AUTHORS:
Shakila Singh[1]
Sherri Lee Gopaldass David[1]

AFFILIATION:
[1]University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

DOI: https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i1.7187

e-ISSN 2519-593X
Perspectives in Education
2024 42(1): 84-97

PUBLISHED:
29 March 2024

RECEIVED:
10 June 2023

ACCEPTED:
3 March 2024

"Boys' role in life is to protect and defend": Primary school boys' constructions of masculinity within a context of violence

Abstract

Boys have been identified as the main perpetrators of school violence and bullying, evoking debates on masculinities. However, boys are not always the active producers of violence. This article examines the ways in which primary school boys who otherwise denounce violence explain their participation in it. The data draw from a more extensive qualitative study that focuses on the experiences of school violence among boys at a primary school in KwaZulu-Natal. The study sample comprised a group of thirteen Grade 7 boys. The primary method of data production was through semi-structured individual interviews. The study draws on theories of masculinities that regard them as multiple, fluid and socially constructed. The findings show that although the boys in the study condemned school violence, many could not escape being part of it. As boys, they felt compelled to protect and defend themselves, their families, girls and their friends. In their efforts to resist and mediate violence, they often resorted to violent methods as part and parcel of their masculine constructions. This article argues that it is necessary to focus on boys' perspectives and to shift the focus on violence from problematic individual behaviour to an understanding of the complex social and cultural contexts within which they navigate the everyday world of school. Towards this end, the conflicting implicit and explicit demands on boys sustained through social and institutional structures must be reworked.

Keywords: *boys, defence, masculinities, protection, school violence*

1. Introduction

Whilst schools are normally seen as, and expected to be safe and secure environments for effective teaching and learning, there is no doubt that schooling as a practice and schools as institutions are often associated with various forms of violence (Benbenishty & Astor, 2008; Gafney, Farrington & Ttof, 2019; Morrell, 2002). Violent incidents and fear of violence profoundly affect attendance and retention at school, and schools with high levels of crime and violence are less effective at educating learners (De Wet, 2007; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014).

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/pie

Statistics show that the main perpetrators of violence of all kinds in South Africa are men, mostly directed against other men (Peacock, 2013). This pattern is also evident in research on school violence, which shows that controlling and dominating masculinities not only have harmful effect on girls, but on other boys too (Alex-Hart, Okagua & Opara, 2015; Connolly, 2006). Fighting at school becomes normalised through a "boys-will-be-boys" discourse, and those who do not conform to expected gender identities are often targeted by other boys. (Leach & Humphreys, 2007). There is ample recognition in the literature that schools can be violent places, pointing to the need to invest in understanding the deep-rooted significance of gender and the ways in which power imbalances emerge in school violence (Bhana, 2013).

Masculinity as a construct is central to any understanding of how and why men and boys behave in specific ways (Anderson, 2009). Lamentably, committing violence is still one of the most dominant forms of expressive masculinity (Mills, 2001). Gilbert and Gilbert (2017) assert that ignoring an in-depth account of masculinities and cultural constructions in any analysis of boys' lives at school limits the potential to effect positive change.

With increasing evidence emerging of links between the perpetuation of dominant norms of masculinities with men and boys' perpetration of violence, there has been a concurrent increase in interventions focusing specifically on preventing violence through attempting to rework masculinities (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). There is already substantive research in South Africa on violent constructions of hegemonic masculinities (see Bhana & Mayeza, 2021; 2019; Hamlall & Morrell, 2012; Jewkes & Morrell, 2017; Leach & Mitchell, 2006; Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012; Ratele, 2015). Even regarding the notion of multiple masculinities (Connell, 1995; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele, 2015), the main focus of research has so far been on how masculinities are implicated in the subordination and violation of girls, women, and femininities. There is, as yet, only a limited understanding of the complexities related to gender violence among boys and among men. Moosa (2021) studied how South African primary school boys validate or resist hegemonic masculinities, finding that while some boys do speak out against violence, they often still participate in violence, seeing it as a necessary masculine performance.

This article foregrounds the perspectives of primary school boys and examines how and why they resort to participating in violence, even though they recognise its harmfulness. While it was not the initial intention of the study, due to the demographics of the school and the sampling methods, the final sample entirely comprises Black schoolboys. Nevertheless, the focus of this article is not on Black masculinities. Neither does the study present Black boys as instigators of violence (Bhana, Singh & Msibi, 2021). Instead, it facilitates discussions with the13 volunteer participants in this study by engaging them in reflecting on how and why boys commit violence even when they denounce it. The article thus seeks to highlight ways in which dominant gender and heterosexual ideologies influence the daily lives of boys at school.

2. Theories of masculinities in relation to school violence

We draw on theories of masculinities that reject the notion of masculinity as a biological entity and replace it with a more socially constructed internalisation of a male sex role, following broad cultural expectations of men and boys (Connell, 1996). Scholars such as Connell (1995), Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) and Ratele (2015) theorise masculinities as being multiple, with different versions often competing to be dominant (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003). Connell (1995:76) argues that "to recognise the plurality of masculinities is only a first step towards

the critical theorising of masculinity. To fully understand the critical perspective, we also need to examine the relations between the types of masculinity." Morrell (2001) emphasises that multiple and changeable masculinities also imply that positive change is possible.

Constructions of masculinity are characterised by constant effort, as boys must continuously participate in asserting and defending their masculinity in order to maintain the power with which it imbues them (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). Boys and men are expected to display physical strength or toughness, including the use of violence to control others. This incentive tends to encourage them to be more violent and more prone to employ aggression as a first solution to problems and confrontations (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). It should not be surprising then, that the overwhelming majority of violent crime (in South Africa and elsewhere) is committed by men (Peacock, 2013; Ratele, 2015).

There are, of course, particular pressures on young men in diverse contexts to be like other older men, and simultaneous pressure on all males (young and old) to conform to the prevailing dominant norms of masculinity (Shefer *et al.,* 2008). There is also a widespread belief in some societies that it is natural for men and boys to be violent, with rape and combat being viewed as part of an unchanging order (Connell, 1995). While male violence against women is a serious concern and is rightfully receiving intensive research attention, male-on-male violence is also commonplace and often used as a means of establishing a hierarchy of masculinities (Mills, 2001). Research also shows that men and boys often urge one another to be stoic and tough and to handle their feelings independently (Oransky & Fisher, 2009; Oransky & Marecek, 2009; Way *et al.,* 2014).

A critical norm of South African masculinity is the exercising of power by men and boys over women, girls and other boys. This often provides fertile ground for men and boys to use violence and aggression to attain power and demonstrate it (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Boys who do not conform to traditional norms of masculinity are often 'othered' and called derogatory names such as 'losers' and 'sissies' (Bhana, 2005; Connell, 1995; Frosh *et al.*, 2003; Langa, 2010; Renold, 2004).

On the other hand, research on resistance to dominant masculine norms shows that choices regarding resistance and conformity are context dependent, and it seems possible that some young men and boys consistently resist prevailing masculine norms across all contexts (Smiler, 2014). Boys have consistently demonstrated their capacity to actively construct, reject, negotiate and reproduce masculinity, not merely as bearers of power but also as mediators of violence (Bhana, 2013). However, some boys choose to establish male-on-male friendships and, in so doing, actively challenge masculine norms within the context of friendship (Smiler, 2014; Way *et al.,* 2014).

Recognising that not all men and boys are violent and aggressive is also essential in our argument. They are often able to negotiate their masculinities by presenting different versions of themselves and accommodating and resisting culturally exalted masculinities within the contexts they find themselves (Anderson, 2009). Young people are also often actively engaged in constructing and criticising hegemonic masculinity (Bhana & Mayeza 2019; 2021; Moosa, 2021; Way *et al.,* 2014). Hegemonic masculinities here refer to the prevailing dominant cultural norms of masculinity in society; for example, the dominant view of boys and men as being brave, strong, aggressive and resilient (Langa, 2020).

One study of school boys who defined themselves as 'real boys' (Bhana & Mayeza, 2016) found that they thought a 'real boy' involved being physically strong and being able to protect or defend themselves. In this study, the protection and defence extended to those close to them and mainly those who could not protect and defend themselves. Men and boys as 'protectors' are closely associated with assumed posturing of toughness and dominance. Defenders here are individuals who witness bullying or violent behaviour and seek to support and protect the victim (Coyne *et al.,* 2017; Salmivalli *et al.,* 1996). Defenders can also be aggressive or regarded as antisocial, and they are most often males who use aggression and violence towards bullies so as to prevent further offences (Rubinstein, 2004).

Some research shows that defenders are most likely to be the same age and gender as those they are defending (Huitsing *et al.,* 2014), and they usually intervene when the victim is a friend (Pronk *et al.,* 2013). This aggression and inherent need to defend others are perhaps interlinked with the defending role of 'superheroes' (Coyne *et al.,* 2017; Martin, 2007). Other research has shown that superhero movies and programmes demonstrate how superheroes flamboyantly use aggression and physical violence to stop villains from hurting others (Coyne *et al.,* 2017; Martin, 2007).

In this article, we draw on the theories that view masculinities as multiple, fluid and situated. We seek to understand how boys actively participate in, reject, mediate and reproduce gendered norms. We draw on the voices of primary school boys and analyse their perspectives of their expected masculine roles as defenders and protectors.

3. Methodology

The data drawn upon in this study form part of a more extensive study conducted at a public, co-educational primary school in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The learner population is economically and racially diverse, comprising Black, White and Indian learners, with the majority being Black. This qualitative study enabled us to produce rich data with boys on their perspectives of school violence. We did not specifically aim to work with violent boys, just with boys keen to participate in the study.

We used purposive sampling to select and recruit Grade 7 boys of between 11 and 14 years old. As explained above in the introduction, although it had not been the study's intention or part of the sampling strategy, given the school's demographics, all 13 participants were Black. Our analysis here focuses on their ideas about boys' masculine roles of defence and protection; sometimes, they also talked about themselves and, at other times, about boys in general.

The more extensive study here employed multiple methods, which included drawings, focus-group discussions, semi-structured in-depth individual interviews, poster-making and song-writing. This paper focuses only on the data from the semi-structured in-depth individual interviews we conducted. We received permission for this study from the Department of Basic Education, the school principal and the UKZN ethics committee (Protocol number: HSS/1210/015CA).

We were very aware of the sensitivity of the topic. We ensured ethical processes by obtaining participants and their parents/guardians' informed consent/assent and protecting participants' identities through pseudonyms, which are used (instead of participants' names) in all written and oral outputs associated with this study. We also assured the boys that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that if they felt distressed, they should inform their teachers or parents. There were no reports of distress. The boys in the study were eager to be heard, and it was clear that the individual interviews provided opportunities for them to reflect frankly and privately on their everyday experiences of violence at school.

The interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and were conducted in English, based on the language preferences of all participants. The interviews were conducted by the second author (an educator at the school) during school hours, and times and dates were arranged with participants. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

We used an inductive thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the interview data. The two authors worked separately to become familiar with the transcribed data, identify trends and patterns and develop tentative themes. We then reunited to work together and agree on the three major themes discussed in this paper.

4. Findings

The findings show that violence is part of primary school boys' everyday experiences. The boys in the study indicated that school violence is mainly perpetrated by boys against boys. This concurs with many previous research findings (Alex-Hart *et al.,* 2015; Connolly, 2006; Peacock, 2013).

The overall findings show that all 13 boys denounced violence and demonstrated an awareness of the adverse effects of violence on themselves and others. However, many held conflicting positions of speaking against violence and engaging in violence in their attempts to stop it. The boys' perspectives on their need to engage in protective and defensive behaviours are discussed in the themes below**.**

4.1 Defence and protection for respect and honour

The boys in the study recognised the harmful effects of fighting on everyone involved. Like many other boys in the study, Nkosi positioned himself as non-violent, but stated that fighting back was just a 'necessary' way to defend himself. The excerpt below suggests that he has faced negative consequences for previous incidents of fighting but still sees it as the obvious and unavoidable method of defence:

> *I like to defend myself, so I just like to fight, but this year I don't fight. I've seen there's no reason for fighting. There's no reason for fighting because it gets people into trouble and it gets people injured, that's why. I just fight to defend myself* (Nkosi).

Gaining the respect of other boys was an important masculinising strategy and the boys found it essential to demonstrate their strength by fighting to defend themselves:

> *All I can say is maybe to defend yourself, oh and uh, like maybe it's like for people to look at you up there, like you strong, praise you, say ay this one I'll call him you know why this one knows how to hit and then we also get angry and start fighting more fighting more but then you get hit, that's what will make you call your gang. That's the problem with boys. I just fight to defend myself* (Nhanhla).

The data thus make it apparent that such displays of aggression contribute to a cycle that perpetuates violence and consequently aggravates masculinity. They not only boost boys' self-worth, but gain them the respect of others, which makes them feel powerful, further heightening their self-worth. This is evident in Victor's statement, wherein he voices a common view among the boys that fighting symbolises strength and gets respect:

> *Well, when you fight in school, you get more respected and all those stuff so, so as you get respected, you get full of power* (Victor).

Conforming to dominant notions of masculinity that position boys/men as protectors, many of the boys in this study reveal themselves as guardians of their family and their school's honour. They see it as their duty to defend themselves against any attacks, verbal or otherwise. While Amisi mainly self-identified as peaceful, he made exceptions when his family was attacked, even if it was verbal. He said:

> *I'll fight if they tease or mock my family, parents or people that I love* (Amisi).

Like Amisi, many of the boys legitimise violence as a regular masculine activity where boys are compelled to fight.

The boys' protection of territory extended to their school too as shown below:

> Nyako: *They started, they said our principal, they swore at our principal … Then we got angry, then they started carrying knives … And then they wanted to stab us.*
>
> Researcher: *Wow. And what did you all do?*
>
> Nyako: *Ma'am, we also carried ours.*

In this excerpt, Nyako showed how verbal attacks can escalate to the point of severe physical violence. Furthermore, it describes how boys justify carrying weapons to school as a means to defend themselves.

Some boys also suggested how school girls sometimes fought with one another. The boys themselves did not get involved, except in cases where someone from another school attacked girls from their school. Nkosi explained :

> *Well, let's say like the girls wanna fight with the girls from St. Angeline's, then the boys come and hit the girls. We go and hit them because they hit the girls in our School. Like it works like that, and the girls don't fight for us but we fight for them* [Nkosi].

This excerpt demonstrates boys' care and concern for girls at their school. They felt compelled to utilise violence to protect and defend girls from their school. Nkosi also pointed out that defence and protection were strictly masculine roles, stating that "*girls don't fight for us*, *but we fight for them".*

In their explanations of how to potentially prevent future violence, many mentioned the need to display strength. For example, Andile positioned his demonstration of assertiveness (a valued aspect of masculinity) as an important means to deter bullies:

> *Ma'am, you see, once you carry on standing up for yourself, you get respected because they (the bullies) will see 'that once you try to bully that person, they will fight back* (Andile).

In this excerpt, Andile stated that brazenness immediately gained respect and signals power, particularly, a capacity to retaliate if provoked. He did suggest, though, that there were alternative ways of defending oneself that can prevent violence. This was a shift in emphasis from the need to use violent methods for defence. However, the display of assertiveness was interpreted as a display of the ability to fight back. It continues to draw on hegemonic aspects of masculinity to establish dominance.

The discussion in this theme shows that boys are unknowingly coerced by their understanding of masculine performances. They legitimise violence as a normal response to violence when they are attacked or provoked.

4.2 Boys have to defend and protect their friends and the weak

Many of the boys interviewed demonstrated notions of protectionism against people they perceived to be weaker. Girls and young boys were seen to be in need of protection. They mentioned that violence against girls was unacceptable and that strong boys were responsible for protecting girls. Lindo explained that he sometimes got involved and tried to intervene when boys attacked girls.

Lindo said:

> *Ma'am I tried sometimes to stop them, they came – the boys to hit a … hit a girl and I stopped them I said no it's wrong.*

Amisi had a similar view about boys' responsibility to protect girls. He added that boys should not fight with girls:

> *I would say boys, their role in life is to protect, protect like women and girls everything, protect them and not fight with them.*

The preceding excerpts show how some boys do challenge and deconstruct harmful dominant masculine ideologies that position males as being inherently aggressive towards women and girls (Connell, 1995; 1996). However, Amisi's reference to boys' "role in life" shows that traditional norms of masculinity remain deeply entrenched and that boys usually occupy contradictory positions as they navigate their masculine constructions.

In the excerpt below, Thabiso suggested that not all boys were aggressive and confrontational but that the slightest provocation usually demanded retaliation. Some of the boys even formed gangs to combine their protective power:

> *I am part of a gang that protects you. It doesn't go around punching people, unless if a boy comes to my area and starts looking at me. I am a weak boy, because I don't fight my own battles I call my group members* (Thabiso).

Anderson (2009) and Vetten (2000) also found that gang members are often male and that gangs are male dominated, with many young men and boys engaging in gang-related activities as a way of proving their manhood. This extract also highlights how boys are often put under pressure to conform to the prevailing dominant mode of masculinity (hegemony) (Shefer ***et al***., 2008). In attempting to explain this tendency, Thabiso perceived himself as being "weak", solely based on the belief that he did not protect or defend himself against others.

The boys interviewed were aware of the ways in which gender norms are reinforced in schools. Siyamthanda stated it as a regular attitude when he said that younger boys were encouraged by other boys to defend themselves by using violence:

> *If the big boy hurts the small boy, they will say that the small boy must do the same thing that he had done to him.*

The boys also mentioned that there was an understanding that boys stand together against outsiders. Protection of their territory extended to the defence of boys from their school against boys from other schools. This often inexorably involved violent means, as evident in the following excerpts by Nkosi and Simphiwe:

> *Like, let's say you are going somewhere, then we are behind you and another boy from St. Angeline comes and hits you. We come and help you, so like that like we start we say 'hey boy come here we slap you'* (Nkosi).

> *Some of us protect each other and others. Me too, there's people who I protect in school also. Like one boy says, 'help us there are people bullying me' and we say 'hai, we coming'. Then we come as a squad and we start fighting. Like after school ma'am, we going another boy needs our help by Summerset School* (Simphiwe).

These extracts demonstrate friendship and camaraderie amongst school boys. It demonstrates how some boys in this study engaged in violence as a channel through which to protect and defend other boys in and around school. Courtenay (2000) points out that physical dominance and violence are easily accessible resources for the purpose of structuring, negotiating and sustaining masculinities. These two participants position themselves as protectors or defenders of other boys at their school; roles which can also be seen as displays of dominant masculine heterosexual behaviours.

Furthermore, the excerpt shows that Simphiwe was willing to defend boys who may need his help, even if he could not do so alone. Drawing on the similar protective role of other boys, he enlisted their help to fight for him or others who were bullied. This is another way in which some boys in this study use violence as a way of protecting and defending others and how dominant gender and heterosexual ideologies have a negative impact on the lives of boys in and around school.

4.3 Fighting to mediate violence

Masculinity theorists, such as Lindegger and Maxwell (2007), Peacock (2013), and Ratele (2015) seek to explain the pressure on boys and men to exhibit physical strength or toughness, including using violence to control others. They describe how such a framework tends to encourage them to be more likely to use violence as a first solution to confrontations. However, some of the boys in this study suggested that they first tried to negotiate for more peaceful solutions.

> *Yes, even if a boy from outside hits a boy in our school we help him. We go to him, try to talk, but some of them they start like maybe they start to have an attitude* [Siyamthanda].

It seems violence is not the first option, but it still becomes inevitable if the problem cannot be resolved amicably.

Many of the boys in the study showed a willingness to use other methods of conflict resolution. While they attempted to disrupt the norms of harmful masculinities, they felt trapped within the dominant versions of masculinity that expected them to be protectors. In the next excerpt, Nhanhla demonstrated a recognition that fighting and violence were undesirable by specifically prefacing his discussion with, "*I don't wanna lie.*"

> *I don't wanna lie. I also start with people, but I've stopped because I see, I've seen that if I start with them, I will hit them, so I stopped that, but I like to protect my friends. Like my friend Mfundo, they like hitting him so another boy called Junior he, well my friend teased him that he's talking to another girl that's his girlfriend, but this boy has a girlfriend. Now he wanted to hit him so I said, 'you can't hit him, you have to come before me. I'll come and fight for him, so if you wanna fight with him come to me first and talk'. And then I told him, 'look it was a mistake. Sorry'. I said everything for him, for my friend, and the boy said, 'okay I understand'. I like protecting people because it's like they are my friends when I need them they are there, so I have I have to show them that a friend is who you sometimes too you need in your life.*

Nhanhla also spoke about the need to protect his friends and the possibility of being able to speak about problems instead of fighting over them. However, the negotiation he described often included threats of violence. This also shows how Nhanhla, like many other boys, felt the responsibility to fulfil his role as a 'protector' or 'defender' towards his friends. This resonates with the work of Pronk *et al.* (2013), who argue that defenders usually seek to intervene when the victim is a friend of theirs. This also indicates some of the ways boys show love or care for their friends via their need to protect and/or defend them.

The boys who were quieter and did not react with aggression when provoked were often regarded as weak and needing protection. For example, Nkosi felt protective over a boy who did not seem to defend himself:

> *Like Adrian, he's not a person that argues or fights and all that. Like let's say a teacher shouts at him he just keeps quiet he doesn't say anything he doesn't say, 'oh no ma'am'. He just keeps quiet when the teacher pushes him. Well me, I care for him because, let's say someone hits him I will go and jump for him because he is calm he doesn't fight, maybe he can't even fight so I'll jump for him and stop the fight and all uhm because it's not nice and because he can't fight they just come because they want to hit him.*

He here mentions caring about and 'jumping' in to fight for another boy in an attempt to stop a fight. As some of the other boys said, 'jumping' in for someone meant fighting for them. This is consistent with the work of Coyne *et al.* (2017) and Rubinstein (2004), who assert that defenders are often males who use aggression or violence to protect victims from violent perpetrators and to hinder further offences.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings from this study show that schools are social spaces where asymmetrical gender power relations are constantly enacted and reproduced. Although boys are implicated in much of the school violence, they are not always active producers of said violence. Some boys clearly understand violence as being detrimental to themselves and others, but participate in it as an unavoidable means to promote and uphold their perceived masculine roles as protectors and defenders.

For boys, the implicit norms that guide behaviour are re-enacted and reinforced in the everyday life of the school. They see their roles as protectors and defenders as key to their masculine heterosexual constructions. As protectors and defenders, they assert dominance, sometimes through violent means. Even as mediators, they often resort to fighting violence with violence, thereby reproducing what they argue against. This demonstrates the conflicting implicit and explicit demands on boys sustained through sociocultural and institutional practices. Schools, therefore, need to engage in pedagogies and practices that encourage boys to reflect on their socialisation and openly challenge gender power hierarchies, which are harmful to themselves and to others (Reichert & Keddie, 2019).

The findings of the study show how boys are trapped within hetero-patriarchal norms that coerce them into violent expressions, even when they demonstrate care and friendship and even as a demonstration of care and friendship. It is necessary for schooling to facilitate active engagement with boys that opens up possibilities of broader constructions of masculinity that move away from narrow conceptualisations of gender.

Effective intervention in school violence thus requires a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which schoolboys construct and reconstruct themselves in the realms of gender, violence and (hetero)sexuality. This will include recognition and direct confrontation of the harmful gender norms which make boys both vulnerable to being victims and perpetrators of violence.

6. Limitations

We do acknowledge that this study has several limitations. While the broader study in which this study is embedded used multiple methods of data production, the data used in this article were drawn solely from individual semi-structured interviews. However, this did provide insights into the individual perspectives of the boys in a space away from peer judgement.

The sample comprised a small number of boys who volunteered to be part of the study. In the interviews, some spoke about themselves, and others attempted to explain the experiences and behaviour of boys in general. We do not intend generalisation beyond this sample and stress that the findings should not be taken to suggest the typicality of the practices described among these particular boys or other Black boys. It is also important to stress that this study focused on cisgender heterosexual relationships and reported such practices. Given the sensitivity of sexuality-related topics in primary school, we did not purposefully select participants who identify with non-normative gender and sexuality. Future research should rather involve a diverse sample with regard to race and sexuality.

References

Alex-Hart, B.A., Okagua, J. & Opara, P.I. 2015. Prevalence of bullying in secondary schools in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 27: 391-396. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2014-0038

Anderson, B. 2009. 'Coloured' boys in 'trouble': an ethnographic investigation into the constructions of Coloured working-class masculinities in a high school in Wentworth, Durban. PhD thesis, KwaZulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Benbenishty, R. & Astor, R.A. 2008. School violence in an international context: a call for global collaboration in research and prevention. *International Journal of Violence and Schools,* 7: 59-80. https://doi.org/10.1086/506500

Bhana, D. 2013. Gender violence in and around schools: Time to get to zero. *African Safety Promotion Journal*, 11: 38-47. https://doi.org/10.4314/ASP.V11I2

Bhana, D. 2005. What matters to girls and boys in a black primary school in South Africa. *Early Child Development and Care,* 175: 99-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/0300443042000230410

Bhana, D. & Mayeza, E. 2016. We don't play with gays, they're not real boys … they can't fight: Hegemonic masculinity and (homophobic) violence in the primary years of schooling. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 51: 36-42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2016.08.002

Bhana, D. & Mayeza, E. 2019. 'Cheese boys' resisting and negotiating violent hegemonic masculinity in primary school. *Norma*, 14: 3-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2018.1494402

Bhana, D. & Mayeza, E. 2021. "Other" Boys Contesting Hegemonic Masculinities and Violence in the Primary School. In: D. Bhana, S. Singh & T. Msibi (Eds.), *Gender, sexuality and violence in South African educational spaces.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org10.1007/978-3-030-69988-8_2

Bhana, D. Singh, S. & Msibi, T. 2021. "Gender, Sexuality, and Violence in Education: A Three Ply Yarn Approach." In: D, Bhana, S, Singh & T, Msibi (Eds.), *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in South African Educational Spaces.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69988-8_1

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3: 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Connell, R.W. 1995. *Masculinities.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R.W. 1996. Teaching the boys: new research on masculinity and gender strategies for schools. *Teachers College Record,* 98: 206-235. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819609800203

Connolly, P. 2006. The masculine habitus as 'distributed cognition': a case study of 5-to-6-year-old boys in an English inner-city, multi-ethnic primary school. *Children and Society,* 20: 140-152. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2006.00021.x

Courtenay, W.H. 2000. Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine,* 50: 1385-1401. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00390-1

Coyne, S.M. Stockdale, L., Linder, J.R., Nelson, D.A., Collier, K.M., & Essig, L.W. 2017. Pow! Boom! Kablam! Effects of viewing superhero programs on aggressive, prosocial and defending behaviours in preschool children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology,* 45: 1523-1535. https://doi:10.1007/s10802-016-0253-6.

De Wet, C. 2007. School violence in Lesotho: the perceptions, experiences and observations of a group of learners. *South African Journal of Education,* 27: 673-689. Available at https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC32142 [Accessed 24 April 2024].

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A. & Pattman, R. 2003. The trouble with boys. *The Psychologist,* 16: 84-87. https://doi:10.5040/9780755695683.0009

Gafney, H., Farrington, D.P. & Ttof, M. M. 2019. Examining the effectiveness of school-bullying intervention programs globally: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention,* 1: 14-31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-019-0007-4

Gilbert, R. & Gilbert, P. 2017. *Masculinity goes to school*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315166025

Graaff, K. & Heinecken, L. 2017. Masculinities and gender-based violence in South Africa: A study of a masculinities-focused intervention programme. *Development Southern Africa* 34(3):1-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2017.1334537

Hamlall, V. & Morrell, R. 2012. Conflict, provocation and fights among boys in a South African high school. *Gender and Education*, 24: 483-498. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2012.677012

Huitsing, G., Snijders, T.A.B., Van Duijn, M.A.J. & Veenstra, R. 2014. Victims, bullies and their defenders: a longitudinal study of the co-evolution of positive and negative networks. *Development & Psychopathology,* 26: 645-659. https://doi.org/10.1017S0954579414000297

Jewkes, R. & Morrell, R. 2010. Gender and sexuality: emerging perspectives from the heterosexual epidemic in South Africa and implications for HIV risk and prevention. *Journal of the International AIDS Society,* 13. https://doi.org/10.1186/1758-2652-13-6

Jewkes, R. & Morrell, R. 2017. Hegemonic masculinity, violence, and gender equality: Using latent class analysis to investigate the origins and correlates of differences between men. *Men and Masculinities*, 21: 547–571. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17696171

Langa, M. 2010. Contested multiple voices of young masculinities amongst adolescent boys in Alexandra Township, South Africa. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health, 22*: 1-13. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.2989/17280583.2010.493654.

Langa, M. 2020. *Becoming men: Black masculinities in a South African township*. South Africa: Wits University Press. https://doi.org/10.18772/12020045676

Leach, F. & Humphreys, S. 2007. Gender violence in schools: taking the "girls-as-victims" discourse forward. *Gender and Development,* 15: 51-65. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070601179003

Leach, F. & Mitchell, C. 2006. *Combating gender violence in and around schools*. London: Trentham. https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2007.9674891

Lindegger, G. & Maxwell, J. 2007. Teenage masculinity: The double bind of conformity to hegemonic standards. In: T. Shefer, K. Ratele, A. Strebel, N. Shabalala & R. Buikema (Eds.), *From boys to men: Social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society*. South Africa: UCT Press. https://doi.org/10.58331/UCTPRESS.13

Madikizela-Madiya, N. & Mncube, V. 2014. The hybrid nature of school space and the manifestation of violence in South African schools. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology,* 5: 197-205. https://doi.org/10.1080/09766634.2014.11885624

Martin, J.F. 2007. Children's attitudes toward superheroes as a potential indicator of their moral understanding. *Journal of Moral Education,* 36: 239-250. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240701325381

Mills, M. 2001. *Challenging violence in schools: an issue of masculinities.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Moosa, S. 2021. Primary school boys validating and resisting hegemonic masculinities: "I don't appreciate violence at all. I stop the violence". In: D. Bhana, S. Singh & T. Msibi (Eds.), *Gender, sexuality and violence in South African educational spaces*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69988-8_3

Morrell, R. 2001. *Changing men in Southern Africa.* University of Natal Press.

Morrell, R. 2002. A calm after the storm? Beyond schooling as violence. *Educational Review,* 54: 37-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910120110866

Morrell, R. Jewkes, R. & Lindegger, G. 2012. Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South African culture, power, and gender politics. *Men and Masculinities,* 15: 11-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X12438001

Oransky, M. & Fisher, C. 2009. The development and validation of the meanings of adolescent masculinity scale. *Men & Masculinity,* 10: 57-72. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0013612. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013612

Oransky, M. & Marecek, J. 2009. "I'm not going to be a girl": Masculinity and emotions in boys' friendships and peer groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research,* 24: 218-241. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558408329951

Peacock, D. 2013. Profile: South Africa's Sonke gender justice network: Educating men for gender equality. *Agenda,* 27: 128-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2013.808793

Pronk, J., Goossens, F.A., Olthof, T., De Mey, L. & Willemen, A.M. 2013. Children's intervention strategies in situations of victimisation by bullying: social cognitions of outsiders versus defenders. *Journal of School Psychology,* 51: 669-682. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2013.09.002

Ratele, K. 2015. Working through resistance in engaging boys and men towards gender equality and progressive masculinities. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 17: 144-158. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058,2015,1048527

Reichert, M.C. & Keddie, A. 2019. Helping schools foster healthy masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*, 22: 914–916. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X19875493

Renold, E. 2004. 'Other' boys: negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in the primary school. *Gender and Education,* 16: 247-266. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250310001690609

Rubinstein, S. L. 2004. Understanding adolescent participation in harassment: a social cognitive approach. PhD thesis, Canada: Queen's University.

Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K., Björkqvist, K., Őstreman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. 1996. Bullying as a group process: participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behaviour,* 22: 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1996)22:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-T

Shefer, T., Ratele, K., Strebel, A., Shabalala, N. & Buikema, R. 2008. *From boys to men: Social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society.* South Africa: Juta Academic.

Smiler, A.P. 2014. Resistance is futile? Examining boys who actively challenge masculinity. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity,* 15: 256-259. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037286

Vetten, L. 2000. Invisible girls and violent boys: gender and gangs in South Africa. *Development Update,* 3: 40-53. Available at https://www.csvr.org.za/invisible-girls-and-violent-boys-gender-and-gangs-in-south-africa/ [Access 24 April 2024].

Way, N., Cressen, J., Bodian, S., Preston, J., Nelson, J. & Hughes, D. 2014. "It might be nice to be a girl ... then you wouldn't have to be emotionless": Boys' resistance to norms of masculinity during adolescence. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity,* 15: 241-252. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0037262. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037262