kry..soos 'n foon..as hy 'n nou 'n foon gekry het...djy moet wag..djy moet net wag....so as djy gereed is om 'n phone te

kry...en dan kry djy daai ou phone..en dan kry **hy** ‘n nuwe phone...en dan is daai phone al op ..dis stukkend...die goed werk nie [group agrees]

Sherine: So wat dink julle is die redes hoekom die ma’s en ouers so is met hulle seuns en dogters..wat dink julle?

Sharon: Hulle is veral oor hulle eersgeborenes..of as hulle ‘n seun het wat eerste gebore is ..dan kry hy altyd al die voorregte..soos hulle is meer..ek sal nou nie sê hulle is meer lief vir die..seuns nie...maar daar is ‘n sagte plekkie in hul harte vir die een wat eerste gebore is (K1P8:089)

*Sharon: And you must always get the leftovers..like a phone..when he now got a phone..you must just wait..you must just wait..so when you are ready to get a phone..and then you get that old phone..and then **he** gets a new phone...and then that phone is already old..it’s broken..the stuff doesn’t work [Group agrees].*

Sherine: So what do you think are the reasons why the mothers and parents are like this with their sons and their daughters...what do you think?

Sharon: They are especially over the first born..or if they have a son who was born first..then he gets all the privileges..like they are more...I won’t say that they love the sons more..but there is a soft place in their hearts for the one who was born first. (K1P8:089)

According to Thorne (1993) “children’s interactions are not preparation for life; they are life itself” (p. 3). Thus the girls’ experiences illustrate how, through the mundane daily activities and interactions in families, gender inequality and gender power dynamics are produced and reproduced. Kimmel (2000) contends that the interplay of the interaction between gendered identities within gendered institutions, such as the family, reproduces power and privilege, making it seem normal and natural. He states, power

is deeply woven into the fabric of our lives – it is the warp of our interactions and the welt of our institutions. And it is so deeply woven into our lives that it is most invisible to those who are empowered. (Kimmel, 2000, p. 94)

Although Sharon, in extract 12 above, also frames her brother’s behaviour as laziness, her mother explicitly tells her that it is her role because she is a girl. Similarly, when Zelda’s brother lazes around doing nothing, she reports that her mother does nothing but regards the girls’ actions as problematic. Thus, it is apparent how the girls’ parents perpetuate inequity and privilege, and

empower boys. These findings are consistent with previous research (Gaganakis, 2003; Hillbrecht et al., 2008). Gaganakis (2003) similarly found such inequity consumed the girls' time and energy, bound them to the house and negatively influenced their schoolwork. In Finland, Niemi and Pääkkönen (as cited by Aapola et al., 2005) similarly found girls are still expected, more than boys, to take care of younger siblings and help with food preparation and cleaning at home. Likewise, in Canada, Hillbrecht et al. (2008) found that, despite decades of expressed societal values of gender equality, patterns of unequal division of household labour among adults tend to persist. They indicate how patterns of inequity are reproduced during adolescence, when adolescent girls similarly have more household responsibilities, and consequently less time for leisure compared to boys. These findings suggest that despite public expressions of equality, inequality tends to persist in the private sphere and patterns of inequality are reproduced into adulthood.

In all the focus groups, the girls were also resentful that their mothers bought their brothers more expensive clothing, while they had to do chores in the home to earn an item of clothing. In one group, Jessy reported that in her home it was different because she had a sister. Thus, it seems that when there are only girls in the home, the parents tend to treat the siblings on even terms and there is an equal distribution of the resources.

Extract 18

Adrienne: My ma koop vir my broer **meer** klere as wat ek kry..klere juffrou

Sherine: Nou hoekom koop hulle vir die seuns meer?

Jessy: Ek kan nie sê nie..want ons is altwee meisies...en ons kry gelyk...een week kry sy en dan kry ek.

Ebony: Laas Woensdag het my ma ingegaan dorp toe...en toe het sy vir my broer skoene gekoop..maar sy het nie vir my gekoop nie...en die naweek was ons weer in die dorp ...toe het sy weer vir hom tekkies en klere gekoop.....toe vra ek hoekom koop sy net vir hom (J2P16:74)

*Adrienne: My mother buys my brother **more** clothes than what I get...clothes Miss.*

Sherine: Now why do they buy more for the boys?

Jessy: I can't say..because we are both girls...we get equal...one week she gets and I get the next.

Ebony: Last Wednesday my mother went into town so..and so she bought my brother shoes..but she didn't buy me anything..and the weekend we went to town again..so she bought him sneakers and clothes again..so I asked why she only buys for him. (J2P16:74)

Ivana: Dis ook lekker om 'n seun te wees want soms hulle kry die name klere wat ons nou nie kry nie

Sherine: Nou hoekom kry die seuns die name klere..die labels?

Carlene: Som ouers koop vir hulle..wanneer die seuns vir die ouers vra ..umm..om vir hulle klere te koop...en dan koop die ouers vir hulle..want hulle is miskien..hulle is oor hulle dogters...maar hulle is **meestal** oor hulle seuns

Sherine: Nou hoekom is hulle meeste oor hul seuns?

Carlene: Party ouers dink oor hulle die oudste is en hulle moet nou net meer as die dogters kry...som ouers...nie alle ouers nie

Charmaine: Ja juffrou...soos byvoorbeeld my jonger boetie..hy..hy kry meer aandag as wat ons kry..my ma maak omdat hy jonger is moet hy die meeste kry..en hy moet bederf word..maar eintlik as my ma vir hom iets sê..dan sê hy..maar hy gaan nou eerste speel en as hy terugkom gaan hy eers dink daarvoor om dit te doen...maar wanneer my ma vir my iets sê..**dan moet ek dit net doen**..dan sê my ma..ons wil net in die strate wees..maar as hy nou in die straat wil wees..dan is dit niks (L1P3:119)

Ivana: It's also nice to be a boy because sometimes they get the branded clothing that we don't get.

Sherine: Now why do the boys get the branded clothing..the labels?

*Carlene: Some parents buy it for them..when the boys asks the parents...umm.. to buy them clothes...and then the parents buy it for them...because perhaps they...they care for their daughters....but they care **the most** for their sons.*

Sherine: Now why do they care the most about their sons?

Carlene: Some parents think because they are the eldest and they must just get more than the daughters..some parents..not all parents

*Charmaine: Yes Miss...for example my younger brother...he..he gets more attention than us...because he's younger, my mother thinks he must get the most..and he must be spoiled..but actually when my mother tells him something..then he says..but he is first going to play and when he comes back then he'll first think about it whether he'll do it....but when my mother tells me something..then **I must just do it**..then my mother says we just want to be in the streets...but when he wants to be in the streets..then it's nothing. (L1P3:119)*

In the above extracts, the girls offer different theories as to why their parents favoured their brothers. Some explained that parents “spoil” their sons and granted them more privileges

because they were the eldest/firstborn or youngest son. They also suggested that, although their parents cared for the girls, parents had a “soft” place in their hearts for their sons and cared more for them. Thus, given their most beloved status, the boys were entitled to more privileges than the girls were. Above, Carlene (Extract 15) also explained how her brother would be cross with her mother for six months if she refused to buy him something. Some girls also reported that the boys ruled their mothers and parents were sometimes afraid that their sons could hit them; hence, they gave them more privileges.

Extract 19

Anna: Hulle dink die seuns is beter as die meisies

Zelda: Want party seuns rule mos hulle ma’s se lewe..hulle vertel die ma’s net wat hulle wil

Queenie: Dis waar...hulle vertel vir die ma

Sherine: So hoekom laat die ma’s vir hulle rule deur die seuns

Zelda: Want hulle is bang vir die seuns...want hulle slaan die ma’s

Mary: Ja...party seuns slaan hulle ma’s

Sherine: So die seuns slaan die ma’s ...nou hoe oud is die seuns?

Queenie: Hulle is so sestien...hulle dink mos nou wanneer hulle op die hoerskool is dat hulle groot is (K3P11:41)

Anna: They think the boys are better than the girls.

Zelda: Because some boys rule their mother’s life..they tell the mothers just what they want to.

Queenie: That’s true..they backchat the mother.

Sherine: So why do the mothers allow the boys to rule them?

Zelda: Because they are afraid of the boys..because they hit the mothers.

Mary: Yes..some boys hit their mothers.

Sherine: So the boys hit the mothers...now how old are the boys?

Queenie: They are about sixteen..they think because they are now at high school that they are now adult. (K3P11:41)

Julie: Partykeers juffrou...dan is die ouers bang vir die seunskind want hulle is bang dat die seunskinders kan hulle slaan

Sandra: Veral as ..veral as die ma en die pa dronk is...en die seun is nou...vra nou vir die pa miskien..umm... “Gee ‘n honderd rand.” en so geld.. klompe geld....en die pa

sê vir hom hy het nie..en..hou hy net dik: “Gee die geld...gee die geld.”...en die pa sê net..die pa het nie..dan beginne slaan hy die pa en die ma. (L2P1:240)

Julie: Sometimes Miss..then the parents are afraid of the sons because they are scared that the boys will hit them.

Sandra: Especially when..when the mother and father are drunk..and the son now..asks the father perhaps..umm: “Give a hundred rand” and so money..lots of money..and the father says to him he doesn’t have any..he keeps on: “Give the money..give the money!” and the father just says..the father doesn’t have..then he starts hitting the mother and father. (L2P1:240)

According to hooks (1989), talking back signifies the moment when one moves from an object to becoming a subject and having a liberated voice. The above quotations illustrate how some girls talk back and confront their parents about their secondary status, invisibility and the inequity in their homes. Through their resistance to receiving “leftovers” the girls are claiming their subjectivities and by implication, their worthiness of love and affection. Despite the girls’ theories for the boys’ privilege, they were aware that gender was the primary driver of inequity, which significantly influenced their felt experiences.

7.2.4 Girls’ strategies of resistance and felt experiences of the inequity

In this study, some participants reported that they cannot backchat, hence they grudgingly conformed. Contrary to some feminists’ contention that girls tend to self-silence (Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 2011), some participants in this study resisted and voiced their dissatisfaction. In this section, I will highlight the girls’ strategies of resistance to the inequity and the feelings the inequity evoked for them.

Above, Thandi indicated that their parents scolded or grounded girls or withheld their pocket money when they offered resistance, while other girls reported that their parents often silenced and/or smacked them for their insubordination.

Extract 20

Jasmine: Dis ook lekker om 'n seun te wees..want jy kry alles reg by jou ouers..jy kan net so sê en so sê.. dan kry jy dit...dis lekker

Sherine: Nou wonder julle hoekom is dit so...en vra julle somtyds vir julle ma's of sê julle iets?

Mandy: Dan word dji altyd uitgeskel: "Hoekom vra dji? Dis nie jou besigheid nie."

Sandra: En dji kry...dan sê die ouer..dji kry ook wanneer hy kry...maar hy kry altyd die meeste goed en duurste goed

Jasmine: En hulle sê oek miskien..eendag as die seun..as hulle getroud is..jou ouer broer getroud is..dan kan dji ook weer alles kry..maar ek wil mos nou nie daai tyd alles kry nie..dan is ek ook al groot al daai tyd al...ek wil dit nou hê terwyl ek nog jonk is...en ek hou myself mos nie van no name goed dra nie [laughs] (L2P1:283)

Jasmine: It's also nice to be a boy..because you get everything right with your parents..you can just say say this and say that..then you get it...it's nice.

Sherine: Now do you wonder why it's like this..and do you ask your mother sometimes or do you say something?

Mandy: Then you are always scolded: "Why do you ask? It's none of your business?"

Sandra: And you get...then the parents say you also get when he gets...but he always gets the most stuff and the most expensive stuff.

Jasmine: And maybe they also say..one day when the son..when they are married..your elder brother is married...then you can again get everything..but I don't want to to get everything then...then I'm an adult already..I want it now while I'm still young and I myself don't like to wear no name brands [laughs]. (L2P1:283)

As I indicated earlier in this thesis, although the girls' resistance seemed futile and despite the threats of sanctions and punishment, they still resisted. While most girls verbalised their anger, others refused to accede to their parents' requests and ran away, and some exerted passive resistance. In the quotations below, they relate how they resisted and we see how power struggles tended to ensue.

Extract 21

Kathleen: Ek moet elke middag vir my pa koffie maak. Dan, dan sê my pa: "Maak die koffie." Dan sê ek: "Nee, daddy, ek moet aanmekaar koffie maak. Amelia is ook daar sy kan ook koffie maak." Dan sê my pa: "Nee, maar ek wil hê dji moet die koffie maak." Dan sê ek: "Nee daddy." Dan gaan ek kamer toe dan gooi ek sommer die skoene so. (L3P5:405)

Kathleen: I must make coffee every afternoon for my father. Then, then my father says: "Make the coffee." Then I say: "No, daddy, I must always make coffee. Amelia is also there, she can also make coffee." Then my father says: "No, but I want you to make the coffee." Then I say: "No, daddy." Then I go the room and I just throw the shoes. (L3P5: 405)

Nadia: Of hy sê "Nadia, maak vir daddy 'n bietjie koffie." Dan's dji hoeka moeg van heel aand koffie maak. As hy by die huis kom dan moet dji elke dag koffie maak. Dan sê dji "Nee, daddy, of nee mammie, nee, ek is al moeg van koffie maak. Daddy bly koffie, koffie, koffie van die more tot die aand." Lyk my ek kan die man vat...want hulle bly koffie, koffie, koffie. En nou skel jou pa jou nog so lelik uit en dan moet dji vir hom nog gaan koffie maak en dan kyk jy nog in sy gesig in. Dji raak sommer..dji raak sommer kwaad vir hom (K4P13:819)

Nadia: Or he says: "Nadia, make daddy some coffee." Then you are already tired of making coffee. When he gets home then you must make coffee every day. Then you say: "No daddy, or no mommy, no, I'm already tired of making coffee. Daddy keeps on coffee, coffee, coffee from morning till night." I feel like I can take the man..because they keep on coffee, coffee, coffee. And now your father also says ugly things to you then you must still make him coffee and look into his face. You just get..you just get angry with him. (K4P13:819)

Candy: My pa is soos 'n baas...as hy uit die werk uit kom...gooi hy sy werk klere net daar op die vloer neer...dan word die ketel solank aangesit word...dan vat ek myself weg....ek gaan nie koffie maak nie (J2P16:99)

Candy: My father is like a boss...when he comes from work..he throws his work clothes on the floor..then the kettle is put on..then I make myself missing..I'm not going to make coffee. (J2P16:99)

In the quotation below, Nadia also eloquently voices her discontent, alerting her mother to how she feels invisible when her mother privileges her brother. Here Nadia is displaying what Brown and Gilligan (1993) refer to as an act of political resistance. However, Nadia is not only verbalising her feelings and standing up against the inequity, she is also demanding recognition and to be seen by her mother. It is interesting to see how her mother infantilises her and problematises her request, suggesting that she wants money to buy alcohol.

Extract 22

Nadia: Ja. En partykeers, soos ekke sê vir my ma: "Nee, mamma, mamma bly net David, David, David, mamma kyk nooit na Nadia nie. Mamma gee altyd vir David die meeste geld. Kyk hoeveel moet ek kry." So dan sê sy: "Nee jong, dji's nog klein. Wat wil dji so 'n klomp geld hê." Of: "Wat wil jy met die geld maak?" Hulle sê sommer

jy wil vir jou ‘n klomp drank koop of djy wil jou tjommies entertain of so. (K4P13:825)

Nadia: Yes. And sometimes, like I say to my mother: “No mommy, mommy only says David, David, David, mommy never looks at Nadia. Mommy always gives David the most money. Look how much I get.” Then she says: “No man, you’re still small. What do you want to do with a lot of money.” Or: “What do you want to do with the money?” They say you want to buy a lot of alcohol or you want to entertain your friends or so. (K4P13:825)

As discussed in the methodology section, the girls often used humour as a defence mechanism to mask their feelings when they spoke about the inequities and power struggles in their homes. For example, when Zena told the story of how her parents fought, the group spurred her on to tell me how her father’s girlfriend stabbed her mother. Although this story had the group in stitches, it was evident how stressful and anxiety provoking these fights were for Zena.

Extract 23

Zena: My ma en pa kan nooit saam drink nie. My pa..my ma hou van baklei as sy dronk is. Sy donder sommer nou my pa met ‘n glas op die kop. Sy het al my pa op die kop geslat. Ja, toe moet sy gaan sit in die selletjies. Toe huil sy heel pad, huil sy heel pad in die van in. [Ursula: Vertel vir juffrou van daai dag met die mes] My ma..my pa het mos gejol. Toe het die meisie wat my pa gehad het, het my ma gesteek..hierso en op die kop. Toe moet sy al haar hare afsny. Toe’t my ma vir haar ‘n pruik gekoop. Dis nie ‘n pruik nie, dis ‘n bolla. Uh..toe sit sy daai op haar kop. As sy mos nou gedrink is en dan..elke..uhm naweek het sy mos nou gedrink...dan Saterdag...dan kom my pa...dan soek my pa nou net skoor saam met haar. Dan sê..dan sê my pa vir haar..hy gaan vir haar aanmekaar uittart...totdat sy gaan slat. Dan los my ma vir hom. Dan tart hy aanmekaar my ma. Dan sê hy vir my ma goeters. My ma los hom. Tot my ma ...toe slat sy hom teen die kop...toe kom daar ‘n knop...toe skop hy my ma...toe val die pruik van my ma se kop af. [laughter] toe waai die pruik in die dorings. Toe sit my ma met ‘n hele uhm pruik vol grasdorings...sand..alles. En toe kan sy dit nie meer dra nie. Toe moet sy vir haar ‘n ander pruik koop. [laughter] Hulle is baie mal as hulle dronk is.

Sherine As hulle dronk is...en dan wat maak jy, Zena as hulle so baklei?

Zena: Ek watch alles. Ek lag my dik. Maar as as ek nou sien die mense begin te wild raak...dan huil ek, ek skree moord. As my ma...ma begin..jô! Dit werk op my senuwees. Dan sit ek so....dan loop die trane. As ek sien, nee, my pa begin..dan staan ek op..dan skree ek: “Pa!” [roep uit] (L3P5:1465)

Zena: My mother and father can never drink together. My father..my mother likes to fight when she is drunk. She just wallops my father with a glass on the head. She already hit my father on his head. Yes, so she had to go and sit in the cells. So she cried all the way, cried all the way in the van. [Ursula: Tell Miss about that day with

the knife] My mother..my father had an affair. So the girl that my father had, stabbed my mother..here and on the head. So she had to cut all her hair off. So my mother bought herself a wig. It's not a wig, it's a bun. Uh..so she put it on her head. Now when she's drunk then every uhm she drank every weekend...then Saturdays...then my father comes...then he looks for trouble with my mother. Then my father says...he's going to provoke her till she hits him. Then my mother leaves him. Then he keeps on taunting her. Then he tells my mother stuff. My mother leaves him. Till my mother...then she hits him against the head...so there was a big knob...so he kicked my mother...so the wig fell off my mother's head [laughter] so the wig landed in the thorns. So my mother sat with a wig full of thorns...sand..everything. And so she could not wear it any longer. So she had to buy herself another wig [laughter]. They are very crazy when they are drunk.

Sherine When they are drunk...and then what do you do Zena when they fight like that?

Zena: I watch everything. I laugh a lot. But when I see the people start getting too wild..then I cry, I shout murder. When my mother..mother starts..gee! It works on my nerves. Then I sit like this..then the tears run. When I see, no, my father starts..then I stand up..then I shout: "Dad!" [shouts out] (L3P5:1465)

In the methodology section, I discussed Sandra's anger and feelings of helplessness when her parents abused alcohol, and the shame she felt when she had to ask the neighbours for food. Earlier I also discussed how Ivana and Mandy-Lee became angry in the group when they shared their stories of the unequal burden of chores. Thus, frustration, fear, anxiety, anger, shame and resentment were dominant feelings that the girls expressed when they spoke about the inequity or when their parents fought.

The girls also further reported feeling disrespected when their parents scolded them or accused them of being precocious when they voiced their dissent. In the quotation below, Mercia relates her passive resistance and how she felt hurt by her mother's unfair treatment and accusations.

Extract 24

Mercia: Sommige kere as ek saam met my vriende uitgaan of so en ek gaan dorp toe saam met my niggies en so..en dan as ek terugkom, dan my ma..dan my ma gaan nie som Saterdag dorp toe nie, en dan's sy by die huis en dan's my broers ook daar by die huis. En dan lê hulle tot twaalf-uur toe en as ek terugkom uit die dorp uit, juffrou, ek gaan..uhm..nege-uur dorp toe, dan kom ek sommige kere halftwaalf of halfeen huis toe. En dan as ek by die huis kom, dan is die huis nog altyd vuil, juffrou. Dan moet ek huis skoon maak en dan raak ek kwaad, juffrou en dan doen ek dit nie. En dan sit ek daar, juffrou. Dan skel my ma my uit dan sit ek daar. Dan skel my ma my uit en dan

sê my ma ek gaan vir outjies dorp toe. Juffrou, dan gaan ek uit die huis uit en dan wil ek net alleen wees...ek lag nie saam met my ma nie..my ma moet vir my ook respekteer vir wie ek is, dan sal ek ook vir haar respek hê. Ek wil hê as my ma iets vir my gesê het, en sy weet dit is verkeerd, dan moet my ma vir my sorry sê, want dit was nie ek wat onbeskof was nie, dit was my ma. Al gaan dit vir twee dae, dan praat ek nie saam met my ma nie. (L3P5:311)

Mercia: Sometimes when I go with my friends or I go to town with my cousins..and when I come back, then my mother..some Saturdays my mother doesn't go to town and she's at home and then my brothers are also at home. And then they sleep till twelve o' clock and when I come from town Miss, I go..uhm..nine o' clock to town and sometimes I come home half past eleven or half past one. And when I get home, then the house is still untidy Miss. Then I must clean the house and then I get angry Miss, then I don't do it. And then I just sit there Miss. Then my mother scolds me and I just sit there. Then my mother scolds me and says I go to town for guys. Miss then I go out of the house and then I just want to be alone. I don't laugh with my mother...my mother must also respect me for who I am, then I will also respect her. I want my mother...when she tells me something and she knows it's wrong, then my mother must say she's sorry, because I wasn't rude, it was my mother. Even if it's two days, then I don't talk to my mother. (L3P5:311)

By disconnecting from her mother through not talking or verbalising her emotions, Mercia is enacting a form of psychological resistance (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). We also see how she enacts what Firestone called “a smile boycott” (LaFrance, 2002). Although Mercia states that she just sits there passively, her actions represent an act of defiance and power. This contrasts with LaFrance’s (2002) claim that in asymmetrical power relationships people with less power seem to “be under some obligation to smile regardless of whether they are feeling good or not” (p. 322). Mercia’s smile boycott and self-silencing are deliberate enactments of agency, a display of her anger and a demand for respect. Below, Carol similarly reports how she feels sad when her mother denigrates her and makes nasty comments.

Extract 25

Carol: Die meisies moet in die huis in bly, Juffrou, en die huis skoonmaak en sommige kere as as jou ma vir jou iets sê dan..dan..dan word jy miskien hartseer, juffrou en dan huil jy oor wat jou ma vir jou gesê het..lelike woorde..Juffrou soos..slegte ding (L3P5:363).

Carol: The girls must stay indoors Miss and clean the house and sometimes when your mother tells you something then..then..then perhaps you become sad Miss and

then you cry because of what your mother said to you..ugly words..Miss, such as..good for nothing. (L3P5:363)

Although anger and resentment were the dominant overt feelings the girls expressed towards the inequity, these expressions of anger possibly masked the pain of their unmet needs for love, recognition and respect. Above, I discussed how the girls interpreted the privileging of their brothers as a sign that their parents cared more for their sons. Likewise, Edna haltingly verbalised how she felt hurt by her mother's partial behaviour towards her mother's boyfriend.

Extract 26

Edna: My lewe is nie nou lekker nie..moet ek sê? [Zelma: Vertel my broer] My ma...(hesitantly) ek is skaam om te sê...ok...ek gaan nou sê..my ma..sy staan my af vir haar boyfriend...soos as ek vir haar iets vra dan wil sy dit nie vir my gee nie..maar as hy vir haar vra..dan kan sy dit gou vir hom gee. My pa is so 'n ruk gelede..nie lank gelede nie..het my pa mos gesterf..dan as ek iets verkeerd doen dan sal sy vir my sê ek moet na my pa se mense toe gaan....so...maar as my broertjie en sustertjie iets vra dan gee my ma gou vir hulle. (K2P9:534)

Edna: My life isn't nice now..must I say?[Zelma: Tell, my friend] My mother..(hesitantly) I am shy to say..ok..I'm going to tell..my mother..she puts me down for her boyfriend..when I ask her something then she doesn't want to give it to me..but when he asks her..then she quickly gives it to him. My father died a while ago..not so long ago..my father died..then when I do something wrong, then she tells me I must go to my father's family..so...but when my brother and sister asks for something then my mother gives it to them quickly. (K2P9:534)

Similarly, Merle told us about her father's lack of reciprocity and how he did not really care about her. As she spoke, her sadness was palpable and I interpreted her rationalisation about her disconnection from her parents, and that she only cares about herself as a defence and coping strategy for her unmet need for connection. This seems to protect her from her assumption that her father cares more for her brother and that she does not matter.

Extract 27

Merle: Juffrou, want as my pa vir my iets vra dan moet ek dit doen. Maar as 'n mens jou ouer vra om vir jou iets te doen, dan sal hulle dit nie gou doen nie, Juffrou. En my pa hou nie eens van my nie...my pa is so...my pa..uhm...hy het net een kind waarvan hy baie van hou, Juffrou.

Sherine: Is dit?

Merle: Ja, Juffrou.

Sherine: So wie's die een kind?

Merle: My broer.

Sherine: Jou broer. So maak hy meer van jou broer as van jou?

Merle: Ja, juffrou.

Sherine: Wat..nou wat is die rede?

Merle: Juffrou uhm toe my broer...toe hy nog klein gewees het, juffrou, wat hy gebore gewees het, Juffrou, van kleins af het hy net soos my pa gelyk. Alles soos my pa, Juffrou. En uhm toe wat my ma met my pa getroud was Juffrou uhm, toe was my ma swanger met my tweede oudste broer, Juffrou. En toe het my pa 'n ander vrou gehad, Juffrou. En toe't my pa nou net ter wille van...toe was ek ook al gebore, Juffrou, en toe's ek die babatjie by daai tyd, Juffrou. Toe kom my pa..eintlik het my pa net teruggekom vir my pa se seun, wat my pa by my ma het.

Sherine: [sag; besorgd] Dis moeilik ne...hoe hoe voel jy nou as jy daaroor praat?

Merle: Nee, lekker Juffrou. Ek worry nie daaroor nie. Ek is my eie mens, ek worry nie. Ek is nie 'n mens wat worry oor my ma-hulle en so nie. Ek worry net oor myself en dis klaar, Juffrou. Oor niemand anders nie. (L3P5:721)

Merle: Miss, when my father asks me to do something I must do it. But if one asks your parent to do something for you, then they won't do it. And my father doesn't even like me..my father is like that..my father..uhm..he only has one child that he cares about a lot Miss.

Sherine: Is that so?

Merle: Yes, Miss.

Sherine: So who is this one child?

Merle: My brother.

Sherine: Your brother. So does he make more of your brother than you?

Merle: Yes Miss.

Sherine: What is the reason?

Merle: Miss..uhm..when my brother...when he was still small, Miss..when he was born Miss..since he was small he looked just like my father. Everything like my father Miss. And uhm when my mother was married to my father..my mother was pregnant with my second eldest brother Miss. And my father had another woman Miss. And so my father only came back because..I was already born then..Miss, and I was the baby then Miss. Then my father came...actually my father only came back for my father's son that he had with my mother.

Sherine: [soft; caring] It's difficult hey..how do you feel now when you talk about it?

Merle: No, fine Miss. I don't worry about it. I am my own person, I don't worry. I'm not one that worries about my mother them and so. I only worry about myself and that's it Miss. About nobody else. (L3P5:721)

Similarly in the following quotation, Sandra and Mandy also express their feelings of rejection when their fathers made a fuss about their brothers and how they sometimes wanted to bully the child just to vent their anger.

Extract 28

Sandra: Uh..umm...sê nou djy's nou die oudste en nou het jou pa nog 'n seuntjie gekry..en nou raak die seuntjie groot en hy word bederf en djy word nie bederf nie..en hulle is nou....die pa's is bly wanneer hulle seunskinders kry..en hulle word net bederf..

Sherine: So hoekom maak hulle meer van die seun as van die meisie?

Mandy: Om tot by daai punt in te kom...umm...soos Sandra nou gesê het..soos...sê maar as jou pa het nou die seuntjie gekry het..en dan is hulle almal opgemaak met die kind ..jy was al die jare daar gewees vir hulle en nou is jy net nie meer goed genoeg vir hulle nie...dit maak 'n mens 'n bietjie hartseer...vies soos om kwaad te raak ...hoekom want...dit voel ook vir jou partykeers.. om... die kind te vat en net vir hom ..af te knou 'n bietjie...te slaan..want hoekom...hy kry alles. (L2P1:220)

Sandra: Uh..umm...say you are now the eldest and now your father got another boy..and now the boy gets big and he gets spoiled and you aren't spoiled..and they are now..the fathers are glad when they have sons..they are just spoilt.

Sherine: So why do they make more of the boys than the girls?

Mandy: To come in on that point..umm..as Sandra said now..like..say when your father now has a son..and then everyone is so proud of the child..you were there all the years for them and now you are just not good enough for them..it makes one a little sad...cross like to get angry..because why..sometimes it also feels like you...can take the child and just...bully him a little..to hit him..because why...he gets everything. (L2P1:220)

According to Lees (1993), challenging the “taken-for-granted practices of everyday life is an essential first step to bringing about change” (p. 275). From the above quotations, we see how the girls actively resisted not only “taken-for-granted” gender inequity in their homes, but they also resisted being silenced and threats of invisibility. Although some of them reported that they cannot backchat, they still resisted, albeit passively. These findings are similar to those reported by Way (1995), where some of her participants also “persisted in speaking out in situations in which others told them to keep quiet or to stay silent because speaking out would make no difference” (p. 119). Although much of the manifest content of the girls’ anger revolved around

the unfair burden of household chores and their brothers' access to more material resources, some girls eloquently verbalised their underlying pain and feelings of rejection about their displacement and invisibility to their parents. Similar to Nadia's anger at the lack of recognition by her mother, discussed earlier, here Sandra and Mandy also attest to how becoming a subject is grounded in a dialogical relationship, and to our dependence on each other to recognise us as such (Benjamin, 1994).

The girls' resistance to wearing no name brands of clothing possibly also signifies their struggles against invisibility and the lack of power associated with it. These findings are consistent with previous research (Letendre & Smith, 2011; Warrington & Younger, 2011) who found that appearance, being fashionable and wearing the latest name brands were important strategies for adolescent girls' performance of femininity, status, social approval and inclusion in the peer group. Given the demands on girls growing up in a patriarchal consumerist culture, the participants' resistance to wearing no name brands is not surprising. Patriarchal societies emphasise a culture of "emphasized femininity" (Connell, 1987) and prize girls/women for looking good. Consequently, girls tend to self-objectify to reap the rewards and validation for looking good from boys and other girls (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Tolman, Impett, Tracy, & Michael, 2006). Thus, the differential treatment of girls, silencing them, imparting them implicit messages that they lack worth, not validating and prizing them for who they are, as well as the girls' tendencies to self-objectify, could put them at risk for a range of negative mental health outcomes (Currie et al., 2009; Impett et al., 2006; Tolman et al., 2006).

In patriarchal contexts, hooks (1989) contends that private and public spaces are connected, and on-going oppressive practices in institutional structures in the public sphere make oppression in the private domain real. She states often it is "in those private spaces – that it is there where we are often most wounded, hurt, dehumanized; there that ourselves are most taken away, terrorized, and broken" (hooks, 1989, p. 2). In this sub-theme, I illustrated how these participants are situated

in patriarchal contexts and how they are marginalised because of their sex. I also discussed the girls' experiences of how men draw on patriarchal ideologies to define successful masculinities and exert power to enforce their power and privilege, and the subservience of women in the home. From the girls' felt experiences, it is evident how they struggle with the inequality and how they experience their marginalisation as rejection and a lack of care. Despite threats of sanctions, the girls resisted the gender discrimination, being silenced and invisible. Thus, the girls' talking back is "a courageous act – an act of risk and daring" (hooks, 1989, p. 5) in claiming their space, subjectivities and voicing their needs.

7.3 Girls' relationships with their peers

Previous research indicates that adolescent friendships can be powerful sites of interaction where adolescents can construct, co-construct and practice their gendered identities or resist traditional femininities (Aaopola et al., 2005; Hey, 1997). The girls in this study similarly spoke about the complexities of their friendships and how they navigated these relationships. They reported that their friendships provided them intimacy and solidarity, but were often also sites of betrayal, conflict, competition and aggression. In the following section I will discuss the participants' relationships with girls and boys.

7.3.1 Peer relationships with girls

Although the participants reported that they had some intimate same-sex friendships, the dominant stories they focused on in the groups were about the competition, conflict and aggression among girls. In the extract below, Candy and Charmaine illustrate their intimacy with their friends, and how they talk and have fun with each other.

Extract 29

Sherine: Sê vir my hoe geniet julle vir julle as meisies...wat doen julle?

Candy: Om die dag om te maak daar by ons...ek sit heeldag

Jessy: Ek sit heeldag in die huis...luister na kerk gesange

Candy: Nou nie heeldag nie...om lekker te sit..miskien kom Randy na my toe...dan praat ek en Randy...of ons lag die heeldag...en kyk maar TV of ons deel goed saam met mekaar...vertel geheimpies...[laughs] of dan gaan loop ons dan eet ons druiwe in die wingerde en dan vertel sy weer vir my van haar goed en ek vertel vir haar oor myne (J2P16:293)

Sherine: Tell me, how do you enjoy yourselves as girls...what do you do?

Candy: To pass the day at our place...I sit the whole day.

Jessy: I sit in the house the whole day...listening to church hymns.

Candy: Now, not the whole day..sit nicely..maybe Randy comes to me..then Randy and I talk..or we laugh the whole day..and watch TV or we share our stuff with each other..tell little secrets [laughs] or then we go for a walk and we eat grapes in the vineyards and then she tells me some of her stuff and I tell her about mine. (J2P16:293)

Charmaine: Ek en my tjommie...ons twee..dan sê ek miskien vir haar..end van die maand dan gaan ons twee bysit..gaan ek en sy bysit...dan koop ons vir ons snacks en cooldrink..dan gaan sit ons miskien.. agter ons yard of agter hulle yard..lekker sit en chill met ons goedjies...dan praat ons twee..dan guy ons..so..dan raak die vroumense kwaad vir ons..dan sê hulle ons is soos oumense...omdat ons nie wil drink nie...en verkeerde goed doen nie...dat ons nou wat ons wil doen...wat reg is so (L1P4:215)

Charmaine: My friend and I..the two of us..then perhaps I tell her...the end of the month that we will contribute..she and I will contribute..then we buy ourselves some snacks and cooldrink..then perhaps we go and sit..in our backyard or their yard..nicely and chill with our stuff..then the two of us talk..then we make fun..so..then the women get angry with us..then they say we're like old people..because we don't want to drink..and do wrong stuff..because we do what we want to..that which is right. (L1P4:215)

Thompson (1994) suggests that girls' close friendships provide them an audience where they can experience mutuality and reciprocity. Above, Candy tells us how she and Randy share intimate "little secrets" and laugh the whole day. Similarly, the intimacy, assertiveness and joking between Charmaine and her friend seem to be problematic for the older women in their community. Talking seems central to both Candy and Charmaine's expressions of intimacy, which theorists suggests is an activity girls use to negotiate and renegotiate the kinds of girls they would like to be among other girls (Gulbrandsen, 2003; Lees, 1993; Paechter, 2007). Their friendships are also spaces of solidarity and mutual support when they are confronted with challenges.

Extract 30

Ursula: Maar Juffrou, daar is een ding van meisies, as uhm een meisie iets gedoen het in 'n groep, meisies sal altyd mekaar bystaan. Maar seuns, as dit by baklei kom, sal die seuns uitstaan Juffrou dat daai een wat, uhm uhm wat iets verkeerd gedoen het met daai een, dan moet hy dit self uitsort. (L3P5:549)

Ursula: But Miss, there's one thing about girls, when uhm one girl did something in a group, the girls will always stand together. But boys, when it gets to fighting, the boys will stand alone. Miss, so that the one that, uhm uhm did something wrong to the other one, then he must sort it out himself. (L3P5:549)

In the following extract the girls illustrate their care and concern for Gail. Because of her gentle and caring nature, they motivated her to assert herself with the boys.

Extract 31

Mary: Soos Gail..juffrou, sy's...sy's 'n sagte mens, Juffrou. En sy kan nie, sy, sy kan nie...sy sê nie maklik nee vir iemand as iets nie reg is nie. Sy sal altyd vir jou gee of so....al het sy net een snytjie brood. Ja, juffrou, sy sal dit saam met jou deel, maar ons...daar's seker so...meeste is seuns in onse klas...Juffrou, wat vir haar wil afdruk, Juffrou, en haar brood wil afvat. Maar sommige kere dan sê ons vir haar sy moet vir hulle vir hulle nee sê.

Mercia: Sy moet rêrig begin om nee te sê, Juffrou. Sy moet rêrig begin om nee te sê. Hulle vat...hulle vat advantage van haar (L3:P5:599)

Mary: Like Gail..Miss, she's..she's a soft person, Miss. And she can't..she can't..she doesn't easily say no to someone when something is wrong. She's very giving..even if she only has one slice of bread. Yes Miss, she will share it with you, but our...there's about..most are boys in our class Miss, who like to hurt her Miss, and want to take her bread. But sometimes then we tell her that she must say no to them.

Mercia: She must really learn to say no Miss. She must really learn to say no. They take..they take advantage of her. (L3P5:599)

Above we see the solidarity among the girls and their support for Gail. These findings are similar to that of Bhana (2008) where the girls also tried to protect the “gentler” girls from the boys’ aggression. Despite these instances of intimacy and solidarity among the girls, the girls also spent much time talking about the conflict among them.

As discussed earlier, research indicates that girls' peer relationships are often fraught with conflict, such as fighting about boys, contests for popularity, gossiping and teasing about clothing or appearance (Aapola et al., 2005; Bhana, 2008; Owens et al., 2000). Similarly, the participants also fought about these issues or even "*the smallest and simplest of things like*" Tippex or pens. Below, I will discuss some of the girls' reasons for enacting indirect aggression and physical aggression among themselves.

Indirect aggression: According to Underwood (2007), given the high levels of intimacy and self-disclosure in girl friendships, girls experience indirect aggression, such as gossiping, spreading rumours and social exclusion as painful and threatening to their self-worth and self-esteem. The participants spoke about the pain and disappointment they often felt when betrayed by girls whom they thought were their real friends. Below, Juliette shares her feelings about such an experience.

Extract 32

Juliette: As jou maats..as jou vriende...jou vriende is nie lekker..is nie regtige vriende nie..maar hulle praat..hulle praat oor so baie dinge met jou. Skinder van jou by 'n ander tjommie van jou en dan praat hulle so. Maar daais nie lekker nie...ek hou nie van daai nie. (K4P13:49)

Juliette: When your friends..when your friends..your friends are not nice..are not real friends..but they talk..they talk about so many things about you. Gossip about you by another friend of yours and then they talk. But that's not nice...I don't like that (K4P13:49)

Sherine: En hoe is die meisies ondermekaar [Group all talking loudly together]

Elze: Oe! juffrou!

Candy: Hulle lyk om te skinder

Elze: Hulle skinder onder mekaar...weet Juffrou, ek wil...ek wil... seuns vir tjommies hê...maar nou kinders...wat ek nou lekker kan [Candy: vertrou] want ek weet hulle sal nie skinder soos meisies skinder nie (J2P16:297)

Sherine: And how are the girls among each other? [Group all talking loudly together]

Elze: Oh! Miss!

Candy: They like to gossip.

Elze: They gossip among each other..do you know Miss, I want..I want to have boys for friends..but now children..that I can nicely [Candy: trust] because I know they won't gossip like the girls gossip. (J2P16:297)

Above, Candy and Elze state that they rather want to be friends with boys because they cannot trust girls. These findings are consistent with previous studies that similarly found girls' friendships were laced with trust and distrust issues (Thompson, 1994; Way et al., 2005). Here we see how these participants also construct themselves in opposition to "backstabbing", deceitful and gossiping girlfriends. Gossiping, Underwood (2007) states, is an aggressive act of social exclusion that aggressors use to diminish a peer's social status in their friendship circle. Thus, Juliette's marginalisation from her group probably influenced her self-esteem and sense of belonging in this group. The participants often excluded girls from their cliques based on their appearance, their hair and clothing. In the following extracts, they speak about how hair, clothes, the latest fashions and branded goods were topics of gossip and competition among girls.

Extract 33

Julie: Partykeer is dit ook moeilik om 'n meisie te wees..want...partykeer is dit mikien nou...um...is dji saam met jou vriende..jou hare pas miskien nou nie in nie en die ander se hare is lank..en is dit altyd...dan kyk die ander meisies kyk die ander meisies vir jou anderste aan omdat jou hare kort is...of partykeer is iets miskien nou net nie reg is met jou klere of so nie...dan gaan die ander meisies...gaan nou agteraf praat van jou en sulke dinge is wat gebeur (L2P1:62)

Julie: Sometimes it also hard to be a girl..because..sometimes it is now..umm..you are with your friends..maybe your hair does not fit in and the others' hair is long..and it's always..then the other girls look at you differently because your hair is short..or sometimes something is not right with your clothes..then the other girls go..go talk behind your back and such things are happening. (L2P1:62)

Bianca: Oe!... hier's baie jaloerse meisie kinders...deesdae is die meisies baie jaloers...ja

Candy: Soos...sê maar ek wil 'n skinny [jeans] hê soos Elze..en ek wil dit hê..dan is sy sommer kwaad

Ebony: Al kry dji dit nie reg nie..dan raak dji sommer kwaad....dan sê dji "Nee..die ding se skinny sit pap."

Elze: Maar alle meisies is maar so [laughs] hulle is maar net so [laughs]

Jessy: Daar is nie een wat nie so is nie [Group: mmm]

Ebony: En soos..naby by my birthday kom Christmas..toe sê ek vir haar (points to Candy) "Kom ons twee koop vir ons skinny's vir Christmas" toe sak umm ander twee

susters daar by ons af: “Ja..ons het voor julle gesê ons gaan vir ons skinnys koop.”
Toe sê ek: “Ek gaan nie meer vir my ‘n skinny koop nie.” Ek sal maar either jak soos
‘n mannetjie (J2P16:303)

Bianca: Oo! Here are many jealous girls..nowadays the girls are very jealous..yes.

Candy: Like..say I want a skinny [jeans] like Elze..and I want it..then she just gets cross.

Ebony: Even if you don’t get it right..then you get cross..then you say “No..the thing’s skinny doesn’t fit”.

Elze: But all girls are like that [laughs] they are all just like that [laughs].

Jessy: There isn’t one who is not like that [Group: mmm].

Ebony: And like..close to my birthday comes Christmas..so I said to her (points to Candy) “Come the two of us buy ourselves skinnies for Christmas” so two other sisters there by us said: “Yes, we said before you we’re going to buy ourselves skinnies.” So I said: “I’m not going to buy me a skinny anymore.” I will rather dress like a man. (J2P16:303)

Ursula: “Nee, jou hare is kroes” en “Jou hare is kort” en “Jou hare kan nie pom-poms hou nie.” Jou hare is relax. Sê maar nou jou hare is glad die Maandag dan sê hulle jou hare is gerelax. Sê maar jy’t nuwe skoene aan, dan sê hulle, as jy nou in die kamer kom, “sy kom nou weer hier met nuwe skoene. Sy wil nou weer kom brag.” Dan sê hulle daai skoene

Merle: het van Pep afgekom

Sherine: So die “labels” is belangrik, lyk dit vir my? [Goup: Ja juffrou]

Ursula: Veral by meisies, ‘n seunskind sal nie worry nie, hy sal met ‘n..‘n..hy sal met enige ding kom..hy sal met Pep tekkies kom en so...maar as ‘n meisie nou sien: “Nee, kyk wat het daai meisie aan” dan maak hulle guy van daai meisie of so “Kyk wat het sy aan...haar ma kan nie vir haar koop nie” en so

Ursula: Ja, Juffrou.

Sherine: So die so..so..so sê julle dat daar’s baie kompetisie onder die meisies?

Group chorus: Ja, juffrou.

Mary: Sê..sê maar jy kom in ‘n kortbroekie aan en dan moet jy nou ‘n name tekkie aanhê en sê nou maar jy’t ‘n Billabong top aan, dan sê hulle: “Ja, daai top is tog by **Japanese** gekoop”, daai top is langs die pad gekoop of so.

Sherine: O, so jy moenie jy moenie goed langs die pad koop nie, jy moet goed in die winkel koop?

Group chorus: Ja, juffrou.

Sherine: Nou wat sê dit, nou wat beteken dit as ‘n mens ‘n label ding aan het? Wat sê dit dan nou van jou?

Mary: Jy’s nou kwaai...jy’s nou cool...jy’s nou lekker ryk en julle’t geld en jou ma koop vir jou wat jy wil hê..jy wil jou hoog hou, juffrou. (L3P5:461)

Ursula: “No, your hair is kinky.” and “Your hair is short” and “Your hair can’t keep pom-poms.” Your hair is relaxed. Say your hair is straight on a Monday, then they say your hair is relaxed²⁹. Say you have new shoes on, and when you come into the room then they say: “Here she’s coming with new shoes. She just wants to come and brag”. Then they say those shoes=

Merle: =came from Pep.

Sherine: So it seems to me, the labels are important? [Goup: Yes, Miss]

Ursula: Especially among girls, a boy won’t worry, he will come with a..a..he will come with anything..he will come with Pep sneakers and so....but when a girl now sees: “No, look what that girl has on” then they make fun of that girl or so “Look what she has on....her mother can’t buy her things” and so.

Ursula: Yes, Miss.

Sherine: So the so...so...so do you say there’s competition among the girls?

Group chorus: Yes Miss.

*Mary: Say..say perhaps you come in with a shorts, then you must wear a branded sneaker and say you’re wearing a Billabong top, then they say: “Yes, that top was bought by **Japanese**³⁰”, that top was bought along the road or so.*

Sherine: Oh, so you mustn’t buy things on the road, you must buy it in a store?

Group chorus: Yes, Miss.

Sherine: Now what does it say, now what does it mean when one wears something with a label? What does it say about you?

Mary: You’re great...you’re cool...you’re nice and rich and you have money and your mother buys you what you want...you want to keep yourself stuck up Miss. (L3P5:461)

Paechter (2007) contends that teenagers “police their own and others’ expressions of group membership through the clothes they wear and even the places where these are bought” (p. 37). The extracts above illustrate a similar practice among these girls. Here we see how they used gossiping to regulate normative femininity and the self-presentation they deemed acceptable in their context. Girls who defied these local norms were regarded as stuck up. However, some duality seems to be at play here. Mary says that when one wears branded goods then it implies that you are “cool, you’re nice and rich and have money”. In this study all the girls aspire to wearing branded clothing as it seems to enhance a girl’s self-esteem and status in the peer group. However, it seems that those girls who want to be the most popular in the peer group arrogate this

²⁹ Relaxed refers to hair that was straightened.

³⁰ Mary’s referring here to the Chinese stores or a flea market.

for themselves, while other girls who are also wearing these brands are regarded as stuck up, and are put down in the group.

Brown (2003) states, girls often exclude other girls if they are perceived as a threat. Below, the girls report how girls spread rumours because they are mean and jealous of a peer and because they are competing for the same guys.

Extract 34

Sherine: Ok, so hoe is dit nog om 'n meisie te wees hierso in XX? Nou hoe's die meisies tussen mekaar hier in XX?

Group [chorus]: Katterig en jaloers

Sherine: Katterig...wat beteken dit?

Group all together: Jaloers

Sherine: Ok so vertel vir my...katterig en jaloers is die twee goed wat ek nou gehoor het...nou hoe is dit?

Leigh: Die meisies sê slegte goed vir mekaar omdat hulle jaloers is op mekaar

Sherine: Ok...nou hoekom is die meisies jaloers op mekaar?

Ashlene: Oor outjies...en hulle praat agter die mesies se rugte..hulle praat **sleg** van die meisies ook

Sherine: Dan watter soort goed sal hulle van die meisie sê?

Sharon: Sy's nie meer 'n virgin nie..so..sulke goed. Ja..hulle praat sulke goed van jou...dan is dit nie waar nie..of hulle sê...haar tjops is al gespice al [group laughter] haar tjops is al gespice al..dit beteken sy het al seks gehad

Group: Ja

Leigh: Sê maar jy het 'n... 'n kort broekie aan en dit is warm...dan sê hulle ..jy is ougat [group ja uhh] of jou hare is uitgeblow...sulke goed....dan sê hulle jy is ougat [group all together: Jjy's ougat] dan sê hulle goed van jou..soos amper soos..as jou hare nou...uitgeblow is...dan sê hulle honde dinges ook hare ja

Sherine: So die meisies is [Sharon: jaloers] die meisies is katterig en jaloers op mekaar so die meisies compete onder mekaarof wat is dit?

[Group all talking together and loud laughter]

Leigh: Ja, vir dieselfde outjies..omtrent..dis net so [laughter] (J1P15:16)

Sherine: Ok, so how is it still to be a girl here in XX? Now how are the girls with each other here in XX?

Group [chorus]: Cattish and jealous.

Sherine: Cattish...what does that mean?

Group all together: Jealous.

Sherine: Ok so tell me...cattish and jealous are the two things that I heard now...now how is that?

Leigh: The girls say bad things to each other because they are jealous of each other.

Sherine: Ok...now why are the girls jealous of each other?

Ashlene: Over guys..and they talk behind the girls' backs...they speak ill of the girls also.

Sherine: Then what kinds of stuff will they say about the girl?

Sharon: She's no longer a virgin...such things. Yes, they say such things...then it's not true..or they say...her chops are spiced already [Group laughter]. It means she already had sex.

Group: Yes.

Leigh: Say you wear a..a shorts and it's warm..then they say...you're precocious [Group: Yes uhh] or if your hair is blown out..such things..then they say you're precocious [Group all together: You're precocious] then they say things about you...like also..when your hair is now..blown out..then they say dogs also shit hair.

Sherine: So the girls are [Sharon:Jealous] the girls are cattish and jealous over each other..so the girls compete among each other...or what is it? [Group all talking together and loud laughter]

Leigh: Yes, for the same guys..that's how it is [laughter]. (J1P15:16)

In the extracts above, the girls illustrate how gossiping, meanness and jealousy, are used as regulatory strategies to gain social power and to neutralise or destroy opponents (Brown et al., 1999; Thompson, 1994). Spreading rumours, whether a girl is a virgin or not, is a powerful tool to marginalise her in the competition for boys and it also elevates the standing of those spreading the rumours. Also, in their attempts to keep other girls in check, they use girls' bodies as sites of oppression and on which to project violence (Brown, 2003). Thompson (1994) found that often jealousy was a thrilling experience during adolescence, worn like a badge of honour among the girls when they were the objects of other girls' aggression in the fight over boys. This was also evident among the girls in this study.

Extract 35

Sherine: Ok nou sê vir my nou..is julle bly om meisies te wees?

Edna: Ja...ek is baie bly

Zelma: Ek is bly, veral as die meisies so jaloers is op my oe! Dan voel ek so proud!

Laura: Dan sê ek: “Dis reg as julle so dink van my.”

Edna: “Want ek het als wat djy nie het nie.” Veral daai Jones familie wat so..is jaloers oor al die kinders [Group: Ja ..oe!]

Zelma: Dis hoeka hulle wat ons kom indoen het oor ons jongetjie vriende

Edna: Hulle wil net bieter wees

Zelma: Hulle ..hulle..niggies ...hulle dink hulle is die kwaaieste

Erica: uh....hulle wil net bieter wees

Zelma: Dan bring hulle die polisie...hulle bring die polisie..uh..maar ekke....skrik nie vir hulle nie. Ek het vir hulle gesê: “Ek skrik nie vir julle nie.” Ek het vir hulle gesê ek skrik nie vir hulle nie, never. Kyk hier...Mary dink ek het vir John...my broer...vir John, John, John [Edna: swart John?] mmm kleintjie [Laura: oe Jesus!] [laughter]

Sherine: So lyk my die meisies is ‘n bietjie jaloers vir julle [Group: Ja]

Zelma: As ons nou hier uitstap en ons gaan na John hulle toe..oe! En hulle sien vir ons..ja..maar John hulle wil nie vriende met hulle wees nie..hulle wil net wyn koop vir John hulle (K2P9:450)

Sherine: Ok now tell me, are you glad to be girls?

Edna: Yes...I am very glad.

Zelma: I am glad...especially when the girls are jealous of me. Oh! Then I feel so proud.

Laura: Then I say: “That’s ok when you think of me like that”.

Edna: “Because I have everything you don’t have”. Especially that Jones family that are so...jealous of all the children [Group: Yes.Ooh!].

Zelma: They were the ones who came to fight with us over our boyfriends.

Edna: They just want to be better.

Zelma: They...the cousins...they think they’re the best.

Erica: Uh....they just want to be the best.

Zelma: Then they bring the police...they bring the police..uh..but I..I’m not afraid of them. I told them: “I’m not afraid of you”. I told them I’m not afraid of them, never! Look here, Mary thinks I have John..my friend..John, John, John.

Edna: Black John?

Zelma: Mmm shortie.

Laura: Oh Jesus! [laughter]

Sherine: So it seems to me the girls are a bit jealous of you [Group: Yes].

Zelma: If we walk out here now and we go to John them..ooh! And they see us...yes..but John they don’t want to be friends with them...they just want to buy wine for John them. (K2P9:450)

In the above extracts we see how the girls demonise their opposition and elevate themselves as the preferred objects of boys' attention. This competition among the girls and vying for the boys' attention indicates the levels of objectification among them. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) state objectification and horizontal violence among girls are symptomatic of how girls have internalised the male gaze and how they have become disconnected from themselves and other girls. Above both Elze and Jessy state that all girls like to gossip, "*they are just like that*" and "*there isn't one who is not like that*". These statements suggest that gossiping is natural and normative among girls. Further, indirect violence among girls often escalates into physical fights because girls want to protect themselves or preserve their standing in their peer groups (Brown, 1998; 2003; Owens et al., 2000).

Direct aggression: The existing literature reports that girls fight among each other for various reasons (Aapola et al., 2005; Bhana, 2008; Brown, 2003), which Grotper and Crick (1996) state can either be reactive or instrumental. In this study, girls similarly fought among themselves either to save face when teased or to defend their reputations. In the following extract we see how the girls react to teasing or when they feel insulted.

Extract 36

Ursula: Hulle is nie soos ek nou gesê het..nou sê soos seuns nie....ja....en dan raak jy sommer kwaad nie. Sê nou maar ek sê vir jou djy het 'n groot kop in ons klas, hier gaan sê djy nou vir almal in die hele klas. Dan kom die storie uit. Dan sê sy vir my nou ja: "Ek kry jou vanmiddag by die hek" en so. En dan baklei ons nou, maar net omdat dit was nie eens uhm...dit was maar nou net 'n grap, dit was mos nou nie asof ek dit bedoel het nie.

Sherine: Mmm, so waarom skinder...waarom baklei die meisies?

Mary: Partykeer oor die simpelste dinge, juffrou. Die geringste simpelste dingetjie. Sommer nou oor penne, wat jy nou gesê het..haar pen is 'n Pep pen of 'n cheap pen of 'n Pep pen....of nee..jou hare is lank of jou hare is kort. [Group: mmm] Nee, jy't jou skoene daar gekoop. Nee, jou skoene is by Pep gekoop en so juffrou en partykeer oor outjies ook juffrou. [Group: ja, juffrou] Die meeste fights is oor boyfriends...die ander meisie het die ander meisie se outjie afgevry by haar of so

Ursula: Of djy sê nou maar net vir daai seun: "Hallo, hoe gaan dit? Lanklaas met jou gepraat." Nou sê sy vir hom: "Lanklaas met jou gepraat." nou netnou kom dit by daai

tjommie uit ja...ek het nou by haar outjie aangelê en so...maar hulle gaan nie eers uit nie, Juffrou. Hulle baklei oor enige iets. (L3P5:429)

Ursula: They [girls] are not like I said now..as I'm saying now not like boys..yes..and then you just get angry. Say now I tell you in class that you have a big head, then you tell everyone in our class. Then the story is out. Then she says to me: "I'll get you at the gate this afternoon." and so. And then we fight, but just because it was not even true uhm..it was only a joke, and it wasn't as if I meant it.

Sherine: mmm, so what do girls gossip about ...what do they fight about?

Mary: Sometimes over the simplest of things Miss. The smallest, simplest things. Like over pens, maybe you said something...her pen is a Pep pen or a cheap pen or a Pep pen..or no..your hair is long or short. [Group: agrees] No, you bought your shoes there. No, you bought your shoes at Pep and so Miss and sometimes over boyfriends also Miss. [Group: Yes Miss] The most fights are over boyfriends...the other girl made out with the other girl's boyfriend and stole him..or so.

Ursula: Or maybe you just say to another boy: "Hallo, how are you? I haven't spoken to you in a long time." Now you tell him: "Haven't spoken to you in a long time." now then it gets to that friend yes..I flirted with her boyfriend and so...but they aren't even going steady Miss. They fight about anything. (L3P5:429)

In their eloquent explanations about the fighting among girls, the participants illustrate how slights about their appearance, where they bought their clothes or flirting with another girl's boyfriend can escalate into fights among the girls. However, these "*smallest, simplest things*" seem to mask the underlying causes for their fighting, that "*the most fights are over boyfriends*". These findings are similar to those of Thompson (1994) where the adolescent girls similarly made sense of their pent up anger and that their seeming random fights were actually over boys. Here the girls also understand the dynamics of their fighting and how boys are the crux of the problem.

Below, Zelma and her group continue the drama of the antagonism between themselves and their rivals. In their narration of a rival's sexual exploits and fighting, they are constructing what they believe are unacceptable performances of femininities and sexuality. It is interesting to note how they predict that a girl who seems to display sexual agency could be at risk for sexual violence.

Extract 37

Sherine: So baklei die meisies dan oor seuns somtyds hier in YY? [Group in a loud chorus: Jaaa]

Zelma: Jaaa.. wanneer...Vrydag ne..Vrydag.... Erica...wat ons..wat ek en Gary hulle so daar agter die draad gesit het...wat John hulle almal hier na toe gekom het...ja Vrydag...toe wil hulle mos vir my met 'n mes ko steek ...oor John hulle

Edna: Wie?

Zelma: Mary...sal djy nie dink Mary wil vir my met die mes gesteeke het oor John

Edna: Oe jene!

Zelma: Sy't eerste daar by die draad gestaan...sy't eerste my vriend Cedric geroep

Sherine: Wie is Cedric?

Edna: Ons vriend

Zelma: Ja ons vriend...toe vertel sy mos nou... toe vra sy vir Cedric of hy wiet waar Michael is en so aan. Michael is ook een van hulle vriende. Toe sê Cedric: "Nee". Want Judy..Judy sy wil mos by Michael wees. Dis hoekom hulle so aangaan

Laura: Sy't dan vir Willie

Edna: huh huh sy't nie meer vir Willie nie

Zelma: Wiet djy wat het Michael gemaak? Sy't vir Willie net so gelos

Edna: toe vry sy en Michael voor Willie

Zelma: Toe voel Willie darem baie sleg...toe's Willie daai aand net hier by ons jong

Sherine: So dit lyk sy het 'n klomp boyfriends [Group: Ja ja]

Laura: Sy wiet nie by watter een wil sy wees nie

Sherine: Nou wat sê die meisies van so 'n meisie?

Laura: Hulle gaan haar..ek sê..hulle gaan haar verkrag

Edna: Niemand hou van die Jones familie nie [Group:ja ja]

Zelma: Almal haat hulle want hulle wil net..as die een nou baklei dan is almal hier..dan slat almal...hulle wiet nie eers wat gaan aan nie..maar hulle baklei saam....as hulle nou miskien nou hoor ons praat nou van hulle..ooee!...die hele squad sal nou hier by die deur inkom en ons kom aanpak...die hele familie

Erica: Maar hulle wiet nie wat gaan aan nie

Sherine: So baklei die meisies onder mekaar?

Group: ja.... ja

Laura: Daai eenkeer oek hier by die bus....toe jack hulle een van die Jones meisies op

Erica: Toe pak die anner meisies oek aan

Zelma: Jaa... toe's almal oek aan...hoeka vir daai meisie...wat is haar naam ..sy't oek laas jaar hier skool gegaan

Laura: Marion

Zelma: Marion..ja..dis was vir haar gewees wat hulle so geslaan het

Laura: Dit was oor Tippex gewies (K2P9:457)

Sherine: So do the girls sometimes fight over boys here in YY [Group in a loud chorus: Ye-s-s³¹].

Zelma: Ye-s-s! When...hey Friday..Friday, Erica...when we..when Gary them and I sat behind the fence...when John them all came here...yes Friday...so they wanted to come and stab me with a knife....over John them.

Edna: Who?

Zelma: Mary...so what do you think about this? Mary wanted to stab me with a knife over John.

Edna: Oh my word!

Zelma: She first stood there by the fence...so she first called my friend Cedric.

Sherine: Who is Cedric?

Edna: Our friend.

Zelma: Yes our friend...so she said...so she asked Cedric whether he knows where Michael is. Michael is also one of our friends. So Cedric said: "No." Because Judy... Judy she wants to be with Michael. That's why they're going on like that.

Laura: She then has Willie.

Edna: Huh huh she hasn't got Willie anymore.

Zelma: Do you know what Michael did? She left Willie just like that.

Edna: So she and Michael made out in front of Willie.

Zelma: So Willie felt very bad...so Willie stayed with us that night.

Sherine: So it seems she has many boyfriends [Group: Yes, yes].

Laura: She doesn't know by which one she wants to be.

Sherine: Now what do the other girls say about such a girl?

Laura: They are going to...I say ..they are going to rape her.

Edna: Nobody likes the Jones family [Group: yes, yes!].

Zelma: Everbody hates them, they just want...when the one fights then everyone is here..then they all hit..they don't even know what's going on...but they fight with...if they now hear us talking about them...oh!...then the whole squad will come in by the door and attack us...the whole family.

Erica: But they don't know what's going on.

Sherine: So do the girls fight among each other?

Group: Yes...yes.

Laura: Once here by the bus....so they jacked one of the Jones girls up.

Erica: So all the other girls joined in.

³¹ The girls shouted out in a long drawn out yes.

Zelma: Yes...so everyone was in it...that girl...what's her name..she went to school here last year.

Laura: Marion.

Zelma: Marion..yes..it was her that they hit like that.

Laura: It was over Tippex. (K2P9:457)

From the extract, above we also see how Zelma and her friends are mutually policing the borders of the “good” girl. In Zelma’s focus group it was evident that she was the high status member of their clique. In their narratives about their rivalry with the Jones girls, Zelma positions herself as a fearless protagonist, agentic, holding her own with Mary and displaying much empathy for Willie who was dumped. In this retelling of the story, Zelma and her friends are portraying Mary and the rest of the Jones clan as those who are transgressing the boundaries of normative femininities.

Drawing on the tenets of horizontal violence (Freire, 1993) and objectification theory (Fredrikson & Roberts, 1997), it is evident how growing up in a patriarchal culture seems to foster antagonism among girls. It appears that girls fight for the monopoly of boys’ love and attention to validate their sense of self and being among girls. Thus Brown (2003) posits girls’ fighting each other is a

classic divide and conquer strategy – [that] divert girls’ attention from the real to the ideal; pit them against each other over trivial matters so that they won’t see the big picture – the institutional and cultural inequities, the societal control over women’s bodies, [and] the gendered nature of violence. (p. 32)

7.3.2 Peer relationships with boys

Various studies indicate that cross-gender relationships, platonic and romantic, play a significant role in adolescent girls’ development (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Furman, 1999; McDougall & Hymel, 2007). Furman (1999) suggests that the skills learnt in egalitarian platonic relationships

could later facilitate adolescent romantic relationships and could provide adolescents with support, nurturance and sexual fulfilment. In this section, I discuss the participants' platonic and romantic relationships with boys.

Platonic friendships: As discussed earlier, the girls spoke at length of their experiences of aggression and harassment by boys. However, they also reported having positive experiences in their platonic friendships with boys. These friendships also sometimes protected them against other boys' aggression.

Extract 38

Charmaine: Jy kan seunsvriende het maar jy moet 'n sekere punt het tot waar jy kom..soos ek het baie seunsvriende by die huis..ek hou van seunsvriende... hulle is lekker grapperig soos ons

Carlene: En ek het ook net seunsvriende by die huis

Charmaine: Hulle is lekker met ons..miskien..as hulle laat saam met ons winkel toe loop miskien as daar seuns is wat ons wil rob...daan staan hulle vir ons voor (L1P3:104)

Charmaine: You can have boyfriends, but you must come to a certain point where you are at...like me, I have many boy friends at home...I like boy friends...they are nice and funny like us.

Carlene: I also have only boy friends at home.

Charmaine: They are nice with us...maybe..when it's late and they walk with us to the shop and when there are boys who want to rob us...then they stand up for us. (L1P3:104)

Hence, the participants differentiated between the “nice” and “disgusting” boys and seemed to idealise these friendships (Brown, 2003; Way et al., 2005). However, these friendships were also the source of much competition among the girls.

Extract 39

Sherine: Ok, ek wil net terugkom na 'n punt wat Merle gesê het. Merle het gesê dis somtyds beter om vriende te wees met seuns.

Ursula: Is so, Juffrou..ja, Juffrou.

Sherine: Hoekom sê....hoekom sê jy so, Merle?

Merle: Juffrou, saam met seuns is dit lekker..hulle praat oor niemand anders nie, hulle praat net oor lekker goed en so...Juffrou. Ja, juffrou..maar meisies..meisies hou van skinder

Ursula: “Het jy gehoor wat die een gesê het?” [in ‘n skinder stem]

Merle: En Juffrou..meisies is lief om te stry onder mekaar Juffrou. As jy met seuns sit...dan’s dit net...hulle luister musiek of so, Juffrou. Niemand praat oor enige iemand anders wat nie in die groep is nie..as wat daar sit met mekaar

Ursula: En die seuns is so, hulle..hulle..sê nou maar hulle sê iets sleg van jou en julle wil nou bietjie..uhm..jokies maak van jou, dan sê hulle dit in jou gesig. Dan lag jy saam en netnou maak jy weer dieselfde jokes oor hulle. (L3P5:421)

Sherine: Ok, I just want to get back to the point Merle made. Merle said sometimes it’s better to be friends with boys.

Ursula: That’s so Miss...yes Miss.

Sherine: Why do you say....why do you say so Merle?

Merle: Miss, with boys it’s nice...they talk about nobody else, they just talk about nice stuff and so Miss. Yes Miss..but girls..girls like to gossip.

Ursula: “Did you hear what that one said?” [in a hushed voice].

Merle: And Miss..girls love to quarrel among each other Miss. When you sit with boys..then it’s just..they listen to music or so, Miss. Nobody talks about anyone else that is not in the group..that’s sitting with each other.

Ursula: And the boys are like this, they..they..say now they say something bad about you and they now want to make a little...uhm..jokies..about you, then they say it to your face. Then you laugh with and later then you also make fun of them. (L3P5:421)

Zelda: Dis betere om saam met seuns te loop as saam met meisies..meisies..skinder onder mekaar, van jou miskien nou en so [group: Ja] jy loop...jy loop nou miskien saam met hulle [meisies]...hulle is mos nou in ‘n groepie en..dan loop jy saam met hulle..nou..oormôre dan praat hulle tweetjies nou van jou[pointing to different girls to illustrate her point] en hulle twee praat weer van jou en..hulle twee praat nou van daai twee..en hulle twee...en dan’s dit ’n hele bakleiery. So seuns, hulle...is net rustig en hulle loop net in die rondte (K4P13:646)

Zelda: It’s better to walk with boys than with girls..girls...gossip among each other, maybe about you and so [Group: yes] you walk..you walk perhaps with them [girls]...they are now in a groupie and..then you walk with them..now..tomorrow then the two of them now talk about you [pointing to different girls to illustrate her point] and the two of them talk again about you and..the two of them talk again about the other two..and the two of them..and then it’s just a lot of fighting. So boys, they...are just laid-back and they just walk about. (K4P13:646)

From the girls' talk, they preferred boys' friendships because girls liked to gossip and were deceitful.

Extract 40

Sherine: Nou hoekom het julle meer seunsvriende as meisie vriende?

Charmaine: Meisies...hulle is baie agteraf

Laura: En hulle is nooit so skinderig ..soos die meisiekinders wat oor mekaar skinder agter die kinders se rugte nie

Ivana (cuts in): Hulle praat agter jou rug..maar as hulle by jou is dan gee hulle voor dat hulle is jou vriend...maar agter jou praat hulle.. hulle kan baie skinder

Sherine: So hulle is vals? Julie, hoe is dit vir jou? Het jy baie meisie vriende of net seunsvriende?

Julie: Ek het meer meisie vriende...want dis vir my lekker om meisie vriende te hê, ek voellie ek wil seunsvriende het nie, want hulle is te onbeskof

Sherine: Oe...want sommige van die seunsvriende is onbeskof? En jy Agnes, hoe's dit vir jou?

Agnes: Ek het nie vriende nie...ek is meer in die huis (L1P3:106)

Sherine: Now why do you have more boy friends than girl friends?

Charmaine: Girls...they are very deceitful.

Laura: And they [boys] are not as gossipy..like the girls that gossip about each other behind the children's backs.

Ivana (cuts in): They talk behind your back..but when they are with you then they make as if they are your friend...but behind your back they talk.. they can gossip a lot.

Sherine: So they are false? Julie, how is it for you? Have you got many girl friends or just boy friends?

Julie: I have more girl friends...because it's nice for me to have girl friends , I don't feel I want to have boy friends, because they are too rude.

Sherine: Oh...because some boys are rude?And you Agnes, how is it for you?

Agnes: I don't have friends....I am more indoors. (L1P3:106)

By contrast, it seems that the girls experienced more mutuality with boys because when they joked with or teased each other, the teasing was taken in good spirit. They also enjoyed walking about, listening to music and “*talk about nice stuff*” with the boys. This resonates with previous research that friendships with boys are focused on activities, and provide girls with relief from the intensity of competition and distrust with girls (Brown, 2003; McDougall & Hymel, 2007; Way

et al., 2005). Further, similar to McDougall and Hymel's (2007) findings, the participants' friendships with boys were also suspected of being romantic relationships and this often resulted in the break-up of friendships among girls.

Extract 41

Ebony: Juffrou..as meisies seuns tjommies het dan dink die meisies...oe ...julle is ouderwets [group: mmm] kyk daar loop sy saam met my boyfriend of dan kom doen sy sommer vir jou in...ja: "Hoekom loop julle met my boyfriend?"of so

Candy: Juffrou ek het 'n beste tjommie gehad wat my bedink het dat ek en haar outjie het gevry...nou is ons nie meer beste tjommies nie (J2P16:297)

Ebony: Miss, when girls have boys as friends, then the girls think..oh..you are precocious [Group: mmm] look there she's walking with my boyfriend or then she just comes and attacks you...yes: "Why do you walk with my boyfriend?"or so.

Candy: Miss, I had a best friend that suspected me that I made out with her boyfriend..now we aren't best friends any more. (J2P16:297)

Competition among the girls for the boys' attention and the subsequent rivalry was a dominant topic of discussion in all the focus groups. In the following extract, Zelma and Edna tell us about their "nice" friends and how the rivalry among girls for these boys' attention resulted in indirect and direct aggression.

Extract 42

Zelma: Soos ons...ons loop mos nou.. ek en Edna..loop saam met jongetjies. Maar hulle hou nie vir hulle kwaai nie..hulle het baie mooi maniere en so aan..dis amper.. 'n klomp meisies is agter hulle aan maar omdat ons nou saam met hulle loop hou die meisies nie van ons nie. Die meisies sê: "Hulle wil vir hulle kwaai hou omdat hulle nou met daai manne loop. Kyk hoe lyk hulle! Kyk watter klere dra hulle." Maar hulle sê vir jou lekker. Maar hulle dink hulle is kwaai. Nou umm..naweke is ons oek by hulle..nou in die aande dan wil...dan wil die jongetjies mos nou drink...dan koop hulle vir die jongetjies wyn

Sherine: Die ander meisies?

Zelma: Ja...ons koop nie vir hulle wyn nie. Ons sê: "Ons sal nie vir julle wyn koop nie." Dan sê..hulle ons moet saam drink, dan sê ons

Edna: "Nee ons drink nie."

Zelma: "Nee ons drink nie." Dan sê ons

Edna: As hulle vir ons geld vra

Zelma: As hulle vir ons geld vra.. dan sê ons: “Ag, ons gie vir julle geld. Julle kan maar vir julle gaan wyn koop...maar ons gaan nie saam drink nie.” (K2P9:311)

Zelma: Like us...we walk..Edna and I..walk with boys. But they don't keep themselves stuck-up...they have good manners and so...it's almost..many girls are after them but because we walk with them, the girls don't like us. The girls say: “They just want to keep themselves stuck-up because they are walking with those guys. Look how they look! Look what clothes they wear.” They like to insult you. But they think they are great. Now umm..weekends we are also with them..now at night then they want...then the boys want to drink..they, they buy the boys wine.

Sherine: The other girls?

Zelma: Yes...we don't buy them wine. We say: “We won't buy you wine.” Then they say we must drink with them, then we say

Edna: “No, we don't drink.”

Zelma: “No we don't drink.” Then we say

Edna: When they ask us for money.

Zelma: When they ask us for money..we say: “Ok..we'll give you money, you can go and buy you wine...but we aren't going to drink with you.” (K2P9:311)

Initially Zelma and Edna stated that they do not buy the boys wine, however, later in this conversation it was evident that, like their rivals, they also gave the boys money for wine. In the following extract, Zelma and Edna display their affiliation and bonding with these boys when they talk about “*our boys...our boys*” – who tell them “*lots of things that are right*” and are different from the rude boys because they are are not arrogant. However, it seems that this friendship could possibly be a risky one for them because of the boys' tendency to consume alcohol.

Extract 43

Zelma: Party seuns is baie verwaand [Group:mmm]

Edna: mmm...party seuns is baie onbeskof...baie onbeskof...onbeskof. Hulle is afknouerig en so..maar daar is party meisies wat oek so is

Sherine: So die seuns sê Edna is ‘n bietjie afknouerig. En hoe behandel hulle vir julle?

Edna: Party behandel jou reg

Zelma: huhuh nee. Ons seuns, ons seuns met wie ons mee loop, behandel vir ons reg...maar die anders...omdat ons nou saam met hulle loop is die ander jongetjies baie onbeskof met ons...verwaand. Hulle hou van ons **afdruk**

Sherine: So as jy sê hulle behandel jou reg..wat beteken daai?

Zelma: Hulle is nie soos die anner jongetjies wat nou vir jou sê umm: “Djy wil net vir jou kwaai hou nou wat djy tussen hulle loop.”

Edna: afdruk en so

Zelma: En hulle sal nou weer vir ons sê..ons jongetjie vriende: “Moet julle nie aan daai ouens steur nie, hulle is soos klein kindertjies.” en so aan. Hulle sal vir ons baie dinge sê wat reg is. Maar die ander is sommer..hulle sal verwaand wees met ons. (K2P9:281)

Zelma: Some boys are very arrogant [Group: mmm].

Edna: Mmm...some boys are very rude...very rude..rude. They like to bully you and so..but there are a few girls like that too.

Sherine: So, Edna says the boys like to bully you a little. And how do they treat you?

Edna: Some treat you properly.

*Zelma: Huhuh no. Our boys, our boys with whom we walk, treat us properly...but the others...because we walk with them (their boy friends), the other guys are very rude to us...arrogant. They like to **put us down**.*

Sherine: So when you say they treat you properly...what does that mean?

Zelma: They are not like the other boys that say to us umm: “You just want to keep yourself great now that you walk with them.”

Edna: Put down and so.

Zelma: And they will now again tell us..our boy friends: “Don’t take notice of those guys, they are like small children.” and so on. They will tell us lots of things that are right. But the others are just..they will be arrogant with us. (K2P9:281)

The girls also spoke about how the “disgusting” boys at school harassed them. The boys’ aggression and harassment ranged from pranks where they looked at the girls’ panties, to more harassing behaviours such as showing girls pornography on their cellphones and groping the girls’ private parts. In the following extracts the girls relate how the boys harassed them with seeming impunity.

Extract 44

Sherine:Nou hoe is die seuns met die meisies op skool?

Candy: Hulle slat ‘n mens....en hulle is ouderwets

Patsy: Hulle vat aan ‘n mens....en as ‘n mens sê: “Nee..moenie aan ‘n mens vat nie.” dan sê hulle: “Ja, julle is tog ou gewoond daaraan..aan vat..vat.”

Elze: Ja Juffrou

Candy: Juffrou...hulle sit soos 'n spieltjie op hulle skoen...nou kom staan hulle by jou...dan druk hulle voet so onder 'n mens dan kyk hulle

Elze: Dan kyk hulle nou in die spieltjie, verstaan juffrou? Ja...dan kyk hulle...dji weet van niks af nie... dan praat dji...en dan kyk hulle na jou panty [group all talking together] dan hou ek my skirt vas

Andrea: Dan druk hulle hul voet so [illustrates how the boys put their shoes under their dresses] dan kyk hulle net af die healtyd...dan kyk hulle onder jou klere en kyk na jou pantie

Jessy: Maar ek dra 'n broekie onder my skirt (J2P16:165)

Sherine: Now how are the boys with the girls here at school?

Candy: They hit a person...and they are precocious.

Patsy: They touch a person...and if one says: "No..don't touch me." then they say: "Yes, you are already used to it..to touching..touching."

Elze: Yes Miss.

Candy: Miss...they put little mirrors on their shoes...then they come stand next to you...they..they push their feet under your dress then they look.

Elze: Then they look in the mirror, do you understand Miss? Yes...then they look...you are unaware...then you talk...and then they look at your panty [Group all talking together] then I keep my dress

Andrea: Then they push their foot like this [illustrates how the boys put their shoes under their dresses] then they just look down the whole time...then they look under your clothes and look at your panty.

Jessy: But I wear a pants under my skirt. (J2P16:165)

The girls also related how the boys shoved their cellphones with pornographic material on it in their faces and threatened them when they wanted to report the matter to their teachers.

Extract 45

Mandy-Lee: Ek gaan nou vir Juffrou sê...hulle kan my ook maar slaan ook, maar...Johnny hulle bring ook hulle phone saam..dan kyk hulle..dinges..porn

Sharon: Ougat photos..dan kyk hulle porn op die phones. Ja Juffrou..hulle wys dan vir my [group agrees: uhh in die klas]

Mandy-Lee: uhh...jy kan niks sê nie..as jy wil sê...dan sê hulle: "Jy sal sien wat gaan gebeur met jou."

Ashlene: Ja..hulle verlei jou en ons wil dit nie kyk nie..dan druk hulle dit in jou gesig..en dan sê hulle ons hou daarvan..so [group agrees: uhh] (J1P14:190)

Mandy-Lee: I'm going to tell Miss now..they can also hit me now, but..Johnny them also bring their phone..then they look at porn.

Sharon: Precocious photos..then they look at porn on the phones. Yes Miss..then they show it to me [Group agrees: uhh in class].

Mandy-Lee: Uhh..you can't say anything..when you want to tell..then they say: "You will see what will happen to you."

Ashlene: Yes..they tempt you and we don't want to look at it..then they push it in your face...and then they say we like it [Group agrees: uhh]. (J1P14:190)

At all the schools the girls reported how the boys cornered them, pushed the girls against the wall and warned them to remain silent about this.

Extract 46

Ashlene: Juffrou sê maar nou..jy loop in die gang..dan sal die seuns jou vasdruk teen die muur..dis dan 'n ander soorte druk Juffrou..soos dit...so Juffrou [illustrates how the boys press their genitals against their bodies] dji kan dan nie vir hulle wegstoot nie...hulle hou jou vas [laughs self-consciously]

Sherine: so die seuns vat aan jou

Mandy: mmm....dan is 'n mens bang om vir die Juffrouens te sê

Sherine: Nou hoekom is julle bang om vir die onderwysers te sê?

Sharon: Ons is bang hulle slaan ons of hulle bekruipe ons...hulle kry ook ander mense om met ons te baklei [???? group talks loudly together]

Leigh: Die seuns sal dan meisies kry om vir ons te slat...groot meisies

Kim: groot meisies

Sherine: So dis interessant...so sal die seuns nie vir jou self slaan nie?

Sharon: maar sommige van hulle sal

Ashlene: Van hulle dreig vir jou...hulle sal vir jou ruk of somtyds bekruipe hulle jou....dan slaan hulle jou

Sherine: Nou as julle sê die seuns vat aan jou....nou wat doen hulle?

Porcia-Lee: hulle vat aan jou...hulle vat aan jou borste of hulle druk jou vas...aan jou bums of hulle gee jou sommer 'n trap [group joins in telling which parts of the body the boys touch]

Leigh: Ja juffrou....hulle druk jou vas...of hulle soen jou sommer... [loud talking by the group]

Kim: Hulle slaan jou sommer...of as ons nou in die gang staan...dan kom hulle in 'n groep...dan wil hulle jou net vasdruk

Leigh: oe!....sê maar dis nou pouse en nou ons staan op 'n hoop in 'n gang...oe....dan staan ons meisies alleen...dan wil hulle jou net druk

Mandy-Lee: Juffrou en...hoe kan ek nou sê...sê maar nou die seun slaan jou en jy slaan nou miskien vir hom nou terug...dan vra die meneer nou: “Wat gaan aan?” dan sê die seun: “Nee maar sy het eerste begin.” dan is dit nie waar nie...dan sê die meneer: “Julle meisies wil nie hoor van die seuns nie.” maar dis eintlik die seuns wat alles begin [group agrees: ja, so is hulle] (J1P14: 170-184)

Ashlene: Miss, say now...you walk in the passage..then the boys will push you against the wall..it's then a different kind of push Miss..like this..so Miss [illustrates how the boys press their genitals against their bodies] then you can't push them away..they hold you tight [laughs self-consciously].

Sherine: So the boys touch you.

Mandy: Mmm....then one is scared to tell the teachers.

Sherine: Now why are you scared to tell the teachers?

Sharon: We are scared that they will hit us or they will stalk us..they also get other people to fight with us [Group talks loudly together, inaudible].

Leigh: The boys will then get girls to hit us...older girls.

Kim: Older girls.

Sherine: So that's interesting....so the boys won't hit you themselves?

Sharon: But some will.

Ashlene: Some of them will threaten you...they will push you or sometimes they stalk you...then they hit you.

Sherine: Now if you say the boys touch you....now what do they do?

Porcia-Lee: They touch you....they touch your breasts or they push themselves against you...touch your bums or just give you a kick [Group joins in telling which parts of the body the boys touch]

Leigh: Ja Miss....they press against you...or they just kiss you [loud talking by the group].

Kim: They just hit you...or if you stand in the passage...then they come in a group...then they want to get hold of you.

Leigh: Oh!....say it's interval and we stand in a group in the passage...oh..then the girls stand alone...then they want to push against you.

Mandy-Lee: Miss and....how can I say now....say now the boy hit you and you hit him back...then the sir asks: “What's going on here?” then the boy says: “No, but she started first.” Then it's not true..then the sir says: “You girls don't want to stay away from the boys.” But it's actually the boys who started it all [Group agrees: Yes, that's how they are]. (J1P14: 170-184)

Despite the boys' threats, a few girls reported fighting back when the boys harassed them. For example, Elze and Candy stated:

Extract 47

Elze: Hulle vat oral...oral waar daar vatplek is...aan jou borste en oral [loud talking together about the boys touching them] alles wat vatbaar is...oe juffrou! Ek hou nie van 'n seunskind moet aan my vat nie

Sherine: So wat maak julle as hulle so aan jou vat?

Elze: Ek slat hulle, ek skop sommer vir hulle...ek skel [loud talking together]

Candy: Ek klap hulle.

Jessy: Ek sê vir die onderwysers.

Sherine: Sê julle vir die onderwysers...dan wat maak die onderwysers?

Candy: Dan skel die onderwysers.. 'n prefek het ook hoeka vandag aan 'n ander prefek gevat..toe stuur Juffrou Peters vir daai ou kantoor toe. (J2P16:175)

Elze: They touch all over..all over where they can touch...your breasts and all over [loud talking together about the boys touching them] everything that can be touched...oh Miss! I don't like it when the boys touch me.

Sherine: So what do you do when they touch you?

Elze: I hit them, I just kick them...I scold them [loud talking together]

Candy: I smack them.

Jessy: I tell the teachers.

Sherine: Do you tell the teachers...then what do the teachers do?

Candy: Then the teachers scold them..just today a prefect touched another prefect...so Miss Peters sent that guy to the office. (J2P16:175)

From the girls' narratives it seems that they are in a double bind. On the one hand, the boys sexually harass them and then threaten them should they tell the teachers. Above, the girls relate that the boys would stalk them or get older girls to hit them. On the other hand, when they resist, fight back or muster the courage to lodge their complaints, they feel there are no consequences for the boys' behaviours.

Extract 48

Larry-Anne: Die seuns is te..baie vatterig...hulle is vatterig aan die meisies..hulle..sê maar ek loop nou verby..dan gryp hulle sommer so aan jou [group laughs and someone says: Ja, hulle is so hier by die skool..oe!]

Renee: uhh..hulle is so..dit baat ook nie djy vertel die onderwysers nie...hy sal net sê..die onderwyser sal net sê: "Moet dit nie weer doen nie." En hy gaan dit so aanvaar djy het my niks gedoen nie

Zelda: Dan doen hy dit net weer die volgende keer

Renee: So ek gaan dit net weer doen die volgende keer...ja..want hulle kry nie eintlik pak of word geskors of kry detensie of so iets soos dit..oor dit nie...hulle respekteer nie die meisie kinders nie..hulle vloek jou sommer uit...hulle vat net sommer aan jou..sommer nou...dji het nie eers toestemming gegee nie...en gaan sê dji...hulle dreig jou sommer: "Gaan sê dji net..dan sien dji wat ek maak met jou." [Group: mm]

Zelda: Ja die seuns respekteer nie die meisies nie. (K1P8:67)

Larry-Anne: The boys are very touchy..they like to touch the girls..say I walk past them..then they grab you [Group laughs and someone says: Yes, they are like that here at school oh!].

Renee: Uhh..they are like that..it doesn't help if you tell the teachers..he will just say..the teacher will just say: "Don't do it again."

Zelda: Then he just does it again the next time.

Renee: So he will just do it again the next time...yes..because they don't actually get a hiding or are expelled or get detention or something like that...they don't respect the girls..they swear at you...they just touch you..now...you didn't even give them permission...and if you tell...they threaten you: "Just you go and tell..then you see what I'll do to you." [Group: mm].

Zelda: Yes, the boys don't respect the girls. (K1P8:67)

Schools are social spaces where gendered identities are constructed, practiced and reproduced and tend to reflect the dominant power relations and notions of gender of the broader community contexts (Paechter, 2007; UNICEF, 2010). Thus, the girls' experiences of sexual harassment in this study are consistent with various other studies, documenting the high rates of sexual violence against girls in South Africa (Bhana, 2012; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Petersen, Bhana, & McKay, 2005). Burton and Leoschut (2013), and Petersen et al. (2005) similarly report girls experiencing sexual victimisation, unwanted touching, and boys' sense of sexual entitlement at schools and in the community. Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that the violence against girls was intended to intimidate and demean girls and were undergirded by masculine notions of bravado. Tolman, Spencer, Rosen-Reynoso, and Porche (2003) similarly found that boys' sexual harassment of girls was due to the pressure to perform successful, sexual masculinities, which enhanced the boys' popularity in their peer group. Like the girls' experiences in this study, Tolman, Spencer et al. (2003) also found the boys' sexually harassing behaviour was often ignored by teachers and

regarded as “normal” behaviour by both girls and boys. Tolman, Spencer et al. (2003) report that, by not intervening or holding boys accountable, teachers often implicitly condone boys’ behaviour and shift the responsibility for action onto girls. Hence they state girls often failed to report sexual harassment or when they resisted, they were punished for violent behaviour. In the extracts below, the girls share similar experiences regarding the teachers’ ineffective interventions.

Extract 49

Mary: As hulle aan ‘n mens vat, Juffrou, dan raak ‘n mens kwaad, Juffrou. Dan gaan jy sommer kantoor toe.

Sherine: En dan wat sê die hoof?

Ursula: Ons gaan nie kantoor toe

Mary: Juffrou, die hoof sê hy’t niks te doen met dinge wat buite aangaan nie. As dit in die klas gebeur dan sal..dan sal die meneer iets sê. (L3P5:579)

Mary: When they touch one Miss, then one gets cross. Then you go to the office immediately.

Sherine: And then what does the principal say?

Ursula: We don’t go to the office.

Mary: Miss, the principal says he’s got nothing to do with things that happen outside. If it happens in class...then the sir will say something. (L3P5:579)

Sherine: Het julle al hiervan gepraat in die klas?

Sharon: Daar was ‘n groep wat by die skool kom praat het en hulle het gesê..as ‘n seun aan jou vat, dan moet jy sê Juffrou [group agrees]

Sherine: Maar nou julle is dan bang...hoekom is julle bang?

Sharon: ‘n Mens kan nie vir die onderwysers sê nie...van hulle luister nie vir jou nie

Leigh: ‘n Mens is te bang om te sê...want sê nou djy vertel hulle daarvan, nou skinder hulle daarvan onder mekaar. Sê nou ek sê nou vir die een juffrou, dan sê maar..soos vir Juffrou Peters...sy’s nou lekker...’n mens kan vir haar enige iets vertel.Sy sal nie vir ander juffrouens gaan vertel nie. Maar soos Juffrou Miller..oe! Hulle skinder daarvoor..sê nou jy of jy gaan praat nou met die juffrou...jy’t nou gepraat...dan sal hulle sê dis die meisie se skuld dan skel hulle vir jou uit of hulle wil jou slaan

Ashlene: Ja as ‘n mens nou vir die ander juffrouens sê..dan skinder hulle..dan sal hulle sommer sê: “Die kind het probleme.” Dis die meisie se skuld. (J1P14:176)

Sherine: Have you already spoken about this in class?

Sharon: There was a group that came to talk at the school and they said..when a boy touches you, then you must tell Miss [Group agrees].

Sherine: But it seems that you are afraid..why are you afraid?

Sharon: A person can't tell the teachers..some of them don't listen to you.

Leigh: A person is afraid to tell...because, now you tell them about it, then they gossip about it among each other. Say now I tell the one teacher, then say, but...like Miss Peters...she's nice...a person can tell her anything. She won't go and tell the other teachers anything. But like Miss Miller..oh! They gossip about it..say you, now you talk to the teacher...you told them now...then they say it's the girl's fault, then they scold the girl or they want to hit you.

Ashlene: Yes when one tells the other teachers...then they gossip..then they just say: "This child has problems." It's the girl's fault. (J1P14:176)

Similar to Tolman, Spencer et al.'s (2003) findings, here too we see teachers' lack of responsiveness and the responsibility for the boys' misbehaviours being shifted onto the girls. When the girls resisted, the teacher's response was "*You girls don't want to stay away from the boys*" – implying that the girls were responsible for the boys' inappropriate behaviours. The participants also stated that they cannot trust some of the teachers, because when they reported the boys' harassment, the teachers would gossip about it and pathologise the girls. Although Leigh says she fights back, below she suggests that fighting is not consistent with normative femininity and could get her into trouble.

Extract 50

Mandy-Lee: Juffrou, hoe kan ek sê? Van hulle [seuns] is lekker...maar ..die ander is baie bakleierig of so juffrou. Hulle wil net 'n man afknou omdat ons nou meisies is, en ons kan niks doen nie

Sherine: Ok...maar kan meisies nie terug baklei nie?

Leigh: Ek baklei terug....maar...dit lyk so...so snaaks...dit lyk nou so..dji lyk soos 'n tomboy

Sherine: Maar kan jy nie jousef defend nie?

Leigh: Ek defend myself met hulle...ek kan..maar dan gaan 'n man kantoer toe...dan lê hulle die blame op jou..dan is dit nie die seun nie...dan is dit jy wat die meisie is

Sharon: Hulle kry ook ander meisies om jou te slaan.

Sherine: So wat verwag die mense...dat die meisies moet stilstaan dat die seuns die meisies slaan?

Sharon: Dis waar...dis hoekom so baie vroumense toelaat dat die mans hulle slaan...hulle doen niks...hulle aanvaar dit moet so wees (J1P15:165)

Mandy-Lee: Miss, how can I say it? Some of them [boys] are nice...but the others like to fight or so Miss. They just want to put you down because we are girls and we can't do anything.

Sherine: Ok...but can't the girls fight back?

Leigh: I fight back...but..it looks so...so strange...it almost looks...you look like a tomboy.

Sherine: But can't you defend yourself?

Leigh: I defend myself with them...I can..but then one goes to the office...then they lay the blame on you...then it's not the boy...then it's you who is the girl.

Sharon: They also get other girls to hit you.

Sherine: So what do people expect...that the girl must stand still so that the boys can hit the girls?

Sharon: That's true....that's why so many women allow the men to hit them....they do nothing...they accept it must be like that. (J1P15:165)

In the afore-mentioned discussion it is evident how different forms of aggression ensue among girls when they compete for the attention of boys and how they become disconnected from themselves and one another. Further, when boys are not held accountable for enacting sexual harassment and aggression, it sows the seeds for the normalisation and naturalisation of such violence. Thus, Tolman, Spencer et al. (2003) argue that in patriarchal contexts boys and girls are under pressure to perform and enhance their masculinities and femininities, which tends to exacerbate the risk for gender violence.

Romantic relationships: As discussed earlier, the girls were not allowed to have boyfriends and were punished when their mothers discovered that they had one. A few girls, however, reported that they had boyfriends but they terminated these relationships because the boys were players, wanted to coerce them into having sex and spread rumours about them. In the following quotations, the girls explain what a player is; how boys have concurrent multiple girlfriends and seem to take girls for fools.

Extract 51

Ashlene: Hulle play hulle meisies...sê maar hy gaan nou uit met my dan gaan hy ook uit met ander meisies dieselfde tyd [??? Girls all talking together to explain what a player is]

Sherine: So die seuns gaan uit met baie meisies...en die meisies?

Kim-Lynn: Sommige meisies het ook klomp outjies op dieselfde tyd.

Sherine: So as 'n meisie klomp boyfriends het..wat sê die mense van haar?

Kim-Lynne: Dan se hulle dji's 'n player...ek het nog vir hom, maar dan gaan ek nog met ander ouens ook uit

Group: Sharon het al daardeur gegaan juffrou..Leigh ook

Leigh: Die seuns wil net hê 'n mens moet dinge doen en as dji nie wil nie dan los hulle jou net so

Sharon: Die outjies vat die meisies vir 'n pop juffrou (J1P14:57)

Ashlene: They play their girlfriends...say he is going out with me, then he also goes out with other girls at the same time [Girls all talking together to explain what a player is, inaudible].

Sherine: So the boys go out with many girls..and the girls?

Kim-Lynn: Some girls also have many boyfriends at the same time.

Sherine: So when a girl has many boyfriends..what do the people say about her?

Kim-Lynne: Then they say she's a player...I have him, but then I still go out with many other guys too.

Group: Sharon already experienced this Miss..Leigh too.

Leigh: The boys just want you to do things and if you don't want to then they leave you just like that.

Sharon: The guys take the girls for a fool Miss. (J1P14:57)

Leigh and Sharon sketched the relationships with their ex-boyfriends, how these boys were only interested in sex and when girls do not acquiesce, boys “leave you just like that”.

Extract 52

Porcia-Lee: Daar's hoërskool seuns dan vat hulle laerskool meisies vat...seuns wat al matriek of graad 11 is ...ja juffrou..wat laerskool meisies vat en dan [Group laughing and all talking together: pointing to Sharon and Leigh who were involved with high school boys]

Leigh: Hulle breek jou hart juffrou...hulle maak jou hart seer juffrou

Sherine: So die hoërskool seuns maak jou hart seer...ok..die hoërskool seuns

Sharon: Veral hulle wat so klomp meisies het...hulle stel belang...in goeter wat dji nie wil doen nie...en as dji dit nie wil doen nie...dan los hulle jou..jaaa....ek was baie lief vir hom...en so...ek het al verlief geraak op hom

Sherine: Ok...wat meen jy...die seuns stel belang in wat?

Leigh: In alles...in seks...hulle is net...’n mens kry ook van die seuns wat nie net aan daai dink nie ...juffrou..hulle verstaan vir jou [Group: mm]

Sherine: Ok...en as dji nee sê...dan wat sê hulle vir jou?

Sharon: Dan sê hulle ja..dis verby met ons

Leigh: Ja...net so (J1P14:281)

Porcia-Lee: There are high school boys that take primary school girls...boys that are already in matric or grade 11..yes Miss..that take primary school girls and then [Group laughing and all talking together: pointing to Sharon and Leigh who were involved with high school boys]

Leigh: They break your heart Miss....they make your heart sore Miss.

Sherine: So the high school boys make your heart sore.

Sharon: Especially those that have so many girlfriends...they are interested...in stuff that you don’t want to do...and if you don’t want to do it...then they leave you..jaaa....I loved him very much...and so...I was in love with him already.

Sherine: Ok...what do you mean...the boys are interested in what?

Leigh: In everything...in sex....they are just...one also gets those boys that don’t think about that...Miss..they understand you [Group: mm]

Sherine: Ok...and if you say no...then what do they tell you?

Sharon: Then they say yes..it’s over with us.

Leigh: Yes...just like that. (J1P14:281)

Although Leigh states that there are some boys who “*don’t think about that [sex]*” – these experiences of coercive romantic relationships were dominant, lengthy topics of discussion in all the focus groups. Another factor that we should consider is the age difference between the boys and girls. Given that the approximate age for a Grade 7 learner is 12 or 13 years and a Grade 11/12 learner about 17 or 18 years, it raises questions about the power relations in such relationships. All the girls told similar stories of how boys make promises and try to coerce them into having sex. The girls also offered various explanations why girls acquiesce to the boys’ demands.

Extract 53

Sherine: Nou...nou.. sê julle die seuns gebruik die meisies? [Group: ja]

Sharon: Maar hulle [meisies] wil ook nie hoor nie

Leigh: Nee...huh..huh...jy kan nie so sê nie. Maar juffrou...van die seuns [Mona cuts in: Meisies is miskien rereg lief vir hulle] die meisie wil miskien nou nie...dan moet dji dit doen..en dan bring die meisie dit miskien nou nie uit nie...dat die seun vir haar ge..geforseer het nie

Sherine: So sê julle ...die meisies wil nie seks hê met die seuns nie maar die seuns forseer die meisies?

Group: Ja juffrou

Leigh: Omdat die seuns mos nou sê....umm...seuns sê miskien nou vir hulle goeters dan ..dan..doen hulle dit...amper soos in...dis lekker en so

Mona: Dji gaan net sien hoe is dit

Sharon: Dji gaan nie spyt wees nie soos...dji sal nie 'n babatjie kry nie..maar dan op die ou end juffrou...dan het dji dit. (J1P14:238)

Sherine: Now...now.. do you say the boys use the girls? [Group: yes]

Sharon: But girls also don't want to listen.

Leigh: No...huh..huh...you can't say that. But Miss...some of the boys [Mona cuts in: girls perhaps really love them] perhaps the girls doesn't want to...then you must do it..and perhaps the girl doesn't reveal that...that the boy forced her.

Sherine: So are you saying ...the girls don't want to have sex but the boys force the girls?

Group: Yes Miss.

Leigh: Because the boys say....umm...perhaps boys tell them things then..then..they [girls] do it...almost like...it is nice (pleasurable) and so.

Mona: You will see how it will be.

Sharon: You won't be sorry...you won't have a baby..but then at the end Miss...then you have it. (J1P14:238)

Vera: As hy 'n meisie kry...dan belowe die outjie vir die meisie die son en die maan en die hele wêreld.

Sherine: Is dit so? Ok, Vera, wat wat sê hulle alles vir 'n meisie?

Vera: Hulle sê, "Ek is lief vir jou," en so. En dan praat hulle nog klomp goed en so. En dan op die ou end van die dag...dan slaap hy met jou. As hy klaar met jou geslaap het, dan los hy vir jou net so.

Sherine: Is dit?

Zelda: En sommige van die outjies sê vir die meisies....hulle moet bewys hoe lief hulle is vir die outjie...en dan gaan slaap hulle met die meisie. En as hulle nou klaar met jou..met jou geslaap het...en die volgende dag....dan worry hulle nie van jou nie.....dan kyk hulle verby jou. Dan sê hulle :“Nee, ek het klaar daai ding so geseks en

so geseks.” Dan praat hy en sy tjommies lelik van jou. Dan was dit miskien nog nooit soos hy gemaak het of dan maak hy dit nog ‘n bietjie erger. (K4P13:141)

Vera: When he gets a girlfriend...then the guy promises the girl the sun and the moon and the whole world.

Sherine: Is that so? Ok, Vera, what do they tell the girl?

Vera: They say: “I love you” and so. And then they still say a lot of stuff and so. And at the end of the day...then he sleeps with you. When he’s done sleeping with you, then he leaves you just like that.

Sherine: Is that so?

Zelda: And some of the guys tell the girls....they must prove how much they love the guy...and then they sleep with the girl. And when they are done with you..slept with you...and the next day....then they don’t worry about you.....then they ignore you. Then they say: “No, I already sexed that thing so and sexed her so.” Then he and his friends talk ill about you. Then perhaps it was never like he makes it out to be or then he makes it a little worse. (K4P13:141)

In response to Sharon’s attempt to apportion blame to girls, the rest of the group countered this stating: girls submit because perhaps they genuinely love their boyfriends; and boys promise girls that they love them, sex will be pleasurable and they would not become pregnant. Further, boys also expect girls to prove their love for them and when girls refuse these requests, boys would terminate the relationships. Below Ursula notes how some girls would rather give in to boys because they need the love and attention.

Extract 54

Ursula: Partykeer doen hulle dit [seks] want hulle is seker bang, Juffrou. Hulle is bang die outjie sê hulle af..sommige meisies is baie verleë..sommige kere dan het..dan het dji nie daai uhm konneksie met jou ma of jou pa nie en dan dink dji..nee..die een is meer...gee meer aandag aan my en so. Dan sal dji enige iets doen net vir daai aandag wat hulle vir jou gee. (L3P5:1134)

Ursula: Sometimes they do it [sex] because they are probably scared Miss. They are scared the boys will break up with them...some girls are needy..sometimes then..then you don’t have uhhh connection with your mother or father and then you think..no..this one is more..gives more attention to me and so. Then you will do anything just for that attention that they give you. (L3P5:1134)

The girls displayed a heightened awareness of the risks associated with acceding to the boys' requests for sex. Below, they state how they deliberate whether to have sex or not, the gravity of the matter and the risk factors associated with such a decision. Absent from their talk and deliberation though, is any reference to their own sexual desire. It is interesting to see how they position boys as different to girls because boys can easily have sex with many girls. Further, we see the implicit violence in the girls' initiation into intimate relationships when they talk about the power that boys seem to exert to get sex from girls.

Extract 55

Jackie: ummm... 'n seun is eintlik baie anderste... as hy 'n ding vra... dan party meisies.. dan gee hulle dit vir die seunkinders.. amper nou soos seks en so... as hulle... as 'n seun vra... hy sê nou vir jou hy is **so** lief vir jou... en hy sal alles vir jou doen en so [group: mm] dan gee hulle nou vir die outjie... vir die outjie wat hy nou wil hê en die meisie moet nou bewys hoe lief [Group all together: is sy vir hom] is sy vir hom

Sherine: Ok..so sê julle dat 'n meisie eintlik... dan net aan..um..die behoeftes van 'n seun voldoen... is dit wat julle sê?

Vicky: En 'n meisie... 'n seun kan gou gaan seks het met enige meisie.. met enige meisie... maar 'n meisie kry baie swaar... partykeer dan moet dji eerste baie dink [group: uhhh] moet ek dit nou doen of moet ek nie... maar 'n seun maak dit sommer baie gou... hy worrie nie

Jackie: uhhh...soos forseer haar...om iets te doen wat sy nie wil doen nie

June: uh...dis baie swaar...dis baie gevaarlik vir ons meisies (K1P8:12)

*Jackie: Ummm...a boy is actually very different...when he asks for something...then some girls..then they give it to the boys..almost now like sex and so...when they...when a boy asks....he tells you he loves you **so** much...and he will do everything for you and so [Group: mm] then they give to the guy...to the guy what he now wants and the girl must now prove how she [Group all together: loves him] loves him.*

Sherine: Ok..so do you say that girls only...only then..um..meets the needs of a boy...is that what you are saying?

Vicky: And a girl...a boy can quickly have sex with any girl...but for a girl it's very hard...sometimes then you must first think a lot [Group: uhhh] must I now do it or not...but a boy quickly decides...he doesn't worry.

Jackie: Uhhh...like forces her...to do something that she doesn't want to do.

June: uh...it's very hard...it's very dangerous for us girls. (K1P8:12)

From the girls' narratives, there seems very little evidence of the intimacy, caring, reciprocity and mutuality in their experiences or perceptions of romantic relationships as suggested by Furman and Wehner (1997). Rather, the leitmotif seems to be one of coercion, duplicity and empty promises. The girls' experiences resonate with Tolman, Spencer et al.'s (2003) findings where girls similarly reported about boys' predatory behaviours to get sex from them. Further, the girls' experiences are also consistent with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Here we see how the girls are objectified as sex objects by the boys, used for the boys' pleasure and discarded when the boys have achieved their conquest.

In one of the sessions Edna posed a question to the group, asking why, after dating a boy for a while, he wants to progress to having sex.

Extract 56

Edna: Kan ek 'n vraag vra? Dis 'n simpel vraag..ok. Hoekom is dit wanneer...byvoorbeeld ek gaan nou saam met Zelma uit vir drie jaar, of 'n jaar of twee...dan as dit nou by die derde jaar kom, dan wil die seun seks hê met jou..hoekom is dit so?

Sherine: Ok .. Edna vra..sê maar jy gaan uit met 'n seun vir drie jaar dan wil die seun seks het met jou..hoekom is dit so?

Erica: Want hulle wil hul vriende impress..die seuns

Zelma: Ek weet nie

Edna: Hulle wil bewys dat hulle mans is

Rosemary: Mans genoeg

Sherine: Hulle is mansgenoeg? So wat beteken dit om mans genoeg te wees?

Edna: Hulle is al gereed [Zelma: vir wat?] om pa te word [laughter] of hulle is al gereed om seks te het.

Sherine: So dink julle dat seuns dink dat om 'n man te wees is om seks te het?

Zelma: Ja..hulle dink dat as hulle seks het...nou..ek is mos nou 'n man geword

Erica: Ja ek is nou groot...veral as hulle hier in Graad 7 kom dan beginne hulle..uhhh
(K2P10:49)

Edna: Can I ask a question? It's a simple question...ok. Why is it when...for example I'm going out with Zelma for three years or a year or two..then when it now comes to the third year, then the boy wants sex to have sex with you..why is that so?

Sherine: Ok .. Edna asks..say you are going out with a boy for three years.. then the boy wants to have sex with you..why is it so?

Erica: Because they want to impress their friends..the boys.

Zelma: I don't know.

Edna: They want to prove that they are men.

Rosemary: Man enough.

Sherine: They are man enough? So what does it mean to be man enough?

Edna: They are ready [Zelma: for what?] to become a father [laughter] or they are ready to have sex.

Sherine: So do you think that the boys think to be a man is to have sex?

Zelma: Ja..they think that when they have sex...now..I am now a man.

Erica: Yes, I am now an adult...especially when they get to Grade 7 then they start..uhhh. (K2P10:49)

Above, the girls display their insight that the boys' desire for sex is a consequence of the societal pressure for boys to display and perform their masculinity for their peers. Their insights, that the boys' need to display their sexual prowess to prove their masculinity, is consistent with Tolman, Spencer et al.'s (2003) explanation of their findings of boys' behaviours in adolescent romantic relationships. Displays of sexual assertiveness by boys not only shores up their masculinity but also enhances their status and popularity with their peers (Shefer, 1999; Tolman, Spencer et al., 2003). Similar to the participants in Tolman et al.'s study, the girls here also related how they exercised agency by breaking up with their boyfriends when they experienced pressure to have sex.

According to the girls, engaging in sexual liaisons could result in spoiling their reputations because the boys would spread rumours about them. Besides verbal accounts, the girls also recounted how boys used cellphones to circulate videos and text messages with details of their intimate moments.

Extract 57

Candy: Ek hou nie van die seuns nie..sê maar ek het saam met hom gevry dan gaan sê hy vir sy hele groepie: "Julle ek het saam met daai kind gevry." Daai is nie lekker

nie..dan gorrel hulle vir jou die hele tyd en dan vertel hulle nou vir almal..vir hulle vriende

Jessy: Of dan lieg hulle dan sê hulle..ja...dji vry nie lekker nie dan vertel hy vir sy groupie, dan sê hulle: “Ja..die een sê dji vry nie lekker nie.”

Jessy: Ja juffrou..hulle maak sommer goeters op wat nie waar is nie...of hulle sal sê dji vry nat bek....nat mond

Ebony: Hulle sal mekaar vertel: “My broer het dji gehoor van daai kind?” of hulle maak videos...sê maar ons staan almal in ‘n groep en Candy vry miskien nou met haar...met ‘n ou...dan maak hulle ‘n video... dan stuur hulle dit vir almal in die skool wie se nommer hulle het..dan kom dit by die laaste een uit....dan kyk hulle almal. (J2P16:170)

Candy: I don’t like the boys..say I made out with him then he goes and tells his whole groupie: “Guys, I made out with that child.” That’s not nice...then they tease you the whole time and then they tell everybody...their friends.

Jessy: Yes Miss..they make up stuff that’s not even true...or they say you make out with a wet mouth...wet mouth.

Ebody: They will tell each other: “My friend did you hear about that child?” Or they make videos...then they send it to everyone whose number they have....then it gets to everyone...then they all watch. (J2P16: 170)

Annamarie: Soos byvoorbeeld, as ‘n seun nou klaar seks by jou gekry het en hy los vir jou, dan praat hy lelike goed van jou by ander ouens sodat hulle nie vir jou kan vat nie. Hulle sê: “Ek was klaar daar gewees” en so aan so [uhh uhh group in agreement]

Sherine: O... so hulle maak jou naam dan sleg by ander ouens

Annamarie: Ja, jou naam lê dan op die lappe...jou naam is dan in die modder...dis op die lappe. (K3P11:92)

Annamarie: For example, when a boy got sex by you and he leaves you, then he says ugly things about you to other guys so that they can’t take you. They say: “I’ve been there” and so [uhh uhh group in agreement].

Sherine: O... so they blacken your name with the other guys.

Annamarie: Yes, your reputation is then spoilt...your name is in the mud...it’s spoilt then. (K3P11:92)

Besides spreading rumours about the girls to the whole school, it seems that the boys also use their sexual conquests as a form of branding or marking girls. Above, Annamarie notes that once the boys have had sex with a girl, they tell their friends, “*I’ve been there ... so that they can’t take you.*” This suggests that once a girl has been tainted, no other boy would then be interested in her.

Further, the boys also seem to exert power over girls by spreading rumours, which could taint their reputations in their communities. Below June and Vicky state:

Extract 58

June: En party seuns is so...as dji nie vir hulle af wil gee nie..en hy vra nou vir jou om daai te doen en dji wil nie...dan gaan sê hy hy't gisteraand vir jou loop en...en dan gaan hy vir almal sê en dan sal niemand jou glo nie [group : uh]

Vicky: Daar's hoeka 'n seun in ons klas wat sulke goed praat...en sê um: "Ek het lekker gisteraand vir jou gen..." dan is dit nie so nie..dan gaan praat hy so saam ..met die verkeerde persone..ok..hoe kan ek nou sê..dan vertel hy daai persoon en dan vertel daai persoon jou ma

June: Ja, en baie mense kyk jou aan met daai gedagte aan. (K1P7:61)

June: And some boys are like this..if you don't want to give off [sex] to them...and he asks you to do it and you don't want to...then he goes about telling that last night he did you...and then he goes and tells everybody and then nobody believes you [Group: uh].

Vicky: There's a boy in our class that says such things..and says um: "Last night I f. . . .ed you" then it's not like that...then he talks to the wrong people..ok..how can I say now..then he tells that person and then that person tells your mother.

June: Yes, and many people look at you with those thoughts. (K1P7:61)

In sum, the girls' experiences suggest that their induction into heterosexual romantic relationships tends to be marked by coercion and not by reciprocity. They suggested that the boys prized them for their bodies and not for who they are. Hence, Sharon exclaimed in one session: "**Men...men and boys are the pits!**" because they are only interested in the girls' bodies. These findings are consistent with previous research that suggests that the patterns of power and subordination in the broader context are reproduced in adolescent heterosexual relationships (Lee, 1994; Tolman, 1994). Consistent with the findings of Lees (1993), we see here how boys, as a form of revenge, also have the power to taint girls' identities for refusing and resisting their sexual advances. These experiences of aggression and power in adolescent romantic relationships are similar to the findings from other South African studies (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Lesch & Kruger, 2004;

Wood et al., 1998). Tolman (1994) states that such negative experiences could be confusing for girls and negatively influence their development.

In this sub-theme, I illustrated how the girls' relationships with their peers are complex sites of interaction where they construct and co-construct their femininities and heterosexual identities. Although some of these relationships were fun and supportive, others were fraught with aggression and oppression. Close friendships among some participants were characterised by intimacy and self-disclosure, while relationships with other girls were marked by conflict, betrayal and competition. The girls used indirect aggression, such as gossiping and meanness, and direct aggression to gain social power and maintain their popularity among their peers and their visibility to boys. These strategies also regulated and neutralised their rivals for the boys' attention. Consequently, most girls preferred friendships with boys because they were easier and free from gossiping or rivalry. However, some of their relationships with boys were also marked by sexual harassment and aggression. Particularly, romantic relationships seemed predatory because boys primarily appeared to be interested in sex. Consequently, girls terminated these relationships to protect themselves. Thus, girls' peer relationships provided them with the audience where they could practice their gendered identities, but their induction into heterosexual romantic relationships were marked by coercion that compelled the girls to exercise vigilance and self-protection.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how gender influences the nature of the girls' relationships in the home and with their peers. In the home, the girls experienced their secondary status as an injustice. Despite their talking back and resisting the inequity, it is evident that their parents and brothers perpetuated the privilege of boys and men. Similarly, in their relationships with their peers, patriarchal norms significantly influenced their interpersonal relationships. Although some girls reported having intimate and supportive same-sex friendships, competition and aggression

were dominant features of their relationships with girls. This was fuelled by their jockeying for popularity and visibility to boys. Further, their cross-gender platonic friendships and romantic relationships were mostly marked by sexual harassment and coercion.

In Chapter 8, I present some concluding thoughts about the key findings and discuss the strengths and limitations of the study. I also discuss the implications for possible interventions and future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore with a group of early adolescent girls in a low-income community what it is like to be a girl and how they negotiate their positions as girls in their contexts. Further aims were to explore their constructions of femininities and masculinities as well as their experiences of gender in their communities. In this chapter, I offer some concluding thoughts about the key findings of this study and make some recommendations for possible interventions that could promote adolescent girls' well-being. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study and make recommendations for possible future research.

8.1 About being a girl

In this study, it was evident that the participants are located within traditional contexts where patriarchal norms govern gender relations, determine the access to resources and inform the girls' subjectivities. Consequently, girlhood for these participants was complex and dynamic, fraught with much ambivalence and a highly regulated experience.

In their talk about being girls, the participants drew on essentialist notions of femininities and masculinities to differentiate themselves from boys in terms of their self-presentation and embodiment. Although the participants were glad to be girls and regarded themselves as superior to boys in terms of their self-presentation, they also stated that it was better to be boys and they envied the boys' freedom and agency. The findings also suggest that the participants are embedded in an appearance culture where idealised femininities are highly prized and policed. From the data, both girls and boys regulated the emphasised femininities, they marginalised those who enacted non-normative femininities and girls who were not beautiful. However, the girls also straddled contradictory positions regarding female embodiment. On the one hand, they were burdened by the hard work involved in living up to the demands of heteronormative femininities,

yet they also prized looking beautiful and wearing branded clothing. Such ambiguity Minh-ha (1992) suggests is characteristic of oppression, where the marginalised or dominated learn to say “at least two, [or] three things at a time” (p. 140).

The participants in this study also aspired to be good girls/women. In their construction of the good girl/woman, they invoked the Madonna/whore discourse, and illustrated how girls’/women’s bodies and their sexuality are important sites for the inscription of gender norms and control. It was evident that from an early age parents teach the participants to be “ladies”, and how to discipline their bodies in order to protect them from social and sexual vulnerabilities. Consequently, the girls exercised vigilance not to transgress the borders of the “good” girl by not dressing and/or behaving provocatively. In their constructions of the good girl/woman, the participants also invoked a masculine drive discourse which locates boys/men in a predatory position, and they generally associated girlhood with danger and vulnerability. From the girls’ narratives, it was evident that, by attempting to contain the girls’ sexuality, their parents seem to construct female sexuality as dangerous. Hence, by drawing on a discourse of “ordentlikheid” (respectability) the girls are literally and figuratively kept in their place and their sexuality is policed by their parents, brothers, community members and through self-surveillance.

For the participants, being a good woman was synonymous with being a good mother. In their talk, the participants valorised motherhood and invoked an idealised mothering discourse. These findings illustrate how the glorification of motherhood perpetuates the unequal burden of care in the home and the myth that mothering is a natural inclination of women. This “fantasy of the perfect mother” (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982) further seems to limit the prospect of equality of care in the home.

8.2 Menarche: Becoming a woman

Contrary to the existing research, that menarche heralds the process of girls becoming women; the onset of menstruation signified the process of becoming “young girls” for these participants. The participants also seem to be located in a context of menstrual poverty, where some menstrual myths and taboos prevail. It was evident that the participants were inadequately prepared for menarche and lacked information about their sexual reproductive health, experienced menarche/menstruation as anxiety provoking and a negative process.

Menarche heralded the hetero-sexualisation of the girls, their initiation into the hierarchical gender order and ambivalence and ambiguity seemed salient during this phase. On the one hand, parents seem to tell the girls that they are now becoming women, while simultaneously imparting messages of danger and vulnerability. At this stage, their parents started imposing more restrictions on the girls, apparently to protect them from dangers outside. Consequently, compared to their brothers, the girls’ physical and social world contracted, limiting their opportunities for recreation and socialising with their peers.

The findings of this study also illustrate how girls, growing up in a patriarchal society that devalues women and girls, tend to engage in self-objectification as strategies to cope with sexual objectification. To avoid menstrual stigma, they exercised self-monitoring of their bodies so as not to reveal the signs or odours of menstruation. Although menstruation initiated the girls into the burdens of womanhood, they nonetheless valorised their reproductive capabilities and perceived this as empowering for women.

8.3 Gender relationships at home and with peers

The findings of this study also illuminated how gender influenced the participants’ relationships in the home and with their peers.

Experiences in the home: In their talk about their experiences of gender in the home, the girls invoked the have/hold discourse, locating men in the provider role, while women were responsible for the burden of care in the home. The participants illustrated how their parents drew on patriarchal ideologies to define successful masculinities and womanhood, which endowed power and privilege to men and located women in a subservient position in the home. Although the findings suggest that there were instances of equitable sharing of household tasks, the participants regarded these as exceptions in their contexts. Generally, both parents enforced traditional gender roles and taught the girls that this was normal, preparing them for their future roles as wives/mothers. In cases where some mothers attempted to spread the household tasks equitably among girls and boys, the boys resisted and challenged their mother's authority by displaying "privileged irresponsibility". Their fathers also perceived this as feminisation of the boys and as a threat to the boys' masculinity.

The participants also related how the power and privilege of men manifested as toxic masculinities (Morrell, 2006) in the home. In such instances, the girls portrayed some men as absent in the home, unreliable and lazy, while others used economic and gender violence to maintain the gender order. In cases of gender violence, the participants related how some women resisted and fought back.

Besides the boys' privilege regarding chores, the findings from this study further illustrate how boys also received more attention and material privileges in the home compared to the girls. The girls in this study experienced this marginalisation and inequity as rejection and an injustice, which evoked anger and resentment among the participants. Although some participants diligently complied, others were silenced or punished by their parents, while some girls voiced their dissent about the inequity. Despite the risk of punishment or the withdrawal of material privileges, some participants resorted to passive resistance such as self-silencing or active resistance such as running away and refusing to do the chores. Thus, the findings from this study

illustrate how, through the mundane activities in the home, gender and gender inequity are constructed and reproduced, and how some girls actively or passively resist such inequity. Although the participants resisted the inequity, they nonetheless espoused traditional constructions of gender, valorised their competencies in household chores and hoped that one day they would marry a man who would be a good provider.

Peer relationships: The participants' relationships with their peers at school and in the community were complex, and illustrate how peer relationships become sites to practice, construct, negotiate and contest their gendered identities. Some of the participants' friendships with girls and boys were characterised by mutuality and solidarity, while others were fraught with direct and indirect aggression.

The findings suggest that some of the participants' same-sex friendships were characterised by intimacy and solidarity. In such relationships, the girls shared their secrets, supported each other and had fun together. However, some of their same-sex friendships were also conflictual and marked by indirect and direct aggression. The participants often used indirect aggression (e.g., gossiping or excluding a peer from the group) and physical aggression to regulate femininity, attain and maintain popularity, marginalise opponents, and to save face or defend their reputations. The participants reported that there was much competition among the girls to be the most beautiful, visible and prized by the boys. This competition created a hierarchical structure among the girls, which limited girls' agency, perpetuated disconnection among girls and further bolstered the power of boys. Thus, the findings illustrate how through objectification and self-objectification, the participants seemingly have internalised the masculine gaze, constructed and reproduced emphasised femininities.

The participants' relationships with boys were both platonic and romantic. Regarding their platonic relationships with boys, the participants distinguished between the nice boys and the

rude/aggressive boys. From the findings, it is evident that some participants preferred to befriend boys rather than girls because they had fun with the boys, boys were not as deceitful or sensitive as girls, and boys also offered them protection from aggressive boys/men. The participants' friendships with the "nice" boys also enhanced their status, which in turn were the source of envy among other girls. Their associations with the rude/aggressive boys were also marked by indirect aggression (e.g., spreading rumours about the girls) and aggression (e.g., such as physical fights, sexual harassment). From the participants' reports, teachers at school do not seem to hold boys accountable when the girls report the aggression at school to the teachers. The findings further suggest that teachers often colluded with the boys that it was "normal" boys' behaviour, and instead pathologised the girls' when they fought back and resisted the boys' aggression.

The participants reported that their parents did not approve of them having romantic relationships because they were too young for such relationships. However, some of the participants reported having had a romantic relationship but that they terminated these relationships because their ex-boyfriends were not serious about the relationship, had multiple girlfriends and wanted to coerce the participants to have sex. The findings also suggest that some romantic relationships posed a risk for adolescent girls' reputations because some boys often spread rumours about the girls among their peers, which could then jeopardize the girls' chances for future relationships. In their romantic associations with boys, the girls seemed to be in a double bind. On the one hand, they aspired to be objects of desire for the boys, and on the other hand, they seemed to be disillusioned that the boys only picked them because they were beautiful and had a pretty face. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the participants' induction into heterosexual romantic relationships seems to be marked by ambivalence, risk and coercion, rather than intimacy and reciprocity.

8.4 General overview

Overall, this study is contributing to the current literature on contemporary young femininities and has some implications for theories about girlhood and gendered identities in low-income communities in South Africa. The knowledge gained from this study could also inform policies, future interventions to promote the development and well-being of adolescent girls. Below, I highlight some of the core contributions from this study.

This study confirms how the meaning and negotiation of femininities is a socially constructed relational process and how girls draw on the canonical narratives about girlhood/womanhood in their communities to inform their gendered practices. It was evident how these narratives and discursive practices influence girls' perceptions and behaviours to conform to the dominant ideals of girlhood/femininity. However, from this study it is also evident that girlhood is a complex and dynamic process, and girls often straddle ambivalent and contradictory positions in their subjectification and embodiment of girlhood. On the one hand, the girls drew on essentialist notions of girlhood, yet on the other hand, they also related how girlhood is achieved, regulated and policed by parents, brothers, community members and by the girls themselves. This study also highlights how violence is a salient and ongoing threat in the lives of these participants.

Regarding self-presentation and embodiment, this study illustrates how girls' bodies are central to the construction and meanings of heteronormative femininities in their contexts. In distinguishing between femininities and masculinities, the girls both disparaged and envied masculinity to make femininity intelligible. The girls also experienced the disruption of the masculinity/femininity binary by tomboys as anxiety-provoking and threatening. An interesting finding was how sympathetic the girls were to boys whom they identified as gay, yet they pathologised girls who were tomboys. The findings further illustrate how girls' bodies are sexualised; particularly how wearing revealing clothing or behaving contrary to the dictates of good femininities could expose girls to social, physical and sexual vulnerabilities in their communities. Consequently, the girls,

their families and community members drew on discourses of “ordentlikheid” (respectability) to police the good/bad borders of girlhood to protect the girls and to keep the good girl intact. A further particular interesting finding was how brothers also policed their sisters’ sexuality and apparently protected them from the brothers’ friends.

This study also illuminated how the girls embraced traditional gender roles and aspired to be good girls/women, which was synonymous with being a good mother and wife one day. Hence, this study illustrates the intractability of the myths of motherhood and how this keeps girls/women in their place. The girls valorised motherhood, their competencies at household chores and their reproductive capabilities. These capabilities they perceived as empowering for women and enhance a woman’s standing in the community. Despite the valorisation of girls’ competencies at household chores, this study also illustrated how, despite threats of verbal or physical sanctions, some girls resisted gender inequity in the home. In contrast to the valorisation of girlhood/womanhood, the girls reported the prevalence of toxic masculinities; how men exert their power and privilege in their communities, which in turn motivated the girls to be independent and self-reliant women one day.

From the findings, menarche is also a salient marker in the hetero-sexualisation of girls and their initiation into the gender order. Consequently, girls seem to experience much ambivalence and ambiguities at menarche. Contrary to the current literature that menarche heralds the transition to womanhood, this study found that at menarche girls seem to be located in a liminal space. Contrary to parental intimations that they are no longer children, girls are seemingly also not yet women but young girls (*jongmeisies*). Thus illustrating that becoming a woman is more than a biological event; it is a socially embedded process. At this stage, girls also become aware that they and their bodies are sexually objectified. Consequently, at menarche their social world contracts as their parents impose more restrictions to protect the girls not only from the dangers outside, but seemingly also to contain the girls’ sexuality, the dangers within.

In their relationships at home and with peers, gender appears to be a driver of the nature and the quality of their relationships. From the findings, it is evident how boys are more privileged, compared to girls, in the home. Some participants passively and actively resisted this inequity and their invisibility in the home, while others complied. The participants' peer relationships confirmed how these relationships are sites to produce, practice and reproduce adolescent femininities and masculinities. Some of the participants' same-sex relationships were marked by intimate friendships, while others were marked by competition, rivalry, aggression, and jockeying for visibility to the boys. The girls' reported that some of their friendships with boys were fun and not as stressful as their friendships with girls, and also provided them protection from aggressive boys. The findings highlighted how girls' initiation into heterosexual romantic relationships is fraught with coercion, which is also a display of power by boys to shore up their performance of masculinity for other boys.

Methodologically, this study also illustrated how the focus group process created an audience for the co-construction, reproduction and performance of femininities. In addition, the homogeneity of the group, and that all the girls knew one another as fellow learners or as neighbours on the farms or streets where they lived, facilitated group cohesion. The focus groups also created safe spaces where the girls could contest or support one another's experiences of girlhood/femininity and they also brought other girls'/women's experiences into the groups. Morse (2000) refers to this reporting about others' experiences, and whether these are similar or different to those of the participants, as "shadowed data". Morse contends that shadowed data are important because they "provide the investigator with some idea of the range of experiences and the domain of the phenomenon beyond the single participant's personal experience" (Morse, 2000, p. 4).

8.5 Implications for practice

As highlighted by the girls in this study, girlhood and femininity are achieved through hard work, self-discipline and regulation. Failure to comply with the demands of respectable femininities could result in social sanctions or motivate girls to engage in risky behaviours. Thus, the findings of this study illustrate how gender inequity and devaluation of the female subject are barriers to promote the mental health and development of girls. Although the primary focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of girls, the information gleaned could be equally relevant for the promotion of boys' mental health because gender oppression constrains everyone (Chrisler, 2013a). Hence, I offer some recommendations for practice:

- Listening to girls as subjects: This study illustrated how girls are articulate in expressing their needs, feelings, aspirations and fears, but also how they are silenced in voicing their feelings. Thus, it is imperative that we create safe spaces where we can listen to girls and where they have the freedom to discuss issues of concern to them as girls. We also have to equip our girls with the required social skills to enhance their authenticity and self-efficacy to voice their dissent regarding gender inequity and the devaluation of girls in their different contexts (e.g., the home, school and community). Allied to this, we have to educate girls in how idealised femininities and the demands of an appearance culture are counter-productive for their well-being and, how and why girls/women often participate in such devaluing practices.
- Given that patriarchy is structurally entrenched in South Africa, we have to employ rigorous interventions with men and women, and girls and boys, on multiple levels in all social institutions. Johnson (2005) states that patriarchy traps all of us in a gender knot, and to unravel this knot we first have to understand the “cultural ideas about men and women, the web of relationships that structure social life, and the

unequal distribution of power, rewards and resources that underlies privilege and oppression” (p. 38). We have to create spaces where women and men, and boys and girls can have courageous conversations and jointly re-imagine and re-define girlhood/boyhood, womanhood/manhood and motherhood/fatherhood that are fulfilling in a socially just and equitable manner. Particularly gender based violence and the sexualisation and objectification of girls should be addressed by both men and women. Consciousness raising about the gender and human rights of girls and boys, and men and women should form part of our “everyday/everynight” conversations and not only during annual campaigns. The constitution provides the legislative framework for gender and human rights, but we have to enact these values on the micro, meso and macro levels in South Africa. Intervention is important on all these levels, but the home and the school are sites where we have the opportunity to start educating parents, teachers and children to bring about change. To bring about this change,

The choice is how to participate in this system differently so that we can help to change not only ourselves, but the world that shapes our lives and is, in turn, shaped by them. Ultimately, the choice is about empowering ourselves to take our share of responsibility for the patriarchal legacy that we’ve all inherited. (Johnson, 2005, p. 50)

- Sexuality and reproductive health: This study illustrated how these participants seemed ill prepared for menarche and menstruation, and how there appears to be a silence about sex and sexuality. We have to implement programmes where girls and boys can learn about and freely discuss issues around reproductive health and sexuality. Here the school and parents should break their silence about girls’ and boys’ sexual desire and collaborate to promote adolescent knowledge of

reproductive health matters. Sex education should not be a once-off event where we provide girls with information about the technical aspects of and dangers about menarche/menstruation. We should rather have ongoing open discussions about the physical and experiential aspects of menstruation as well as sex and sexuality in the context of relationships. Such conversations with adolescent girls are imperative so that they can start developing “an assertive *sexual voice*, that is the ability to negotiate safe and equitable sexuality” (Shefer & Ratele, 2006, p. 235, authors’ emphasis) in their future intimate relationships.

- In contexts of low resources and high crime rates, we need to create safe recreation and meeting spaces, where girls can freely socialise with their peers.
- Counselling services and psycho-education: Mental health professionals should play an integral role in the promotion of mental health and well-being of adolescent girls. Psychologists and school counsellors should provide psycho-education and equip adolescent girls with the skills to deal with the challenges and demands of adolescence, risky behaviours and how to foster sound relationships with their peers, parents and adults.

8.6 Limitations and strengths of the study

The main limitation of this study was probably the sample. Although I recruited sixty-one participants from three different areas, they all shared similar demographic characteristics and were all from low-income communities. It is important to acknowledge that the participants’ subjectification and gendering are inextricably intertwined with their race, class, culture and geographic location. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all early adolescent girls in South Africa. Despite this, this study yielded a thick description of the gendered experiences of girls from a peri-urban, low-income context that could resonate with other girls in similar contexts in South Africa.

Pre-existing friendships and associations among focus group members are generally regarded as an advantage to foster cohesion and as a check for exaggeration in focus groups (Currie et al., 2009; Macnaghten & Myers, 2004). Further, constructionists contend that the construction of femininities is a relational process and co-constructed among peers (Aapola et al., 2005; Currie et al., 2009; Wilkinson, 1999). Thus, the focus group provided me with an opportunity to observe the social interaction among the participants. However, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) also cautions that such groups could have an inhibiting influence on members because of pre-existing norms of interaction. This is possibly another limitation of this study. After the focus group process, I interviewed some of those participants whom I observed to be silent in the focus groups so that I could ascertain what their experiences were about girlhood. In hindsight, I should also have interviewed some of the talkative participants and those who took a leading role in the focus groups. I am curious as to how they would have performed in an individual interview setting and what information they would have shared with me when they were away from their peers.

A further possible limitation in this study revolves around “interviewer effects” on the data collection, analysis and interpretation processes. I am cognisant of Scheurich’s (1995) contention that, “in an interview there is no stable ‘reality’ or ‘meaning’ that can be represented” (p. 249) as these are constantly shifting. Allied to this, as a researcher, I also bring “considerable conscious and unconscious baggage into the interpretive moment” (Scheurich, 1995, p.249). Bearing all this in mind, I am aware that “giving voice” to the stories of the girls in this study is fraught with much complexity and responsibility. I am aware that I will never be able to exhaust all the possible meanings of the stories the girls shared with me, as there are possibly a myriad of ways to interpret this data from different vantage points. As Lawler (2000) puts it, “data do not ‘speak for themselves’: there are, at every stage, processes of selection and interpretation going on” (p. 5). I am hopeful that the credibility checks that I used, such as member-checking, my supervisee

relationship with my supervisor and having a group of critical peers who gave me feedback on the different facets of this study, possibly contained some of my biases. As constructionists note, the data collected in qualitative studies are a co-construction of the interviewer and the participants (Currie et al., 2009; Wilkinson, 1999). The data collected in this study are the stories the participants chose to tell me and data collected by another researcher would probably have a different texture. I endeavoured to make the participants' voices audible and grounded my interpretations of the girls' experiences in the current literature and theory, and tried to substantiate these claims with extracts from the girls' narratives. Despite these limitations, the study also had some strengths.

A major strength of this study was how I collected the data. First, by collecting the data over four meetings gave me the opportunity to provide the girls with a summary of the previous session and to explore whether they wanted to add anything else to the previous session's discussion. Second, I found that girls processed the sessions and when they returned the next week, they often wanted to expand on or contest what someone had said in the group. Third, a significant strength of this study was that the focus groups provided adolescent girls a safe space where they could discuss matters that concerned them. The participants in this study demonstrated that adolescent girls are sophisticated, capable of reflecting on and articulating their experiences and needs. Thus, the focus groups provided them with an opportunity to express themselves freely and they could also hear whether other girls' experiences were similar or different to their own. In my interaction with the girls, I tried to be reflexive and adopted a stance of not knowing, but also used indirect confrontation to challenge the girls when there were inconsistencies or contradictions in their stories. This stance of not knowing and listening to the girls afforded me the opportunity to gain some insight into how they make meaning of their experiences, practices, their relationships and social contexts. In addition, when I did not understand some things, I found the girls eagerly "educated" me about these issues.

Fourth, although my insider and outsider status in the group probably had some limitations, I found that because I spoke the girls' mother tongue it facilitated the group process and I could make sense of the nuances of their narratives. Finally, my experience in working with adolescents, my theoretical orientation, expertise as a group facilitator and long-standing relationships with the schools and staff, contributed to the strength of this study.

8.7 Recommendations for future research

From this study, some further interesting questions have emerged about femininities in other communities and contexts in South Africa. It would be interesting to explore with adolescent girls from other racial and socio-economic groups in urban and rural areas what their experiences of girlhood and femininities are in their contexts. Such studies could illustrate how race, class, ability and geographic locations intersect in the construction of femininities and could contribute to the body of knowledge of girlhood in South Africa. Further, given that gendering is an ongoing relational process, it would be worthwhile to conduct mixed-gender focus groups to explore how femininities and masculinities are constructed, contested and re-produced in such groups and how boys and girls negotiate such engagements. Knowledge gleaned from such studies could help us to inform interventions to promote gender equity and the mental health and well-being of both girls and boys.

Finally, how does one conclude a project that has occupied one's mind for so long and where one's attempts to understand the experiences of girls have been partial? I am tentative in offering a conclusion to this study because there is still so much to explore and learn about young femininities. Nonetheless, this chapter of the dissertation has to be concluded.

Although much has changed in South Africa and these girls are "born free" from the legislated inequities of apartheid, much has remained the same and these girls are not yet free from the structural violence entrenched in patriarchal South Africa. The findings of this study illustrate

that girlhood is hard work; it is messy, and marked by ambiguities, contradictions and danger. It also illuminated how girlhood is highly regulated and the participants experienced intense levels of surveillance. From the findings, it is evident that these forms of surveillance regulate normative femininities and the “respectability” of girls, thereby keeping the good girl intact. However, it also illustrated the girls’ resilience and how they resisted the gender inequities. The interplay of growing up in a context of violence and the concomitant need for vigilance and surveillance leads to patterns of restriction in which girls themselves also participate. If we are to understand and change the patterns of restriction and gender relations, it necessitates that we engage both genders at multiple levels. In addition, we have to address the way in which girls themselves believe they have no power but to reproduce dominant ways of being and power relationships.

So one could echo Freud and ask, “What do girls want?” From this study, it is evident that girls want to be seen and heard. They desire visibility and recognition as subjects and not as objects. They want to feel and know that they matter. Girls want fairness, gender equality and justice, and they want to be free to be themselves in a safe, caring and thriving environment.

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APPENDIX 1

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

....	Indicates short pauses
=	Overlap and another participant cuts in
???	Participants' talk inaudible
bold text	Indicates the participant's emphasis
E-V-E-R-Y	Participants spell out the word for emphatic effect

APPENDIX 2**Biographical Questionnaire**

Baie dankie vir jou bereidwilligheid om aan hierdie studie deel te neem. Vul asb. jou biografiese besonderhede op die vorm in. Moet asb. **nie jou naam** op hierdie vorm skryf nie Beantwoord asseblief al die vrae.

1. Wat is die naam van jou skool: _____

2. Geslag: _____

3. Graad: _____

4. Hoe oud is jy? _____

5. Watter taal praat jy waar jy woon? _____

6. Waar woon jy? _____

7. Aan watter buitemuurse aktiwiteite neem jy deel?

8. Wie sorg vir jou?

Ma en Pa	
Net Ma	
Net Pa	
Ouma/Tante/Oom	
Voog	
Ander (spesifiseer asb.)	

9. Watter soort werk doen jou ouers?

Ma:
Pa:
Voog:

10. Wat is jou ouers of voog se hoogste kwalifikasie?

Ma:
Pa:
Voog:

Baie dankie vir jou samewerking

APPENDIX 3

Questioning guide / Interview schedule

These are some of questions that were used as probes and to promote discussion among the girls during the focus group discussions:

What does it mean to be a girl? What is it like to be a girl?

What do you think it is like to be a boy?

Are you glad to be a girl?

What do you like (positive) about being a girl?

What do you dislike about being a girl?

What are the challenges that you face as girls?

How do you deal with these challenges?

Learning to become girls:

Could you tell me how do you learn to be a girl?

Who taught you about being a girl?

What did teach you about being a girl? What are the things they tell you?

Societal expectations for girls / boys:

What is expected of girls today? And boys?

What do your mothers/parents/aunts/grannies tell you?

My mother always says to me / My father always says to me

Do boys and girls have the same privileges?

What is it like to be a girl at school?

What is it like to be a girl here in.....?

On being a woman / man:

What does it mean to be woman? What is it like to be a woman?

What does it mean to be a man?

What are the duties/responsibilities of a woman / man?

What is it like to be a woman in your community?

What is it like to be a man in your community?

Do men and woman have the same privileges? Do men and women have the same rights where you live?

Explore relationships with peers:

Tell me about your friends : girls / boys

What kinds of activities do you do?

What do girls talk about?

Tell me about your relationships with your boyfriends? Dating relationships

Dreams / future aspirations:

What would you like to be one day? What are your aspirations for the future?

What are you looking forward to in the future? What are your dreams?

What career would you like to have one day? Tell me more about this

Thanked the girls for their participation in the research.

What was it like? Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

In the last session I shared the preliminary themes with them. Do these ring true? Would they like to add anything else?

APPENDIX 4



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
Jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

18 March 2009

Tel: 021 - 808-2687
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 154/2009

Mrs S.B. van Wyk
Department of Psychology
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7802

Dear Mrs van Wyk

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Gender matters: Exploring adolescent girls' social constructions and lived experiences of gender in three low-income communities in South Africa*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.
4. The researcher will implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards




MS. M. HUNTER-HUSSELMANN
Co-ordinator: Research (Human and Social Sciences)

APPENDIX 5

Navrae
Enquiries **Dr RS Cornelissen**
IMibuzo

Telefoon
Telephone **(021) 467-2286**
IFoni

Faks
Fax **(021) 425-7445**
IFeksi

Verwysing
Reference **20090305-0026**
ISalathiso

Mrs Sherine Van Wyk
Ryneveld Street
STELLENBOSCH
7600



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Dear Mrs S. Van Wyk

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: GENDER MATTERS: EXPLORING ADOLESCENT GIRLS' SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GENDER IN THREE LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **10th March 2009 to 30th June 2010.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.
Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 10th March 2009

APPENDIX 6



████████████████████
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

11 March 2010

Dear Sherine

It is my pleasure to officially inform you that your request for consent to conduct your doctoral study at ██████████ Primary School, during the second the second school term of 2010, has been successful.

It would be most convenient for the school and you, if your interviews could happen between 12.15 and 13.30 on the days that you wish to schedule them.

Please let me have a copy of your schedule once you have finalised it and before the end of the current school term, so that the necessary arrangements may be made beforehand.

Sincerely

██████████
Manager

██████████ *Primary School*
Children's Programme

PRIMêR [REDACTED] PRIMARY

16 MARCH 2009

Dear Mrs Van Wyk

RE: GENDER MATTERS: EXPLORING ADOLESCENT GIRLS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GENDER IN THREE LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES IN SA:

I please to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct the research for Your doctoral studies at our school during March and the second quarter of 2009.

It is understood that your research should in no way interfere the normal school programme.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

(Principal)

APPENDIX 7

TOESTEMMINGSVORM VIR DEELNEMERS (Onderwysers)

UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH

INWILLIGING OM DEEL TE NEEM AAN NAVORSING

Gender matters: Exploring adolescent girls' social constructions and lived experiences of gender in three low-income communities in South Africa.

U word gevra om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingstudie wat deur Me Sherine Van Wyk (Dosent en Doktorale student) van die Departement Sielkunde aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch uitgevoer word. U is as moontlike deelnemer aan die studie gekies omdat u, as onderwyser, my moontlik meer inligting aangaande die sosiale omstandighede van tiener meisies in u skool asook die uitdagings wat hulle daaglik ervaar, kan gee.

1. DOEL VAN DIE STUDIE

Die doel van hierdie studie is om inligting in te samel aangaande adolessente meisies se persepsies van geslagsrolle asook wat hul ervarings as meisies by die huis, skool en in hul gemeenskappe is. Verder wil ek ook 'n beeld kry van hul verskillende verhoudings, die uitdagings wat hulle ervaar en hoe hulle hierdie kwessies hanteer.

2. PROSEDURES

Indien u inwillig om aan die studie deel te neem, sal die volgende prosedures gevolg word:

- a) **Inligting ten opsigte van dié studie:** Voordat u die nodige toestemmingsvorme teken, sal ek weer die hele navorsingsproses en wat dit behels aan u verduidelik. Ek sal EEN onderhoud met u voer wat ongeveer een uur sal duur. In hierdie onderhoud wil ek graag meer oor die sosiale omstandighede van die meisies leer en ook watter uitdagings hulle elke dag ervaar.
- b) **Toestemmingsvorme:** Voordat u aan hierdie studie kan deelneem behoort ons eers al die nodige toestemmingsvorme te teken.

3. MOONTLIKE RISIKO'S EN ONGEMAKLIKHEID

Ek voorsien nie dat daar enige moontlike risiko's vir u as gevolg van hierdie onderhoud sal wees nie.

4. MOONTLIKE VOORDELE VIR PROEFPERSONE EN/OF VIR DIE SAMELEWING

Jongmense kry selde die geleentheid om oor belangrike kwessies wat hulle pla met andere te praat. Hul deelname aan hierdie projek sal hulle die geleentheid bied om met hul portuurgroep in gesprek te tree oor wat dit vir hulle beteken om 'n meisie te wees. Hulle sal dus heelwat van hul vriende leer maar hulle sal ook heel moontlik van hulle verskil. Studies soos hierdie bied ook vir ons as professionele persone die geleentheid om kennis in te win wat ons weer later kan gebruik om programme vir tieners te beplan.

5. VERGOEDING VIR DEELNAME

Daar sal geen geldelike vergoeding wees vir deelname aan hierdie projek nie.

6. VERTROULIKHEID

Enige inligting wat deur middel van die navorsing verkry word en wat met u in verband gebring kan word, sal vertroulik bly en slegs met u toestemming bekend gemaak word of soos deur die wet vereis. Vertroulikheid sal gehandhaaf word deurdat die data in my kantoor bewaar sal word en slegs ek en my promotor sal toegang tot die data hê. Die bande met die onderhoude sal na drie jaar vernietig word.

Indien daar enige inligting uit die onderhoude kom wat my as navorsers eties verplig om aan te meld, sal die saak na 'n toepaslike persoon of instansie te verwys wat die saak verder sal aanspreek.

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie sal in 'n proefskrif gepubliseer word en daar sal ook terugvoering aan die Weskaapse Onderwys Departement gegee word. Verder word dit ook beplan om die kennis wat

tydens hierdie studie ingewin is, te publiseer. Vertroulikheid sal egter deurgans handhaaf word want geen name en plekke sal in die publikasies gemeld word nie.

7. DEELNAME EN ONTTREKING

U kan self besluit of u aan die studie wil deelneem of nie. Indien u inwillig om aan die studie deel te neem, kan u te eniger tyd daaraan onttrek sonder enige nadelige gevolge. U kan ook weier om op bepaalde vrae te antwoord, maar steeds aan die studie deelneem. Die ondersoeker kan u aan die studie onttrek indien u welstand dit vereis. Indien dit blyk dat u sielkundige dienste benodig, sal ek u na 'n geskikte persoon verwys word.

8. IDENTIFIKASIE VAN ONDERSOEKERS

Indien u enige vrae of besorgdheid omtrent die navorsing het, staan dit u vry om met my Me Sherine van Wyk by (telefoon nr. 021 8083452; e-pos: sbvwyk@sun.ac.za) of met Prof. Leslie Swartz, (tel. nr. 021 8083461; epos: lswartz@sun.ac.za) in verbinding te tree.

9. REGTE VAN PROEFPERSONE

U kan te eniger tyd u inwilliging terugtrek en u deelname beëindig, sonder enige nadelige gevolge. Deur deel te neem aan die navorsing doen u geensins afstand van enige wetlike regte, eise of regsmiddel nie. Indien u vrae het oor u regte as proefpersoon by navorsing, skakel met Me M. Hunter-Husselman by die Eenheid vir Navorsingsontwikkeling (021 8084623).

VERKLARING DEUR DEELNEMER, HAAR OUER / REGSVERTEENWOORDIGER

Die bostaande inligting is aan my, _____ gegee en verduidelik deur Me Sherine van Wyk in Afrikaans en ek, _____ is dié taal magtig of dit is bevredigend vir my vertaal. Ek is die geleentheid gebied om vrae te stel en my vrae is tot my bevrediging beantwoord. Ek willig hiermee vrywillig in om deel te neem aan die studie. 'n Afskrif van hierdie vorm is aan my gegee.

Naam van deelnemer

Handtekening van deelnemer

Datum

VERKLARING DEUR ONDERSOEKER

Ek verklaar dat ek die inligting in hierdie dokument vervat verduidelik het aan _____ Hy / Sy is aangemoedig en oorgenoeg tyd gegee om vrae aan my te stel. Dié gesprek is in Afrikaans, sy/haar moedertaal, gevoer.

8.8 Handtekening van ondersoeker

Datum

APPENDIX 8

TOESTEMMINGSVORM VIR DEELNEMERS

UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH INWILLIGING OM DEEL TE NEEM AAN NAVORSING

Gender matters: Exploring adolescent girls' social constructions and lived experiences of gender in three low-income communities in South Africa.

Jy word gevra om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingstudie wat deur Me Sherine Van Wyk (Dosent en Doktorale student) van die Departement Sielkunde aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch uitgevoer word. Jy is as deelnemer aan die studie gekies omdat jy 'n tiener meisie is wat my kan help om die vrae wat ek oor meisies se ervarings het, moontlik kan beantwoord.

10. DOEL VAN DIE STUDIE

Die doel van hierdie studie is om inligting in te samel aangaande adolessente meisies se persepsies van geslagsrolle asook wat jul ervarings as meisies by die huis, skool en in jul gemeenskappe is. Verder wil ek ook 'n beeld kry van julle verskillende verhoudings, die uitdagings wat julle ervaar en hoe julle hierdie kwessies hanteer.

11. PROSEDURES

Indien jy inwillig om aan die studie deel te neem, sal die volgende prosedures gevolg word:

- c) **Inligting ten opsigte van dié studie:** Voordat jy die nodige toestemmingsvorme teken, sal ek weer die hele navorsingsproses en wat dit behels aan jou verduidelik. Ons gaan vir VIER agtereenvolgende weke as 'n groep hier by die skool bymekaar kom waar ons gesprekke met mekaar gaan voer oor wat dit beteken om 'n jong meisie tans in Suid-Afrika te wees. Hierdie sessies sal omtrent een 90 minute duur en sal na skool plaasvind. Nadat die groepsessies afgehandel is, sal ek SES van julle nader sodat ek individuele onderhoude met julle kan voer. Hier sal jy die geleentheid om enige kwessies wat nie in die groep bespreek was nie verder te bespreek. Hierdie onderhoude sal by die skool in 'n private kamer gevoer word en sal omtrent een uur duur. Nadat die individuele onderhoude afgehandel is, sal ons vir 'n laaste keer weer as 'n groep bymekaar kom sodat ek die bevindinge van hierdie studie aan julle kan voorlê vir jul insae. Indien daar enige iets is waarmee julle nie saamstem nie, kan ons dit bespreek en ek sal dan die nodige veranderinge maak. As daar ook nog iets is wat jy belangrik ag vir die studie, kan jy dit ook dan met my en die groep deel.
- d) **Toestemmingsvorme:** Voordat jy aan hierdie studie kan deelneem behoort ons eers al die nodige toestemmingsvorme te teken. Slegs leerders wie se ouers toestemming gee kan aan die studie deelneem. Jy sal dus jou ouers moet vra om die nodige vorms te teken en daarna moet jy ook self die vorm teken. Nadat jy al die getekende vorms terugbesorg het sal die groepsessies begin.
- e) **Groepsessies:** Tydens die eerste sessie sal ons met mekaar kennis maak en 'n vertroulike biografiese vorm invul. Daarna sal ons die proses vir die volgende vier weke uitklaar asook die norme wat vir ons groepsessies sal geld. Omdat ek nie alles wat in die sessies sal kan onthou nie, sal ons sessies op band opgeneem word. Hierdie is slegs vir my EIE gebruik en om te verseker dat alles wat julle in die sessies gedeel het, nie verlore gaan nie. Niemand anders sal toegang tot hierdie bande hê nie.
- f) **Individuele onderhoud:** Die doel van die individuele onderhoud is om vas te stel of jy wel saamstem met die siening van die res van die groep. Die onderhoud bied jou ook die ruimte om enige verskille wat jy dalk nie in die groep wou bespreek het nie, dan te deel. Verder word jy ook die geleentheid gegun om enige ander kwessies aan te spreek wat jy nie in die groep wou lig nie.

12. MOONTLIKE RISIKO'S EN ONGEMAKLIKHEID

Projekte soos hierdie bied jongmense die geleentheid om met hul portuurgroep oor belangrike kwessies te praat. Dit bied jou ook die geleentheid om in 'n veilige ruimte oor sake wat jou kwel te praat en heel moontlik te hoor dat jou vriende ook met dieselfde kwessies worstel. Hier kan jy ook hoor hoe ander meisies sulke kwessies opgelos het en gewoonlik bied so 'n ruimte 'n besondere sin van samehorigheid aan die groep. Sulke sessies bring ook egter gedagtes en gevolens na vore van probleme wat 'n mens dalk in die verlede ervaar het. Indien sulke gedagtes jou ongemaklik laat voel, het jy die reg om dit nie met die groep te deel nie. Indien jy verkies om dit vertroulik met my te deel kan ons 'n tyd en plek reël waar ons dit sorgvuldig kan bespreek. Indien dit verdere aandag vereis, sal ek, met jou samewerking, jou na die nodige professionele persoon verwys.

13. MOONTLIKE VOORDELE VIR PROEFPERSONE EN/OF VIR DIE SAMELEWING

Jongmense kry selde die geleentheid om oor belangrike kwessies wat julle pla met andere te praat. Jou deelname aan hierdie projek sal jou die geleentheid bied om met jou portuurgroep in gesprek te tree oor wat dit vir julle beteken om 'n meisie te wees. Jy sal dus heelwat van jou vriende leer maar jy sal ook heel moontlik van hulle verskil. Dit is jou reg om van jou maats te verskil maar ook hul opinies te respekteer. Studies soos hierdie bied ook vir ons as professionele persone die geleentheid om kennis in te win wat ons weer later kan gebruik om programme vir tieners te beplan.

14. VERGOEDING VIR DEELNAME

Daar sal geen geldelike vergoeding wees vir deelname aan hierdie projek nie.

15. VERTROULIKHEID

Enige inligting wat deur middel van die navorsing verkry word en wat met jou in verband gebring kan word, sal vertroulik bly en slegs met jou toestemming bekend gemaak word of soos deur die wet vereis. Vertroulikheid sal gehandhaaf word deurdat die data in my kantoor bewaar sal word en slegs ek en my promotor sal toegang tot die data hê. Die bande met die onderhoude sal na drie jaar vernietig word.

Indien dit uit ons sessies en/of in die onderhoude blyk dat jy op enige manier mishandel word, is ek as navorser eties verplig om die saak na 'n toepaslike persoon of instansie te verwys wat die saak verder sal aanspreek.

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie sal in 'n proefskrif gepubliseer word en daar sal ook terugvoering aan die Weskaapse Onderwys Departement gegee word. Verder word dit ook beplan om die kennis wat tydens hierdie studie ingewin is, te publiseer. Vertroulikheid sal egter deurgans handhaaf word want geen name en plekke sal in die publikasies gemeld word nie.

16. DEELNAME EN ONTTREKKING

Jy kan self besluit of jy aan die studie wil deelneem of nie. Indien jy inwillig om aan die studie deel te neem, kan jy te eniger tyd jou daaraan onttrek sonder enige nadelige gevolge. Jy kan ook weier om op bepaalde vrae te antwoord, maar steeds aan die studie deelneem. Die ondersoeker kan jou aan die studie onttrek indien jou welstand dit vereis. Indien dit blyk dat jy verdere sielkundige dienste benodig, sal ek jou na 'n geskikte persoon verwys word.

17. IDENTIFIKASIE VAN ONDERSOEKERS

Indien jy enige vrae of besorgdheid omtrent die navorsing het, staan dit jou vry om met my Me Sherine van Wyk by (telefoon nr. 021 8083452; e-pos: sbvwyk@sun.ac.za) of met Prof. Leslie Swartz, (tel. nr. 021 8083461; epos: lswartz@sun.ac.za) in verbinding te tree.

18. REGTE VAN PROEFPERSONE

Jy kan te eniger tyd jou inwilliging terugtrek en jou deelname beëindig, sonder enige nadelige gevolge vir jou. Deur deel te neem aan die navorsing doen jy geensins afstand van enige wetlike regte, eise of regs middel nie. Indien jy vrae het oor jou regte as proefpersoon by navorsing, skakel met Me M. Hunter-Husselman by die Eenheid vir Navorsingsontwikkeling (021 8084623).

VERKLARING DEUR DEELNEMER, HAAR OUER / REGSVERTEENWOORDIGER

Die bostaande inligting is aan my, _____ gegee en verduidelik deur Me Sherine van Wyk in Afrikaans en ek, _____ is dié taal magtig of dit is bevredigend vir my vertaal. Ek is die geleentheid gebied om vrae te stel en my vrae is tot my bevrediging beantwoord. Ek wil hiermee vrywillig in om deel te neem aan die studie. 'n Afskrif van hierdie vorm is aan my gegee.

Naam van deelnemer

Ek as ouer / voog van bogenoemde gee hiermee my toestemming dat sy aan die studie mag deelneem.

Naam van ouer/voog/ regsverteenvoordiger (indien van toepassing)

Handtekening van deelnemer

Datum

VERKLARING DEUR ONDERSOEKER

Ek verklaar dat ek die inligting in hierdie dokument vervat verduidelik het aan _____ Sy is aangemoedig en oorgenoeg tyd gegee om vrae aan my te stel. Dié gesprek is in Afrikaans, haar moedertaal, gevoer.

Handtekening van ondersoeker

Datum

Goedgekeur Subkomitee A 25 Oktober 2004