BLACK AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF GENDER IDENTITY

EXPLORATION FROM A HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY PERSPECTIVE

BY

CARMEN HIGGS

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MAGISTER ARTIUM

(CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY)

in the

FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Supervisor: Professor Luzelle Naudé

SEPTEMBER 2018

Declaration by Supervisor

UNIVERSITY OF THE
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GEESTESWETENSKAPPE

Reference:	Prof L. Naudé
	Psychology Building, Room 111
	University of the Free State
	BLOEMFONTEIN
	9301
Telephone:	051 401 2189
Email:	naudel@ufs.ac.za

September 2018

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

Student: CARMEN HIGGS

Degree: Magister Artium (Clinical Psychology)

Department: Psychology

Title: BLACK AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF GENDER IDENTITY EXPLORATION FROM A HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY PERSPECTIVE

I hereby provide permission that this dissertation be submitted for examination - in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's in Psychology, in the Department of Psychology, Faculty of the Humanities, at the University of the Free State.

I approve the submission for assessment and that the submitted work has not previously, either in part or in its entirety, been submitted to the examiners or moderators.

Kind regards

Naudé

Prof L Naudé
Supervisor

Department of Psychology / Departement Sielkunde
205 Nelson Mandela Drive/Rylaan, Park West/Parkwes, Bloemfontein 9301, South Africa/Suid-Afrika
PO Box/Posbus 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa/Suid-Afrika, T: +27(0)51 401 2187, www.ufs.ac.za

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PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Dr. L. Hoffman

Kroonstad

BA, BA(Hons), MA, DLitt et Phil

Member of the South African Translators' Institute

Cell no: 079 193 5256   Email: larizahoffman@gmail.com

DECLARATION

To whom it may concern

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the language of the following dissertation, including the bibliography (excluding appendix F).

Title of dissertation

Black African adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration from a hegemonic masculinity perspective

Candidate

Carmen Higgs

Lariza Hoffman

Kroonstad

29 August 2018

Acknowledgements

"He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how."

- Friedrich Nietzsch -

With a grateful heart, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the following individuals:

- To my **Creator**, thank you, Lord Jesus, for completing the work that you started in me. I have run the race with perseverance in Your Name.

- To my supervisor, **Professor Luzelle Naudé**, thank you for your guidance throughout this process. Your dedication, effort, and the time that you put into supervising my thesis are truly appreciated.

- To **Frank and Lizelle Kilbourn, and Anton and Elphi Taljaard** (The Bright Foundation Trust), thank you for financially investing in my academic journey. Without the resources with which you have provided me, I could not have completed my master's degree.

- To my brother, **Clinton Barnes**, thank you for believing in me enough to stand surety for me for several years in my academic career. Without you, this journey could not even have started.

- To my spiritual parents, **Louise and Pieter Groenewald**, thank you for reminding me that I had everything within me that I needed in order to reach my dreams, and for your endless love, support, and prayers.

- To my family, **Mom, Clinton Barnes, Haydon and Hanneli Higgs**, thank you for encouraging me to keep my head held high and my heart strong.

- To my precious, **Carla Nortje**, thank you for your unconditional support, love and patience. I could not have completed this without you by my side. Your wonderful faith in me was both empowering and strengthening.

- To my very dear friends, **Dewaldt Barthel, Emma Esterhuizen, Kurt Jantjies and Louise Phillips**, thank you for reminding me to laugh and appreciate the small joys, regardless of pressures and circumstances.

- To the **Department of Psychology** at the **University of the Free State**, thank you for the opportunity to further my studies.

- To the **participants** in this research study, thank you for sharing your sensitive and personal stories with me. May you be enriched and blessed.

- *I dedicate this thesis to my late grandmother, Stella Goosen ('Nonnie'), who sadly passed away during the time of the study.*

Abstract

In this study, the gender identity of black African adolescents residing in the Manguang district in central South Africa is explored. Transformation in the political, socioeconomic and social spheres of South Africa continues to influence the identity development of adolescents living in collectivistic and marginalised contexts. Adolescence is regarded as a complex and significant life stage in the human lifespan during which individuals explore and commit to identity-defining roles, values and norms in search of an authentic sense of self. In light of an ever-changing environment, adolescents may experience an array of opportunities and challenges as they pertain to exploring gender identity.

The theoretical framework for the research study is the lifespan perspective. Gender identity has been conceptualised differently by several theorists. Some theorists are of the opinion that gender identity should be understood from a biological stance, while others are in support of gender identity being conceptualised as a psychosocial construct. From a biological base, gender identity is described in terms of essentialist and binary theories, and from a psychosocial base, it is explained in terms of socialisation processes and gender continuum theories. The psychosocial base of gender identity is valued and prioritised in this research. An additional perspective, namely 'hegemonic masculinity', is utilised in this study to indicate how some forms of gendered behaviour are favoured over others.

The social constructivist paradigm governed the study, and the researcher approached the study in a qualitative manner. The researcher followed exploratory and descriptive research designs. The population group of interest consisted of both male and female black adolescents, as increased exploration processes characterise the developmental stage of adolescence. Including vulnerable individuals that occupy a turbulent life stage was important to the researcher as the research offered them the opportunity to voice their personal experiences that were regarded as worthy to the researcher. In order to recruit the participants from the secondary school in Mangaung for the study, the researcher employed purposive sampling. Both inclusion and exclusion criteria were utilised to select the participants. Four focus group discussions were conducted (two with male participants and two with female participants) to collect data for the research study. The data were analysed by

following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. In this study, the researcher employed a hybrid approach to data analysis, which consisted of both inductive and deductive methodologies. Four themes emerged from the thematic analysis, namely (a) Traditional views on what it means to be a boy or girl; (b) Exploring who I am: Balancing social context with personal agency; (c) Exploring gender identity in a changing environment; and (d) The complexity in exploring gender identity.

The results indicated that the participants regard their gender identity exploration to be multidimensional in nature, consisting of biological, psychological and social dimensions. The exploration of gender identity was deemed to be not only personal and sensitive but also importantly influenced by the sociocultural environment. While the influences of culture, family, school and peers were deemed to contribute towards gender identity exploration processes, adolescents were also regarded to exercise personal agency in their striving for exploration. The social construction of gender identity exploration makes it a perplexing and complex task. Adding to these complexities was the fact that adolescents explore their gender identity in relation to culturally valued masculine ideologies. While increasing Westernisation influences gender roles and identity constructs, adolescents continue to be influenced by the deeply entrenched hegemonic structures in society, such as heteronormativity and the hegemonic form of masculinity. Especially in black African cultures, these are viewed as normative and, therefore, respected, which makes the exploration of alternative gender roles a challenging task for developing adolescents. By conducting this study, novel contributions were made to the scientific knowledge base on gender identity development and exploratory processes during adolescence.

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Chapter 1

Orientation to the Research Study

In this study, gender identity development among black African adolescents was investigated. The researcher aims to provide a general orientation to the study and an overview of the research methodology in this chapter. Firstly, the context and the rationale of the research study are discussed. Secondly, the researcher outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the research study, including the lifespan developmental perspective, the identity theory and gender identity development. Thirdly, the research design and methodology used in the study are summarised. Fourthly, the researcher provides a chapter delineation and then concludes this chapter with a chapter summary.

1.1 Context of the Research Study

South Africa is a unique, multicultural nation, characterised by several ethnic groups, languages, religions and cultural dispositions (Adams, Van de Vijver, & De Bruin, 2012; Adams & Van de Vijver, 2017). The socioeconomically, politically and culturally diverse context provides exceptional circumstances in which adolescents in marginalised areas of South Africa have to form a coherent ego identity (Erikson, 1968) and, more particularly, their gender identity.

Adolescence is a developmental period in the human lifespan associated with several changes in physical and psychological processes (Santrock, 2011). Adolescence begins when individuals enter puberty and ends as they enter emerging adulthood. During this life stage, identity development is vastly important. From increasing exposure to societal norms and values, adolescents begin to question aspects of the self, including spirituality and religion, ethnicity and gender. This process consists of environmental exploration and eventual commitment to a congruent sense of self, known as an 'ego identity' (Erikson, 1968, 1974). According to Josselson (1987), "identity is the stable, consistent and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world" (p. 10). The processes of exploration are likely to influence identification with various roles, norms and behaviours in society, as well as how individuals in the community respond to these identifications. In

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light of this, individuals are likely to be influenced in ways that can affect their mental health and psychological well-being (Louw & Louw, 2014).

Part of the exploration associated with developing an ego identity is the active experimentation with variant gender-related roles and behaviours. This raises questions related to the social appropriateness and acceptance of such roles and behaviours in society. While facing the valuation of certain gendered behaviours and roles in a culture, adolescents either conform to them or challenge them. These negotiations lead to the development of gender identity. As such, Wood and Eagly (2015) define gender identity as the personal conception of the self as a boy or girl. Primarily shaped by inherent factors and early socialisation practices, individuals perceive themselves in relation to the culturally sanctioned feminine and masculine meanings that are held for men and women. Gender identity is intricately intertwined with gender roles, which refer to the outward manifestation of personality characteristics and behavioural preferences reflecting gender identity (Schmader & Block, 2015). During adolescence, the exploration of gender-variant behaviour often serves as an expression of gender identity. Within the gender realm, the concepts of gender identity, gender roles and gender norms are inextricably linked. Exploring various avenues related to gender identity might imply that when individuals commit to a congruent gender identity, then personal meaning-making, contentment and psychological well-being might be the result thereof, which can influence the future quality of relationships, endeavours and life satisfaction. However, inhibiting exploration or challenges related to exploring diverse gender roles and behaviours may result in poor mental health outcomes. Exploratory processes related to the development of gender identity have been described in terms of social 'doing' and biologically 'being' gendered (Butler, 1997; Nyman, Reinikainen, & Errikson, 2018; West & Zimmerman, 2009).

In a heteronormative society, binary gender constructions based on biological chromosomes link definitions of masculinity and femininity (Wood & Eagly, 2015). As such, gender identity and the expression of gender roles during adolescent exploration might be perceived as being dichotomous, rather than dimensional and continuous. Binary thinking related to exploration processes reinforces and facilitates the development of gender stereotypes and stigma, which can have detrimental implications for adolescents exploring variant roles and behaviours.

Variance in a heteronormative society is often associated with differences in the valuation of certain gendered behaviour and roles. In this study, the framework of hegemonic masculinity was applied to gender identity exploration. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define the concept of hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practices which embody the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p. 832). Given the predominance of male hegemony in black cultures, these institutionalised power differences lend an interesting lens through which adolescent exploration of gender identity can be viewed. Furthermore, the historical roots of the South African context should be considered as black African adolescent exploration takes place within a societal framework that is not free from psychosocial restraints and challenges. Instead, variance in adolescent exploration might serve to negate the prescribed importance of compulsory heterosexuality, in general, and hegemonic masculinity in black collectivistic cultures.

The racial and capitalist legacy of the apartheid regime in South Africa has had tremendous social and economic implications for black adolescents living in South Africa. The sociocultural and political environment, characterised by prolonged structural oppression, is likely to have an impact on the developmental tasks associated with adolescence. The historically and culturally diverse context provides black adolescents with cultural underpinnings and socioeconomic limitations that pose a two-fold threat to their normative exploration (Eaton & Louw, 2000). Firstly, non-Western values, including collectivism, relatedness and shared cultural group norms, might hamper the exploration of individuation, thereby conforming adolescents to what is socially expected from them from their collectively prescribed norms. Secondly, with the emergence of hegemonic Western ideologies and economic transformations that have prevailed since 1994, black adolescents are at a crossroad while they seek to establish their own sense of identity that is separate from their collective African territory (Adams, Berzonsky, & Keating, 2006). However, exploring and establishing a congruent identity in a predominantly Western society are challenging as black adolescents are presented with expectations not only to develop an autonomous and individual identity without economic and psychosocial resources, but also to abandon their collective belonging in doing so (Bulhan, 1985; Dalal, 2006). In the context of a black collectivistic and culturally shared identity, this may have a vast impact on

black adolescent mental health. Individuals from these cultures may feel the interplay between felt pressures for gender conformity versus resistance and the implications thereof. For example, worthiness and acceptance might be the result of gender conformity, while exclusion, disappointment and stigmatisation might be the result of gender variance and challenge (Beyers & Cok, 2008). This aspect highlights the psychological ramifications of marginalised black adolescents' exploration of gender identity in South Africa.

Despite European research studies on gender identity, gender identity dysphoria and gender reassignment (De Vries & Cohen-Kettenis, 2012), a gap exists in the sparse literature available on black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration in South Africa (Alberts, 2000). The diverse familial compositions, socio-political structures, cultural sanctions, power disparities and gender practices in South Africa provide challenges to gender identity exploration and may inhibit adolescents' valuable exploration of their gender identity and roles. This can have an ominous impact on the mental health state of the South African youth, which will influence their ability to become fruitful and valuable contributors in society. More particularly, the neglected Manguang area of the Free State Province is one that represents the reality of marginalised black adolescents. Therefore, the focus of this research was to gain a greater awareness and understanding of the personal experiences of adolescents' gender identity exploration and to determine whether there were gender-specific differences regarding these experiences. The experiences with regard to how the sample participants perceive their exploration and construct meaning from their gender identity exploration were the focus of this research.

1.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Research

As the study was guided by the exploration of a complex and multifaceted construct, namely gender identity, it was crucial to consider a wide array of theoretical perspectives in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In the following section, a brief outline of the various theoretical frameworks that were utilised in this study will be provided.

The developmental stage of adolescence informed this study. According to Papalia, Olds and Feldman (2009), individuals between the ages of 12 and 18 years occupy this life stage. Of relevance in this study were the critical psychosocial tasks with which adolescents are presented in their pursuit of developing an ego identity. Given the fact that gender identity exploration and development begin during childhood and peak during adolescence, it was pertinent to view adolescents' experiences from a lifespan perspective.

Erikson (1968, 1974) was one of the classical theorists who initially proposed a psychosocial theory on identity formation. His theory focuses on eight stages of conflict resolution arising from psychological needs and societal demands. He maintained that the successful resolution of psychosocial tasks might result in ego integration. In contrast, the unsuccessful resolution thereof could lead to ego disintegration or the development of a fragile ego. During adolescence, individuals experience an identity crisis in which they integrate aspects of their identity attained during their former years with novel identifications gained from exploratory processes during adolescence. During this fifth stage of psychosocial development, known as 'identity versus role confusion', adolescents experience a psychosocial moratorium whereby they are offered the opportunity to explore various identities, roles and value systems in search of identity-defining commitments that are authentic and steadfast (Korobov, 2015). When adolescents are not able to resolve the psychosocial crisis, resulting from changing sociocultural and environmental demands, they are at risk of role confusion, which can have a detrimental impact on their psychological well-being and mental health state. Despite this, Erikson (1968) states that a certain amount of psychosocial crises is normative and contributes towards an authentic and meaningful identity.

Based on Erikson's (1968) developments on identity formation, Marcia (1980) developed an identity status theory that was focused on the critical processes for ego growth to occur, namely exploration and commitment (Bergh & Erling, 2005; Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2015). The identity statuses were aimed at describing the manner in which adolescents negotiate various identity aspects of their lives (vocational, gender, relationships, spiritual, cultural and political) through active engagement with and exploration of alternatives prior to making commitments to significant identity domains. The four identity statuses include identity diffusion (no commitment, with or without

exploration), foreclosure (commitment without exploration), moratorium (in the process of exploration, vague commitments) and achievement (commitment following exploration) (Dozier, Stovall-McClough, & Albus, 2008; Marcia, 1980). Additional theories that were based on Marcia's (1980) model of identity status were also included in this discussion on ego identity (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006).

During adolescence, there is an increase in social networking and greater reliance on social relationships and peer groups (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). Expanding on ego identity, adolescents form a social identity, which develops when they form a part of social groups to which they feel a sense of belonging and acceptance (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Developing a social identity requires that adolescents engage with the values, roles, activities and beliefs of the social groups of which they are members. In turn, the social characteristics of the groups resonate with adolescents, resulting in either the internalisation of group norms or defiance thereof if they do not feel comfortable with the group practices and norms (Jenkins, 2008; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Given the sociological and psychological base of the social identity theory, focus is placed on the significance of social categorisation and social comparison by individuals, which can extend to age, race, gender, profession, politics, religion and ethnicity (Hogg, 2001; Trepte, 2011). Extending social identity to gender is the foundation of gender identity exploration.

Gender identity forms part of social identity in that individuals develop a gender identity when they explore with and engage in the gender-related roles, norms and behaviours of various social groups. Gender identity can be viewed as both a biological and a psychosocial construct. Depending on the perspectives taken in defining the construct, it can be conceptualised in accordance with more essentialist theories (biologically based) or socialisation theories (psychologically and sociologically based). In this study, the concept of gender identity was conceptualised as a psychosocial construct. While it has been defined as a personal conception of the self as a male or female individual, the manifestation of gender identity primarily pertains to the implications of internalising or defying gender roles, behaviours and personal characteristics that are traditionally associated with being male or female (Drescher, Cohen-Kettenis, & Winter, 2012). In light of several

gender-related aspects that are favoured over others in society, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' was utilised to view gender identity exploration as an additional perspective in this study.

1.3 Overview of Research Methodology

In the following section, an overview of the research methodology will be provided. Firstly, the research paradigm, approach and design will be summarised. Secondly, an outline of the sampling procedure, data collection and data analysis will be given. After that, the ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness of the research study will be discussed.

The social constructivist paradigm was used to guide the research study. From this perspective, the participants constructed their personal experiences as it emerged from their interaction with the sociocultural milieu (cf. Sarantakos, 2005). The researcher's approach to the research study was qualitative in nature as it allowed her to explore and understand the emotions, behaviours and meaning-making processes of the participants as these emerged from their naturalistic environment (cf. Creswell, 2013). In addition, an exploratory, descriptive design was used.

In this study, the population group of interest consisted of both male and female black adolescents from the Mangaung area in the Free State Province in central South Africa. Purposive sampling was utilised to sample the participants from the secondary school in Mangaung (cf. Bryman, 2015). The inclusion criteria required that the participants (a) had to be between the ages of 12 and 18 years; (b) had to be of African ethnicity; (c) had to show interest in sharing their subjective experiences of identity exploration; and (d) had to be fluent in English. The exclusion criteria for participating in the study were being in developmental stages other than adolescence and school learners above 18 years of age. The final sample amounted to 40 participants (21 male and 19 female), ranging between 12 and 18 years of age.

Focus group discussions were conducted to collect data for the research study (cf. Maree, 2007). Four homogenous focus group discussions (two with male participants and two with female participants) were conducted by following a semi-structured interview schedule. Given the sensitive life stage of the participants and the topic of enquiry, homogenous groups were considered so that

adolescents could spontaneously share their lived experiences with less fear of judgement and scrutiny. Typical questions included were: *What do you know about identity? What are the differences between male and female gender identity?* The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

The data were analysed by following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. In this study, a hybrid approach to data analysis was employed, which consisted of both inductive and deductive methodologies (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This implies that the social constructivist paradigm of the study was considered while allowing patterns to emerge inductively as themes from the dataset. The researcher systematically implemented the six phases during the analysis phase of the research study.

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State and authorisation to conduct the study from the Free State Department of Education and the Research Committee of the Department of Psychology at the University of the Free State. Informed consent was obtained from the research participants; this guaranteed their anonymity and privacy. Furthermore, the ethical principles that were prioritised during the research study included principles of autonomy, beneficence, veracity, dignity, respect, justice and non-maleficence (cf. Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Sound ethical practices were also ensured by considering researcher competence and personal reflexivity during the research study (cf. Allan, 2011)

Given the qualitative approach to the study, the researcher ensured that the research process and its findings were sound and of high quality. This was achieved through trustworthiness, whereby the researcher cautiously considered the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the research (cf. Merriam, 2009).

1.4 Delineation of Chapters

In this section, the structure of the research paper is provided by means of summarising each chapter.

Chapter 1: In the first chapter, a general orientation to the study and an overview of the research methodology are provided. This includes the context and the rationale of the research study, the theoretical underpinnings of the research study and the research design and methodology. In addition, ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness are outlined.

Chapter 2: In the second chapter, a broad overview of adolescent development and ego identity is presented. This includes a discussion of the physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains of adolescent development. After that, the development of ego identity is explained primarily using Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, Marcia's (1980) theory of identity status, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory and Bulhan's (1985) three-stage theory of identity formation. Additional identity theories, including those of Luyckx et al. (2006) and Crocetti et al. (2008), are also described. In the last section, the development of adolescent identity formation in the South African context is reviewed.

Chapter 3: Following the discussion of ego identity in Chapter 2, a detailed discussion of gender identity is provided in the third chapter. The complex nature of the construct is conceptualised from a biological and psychosocial base. This is followed by the psychosocial theories on the development of gender identity, including the essentialist, psychoanalytic, developmental, socialisation and gender continuum theories. As exploration of gender identity is crucial to the aims of the study, the concepts of 'doing' and 'using' gender are introduced, with emphasis on two-fold themes, namely performativity and reflexivity. In addition, the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is explored as a lens to the study, and the predicaments of hegemonic masculinity for exploring gender identity are outlined. In conclusion, gender identity in the South African context is explained.

Chapter 4: In the fourth chapter, the methodology employed in the research study is comprehensively discussed, and the research aims and questions are stated. The research paradigm, approach and design are discussed in finer detail, followed by an outline of the research participants

and the sampling procedure that was employed in the study. After that, the data collection and data analysis methods used in this research study are explained. The ethical considerations are highlighted, and the trustworthiness of the research study is considered.

Chapter 5: In the fifth chapter, the results of the study are presented. The themes and sub-themes that emerged during the research study are tabulated. Following the table of results is a presentation of the themes and sub-themes, accompanied by verbatim quotes from the research participants' narratives.

Chapter 6: The sixth chapter includes an integrated discussion of the research results as these pertain to the theoretical framework of the study. Various psychological and sociological theories are utilised in the interpretation of the research results.

Chapter 7: The seventh chapter serves as a conclusion to the research study. In the first section, noteworthy findings of the research study are summarised. After that, the limitations of the research are outlined. The researcher's recommendations for future research are provided in the final section.

1.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher aimed to orientate the reader to the study that investigated black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration from a hegemonic masculinity perspective. The context of the research study was provided. After that, the researcher outlined the theoretical perspectives that spearheaded the study. The research methodology was presented in a summarised format, and a delineation of the chapters in this research was provided.

Chapter 2

The Adolescent Life Stage and Construct of Ego Identity

Adolescence is regarded to be a complex life stage associated with multiple changes in the developmental trajectory. The formation of an ego identity is central to the developmental tasks associated with this period (Erikson, 1968). In this chapter, a comprehensive overview of adolescent development and ego identity, in general, is provided. Firstly, the period of adolescence is discussed, followed by a discussion of adolescent development according to physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains. After that, the construct of ego identity is expanded upon. In addition, the researcher explains the development of identity using Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, Marcia's (1980) theory of identity status, Bulhan's (1985) three-stage theory of identity formation and Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory. In the last place, the development of adolescent identity formation in the South African context is explored, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the arguments presented in the chapter.

2.1 The Dynamic Period of Adolescence

Adolescence is a versatile period in the lifespan that has been conceptualised differently by several theorists. The conceptualisations of this life stage have been marked by several debates related to the timing of developmental tasks and the perspective taken in defining the period (Rivara, Park, & Irwin, 2009; Santrock, 2011). The term 'adolescence' originated from the Latin word 'adolescere', which means 'to ripen or to grow' (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Paludi, 2002). As the meaning holds true, the original definition did not include a definite timeframe within which such growth ought to take place, and this poses challenges to describing this period in terms of chronological age. Despite these difficulties, the transitional period has been defined as the age range between 12 and 19 (Crocetti et al., 2008; Luyckx et al., 2006). The World Health Organisation (2016) differs in the age range it states, providing the estimated age range to be between 10 and 19 years. In addition, Tobin et al. (2010) argue that adolescence is marked by the period following the onset of puberty, during which an individual prepares for emerging adulthood. Similarly, Warmuth and Cummings (2015)

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maintain that adolescence is a transitional period during which adolescents face profound changes in their biopsychosocial makeup, marking this period as critical to the attainment of adult maturity. Despite increased recognition of the evolving capacity of minors, the South African legislature continues to view individuals under the age of 18 years as minors who have not reached adulthood yet (Strode, Slack, & Essack, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the adolescent period is regarded as a period of developmental transition that involves physical, cognitive, emotional and psychosocial changes that take various forms in different cultural and socioeconomic settings in individuals ranging between 12 and 18 years old (Papalia et al., 2009).

By using chronological age as developmental markers in defining this period, adolescence has been divided into three stages, namely early, middle and late adolescence. Despite the differences in these age categories among theorists (Pickhardt, 2013), early adolescence is estimated to fall between 12 and 14 years of age (Kilford, Garrett, & Blakemore, 2016). During this phase of adolescence, biological and hormonal changes influence pubertal development. Middle adolescence occurs between 14 to 16 years of age, with dramatic changes in the neurobiology of adolescents, making cognitive development a forerunner of this stage, as well as the ability to form and maintain reciprocal and meaningful social relationships (Lezak, 2012). Between the ages of 16 and 18, adolescents journey through late adolescence as they explore their identity and seek to establish a congruent and authentic sense of self (Marcia, 1980).

Adolescence has been associated with multiple changes in the physical, cognitive and social domains (Louw & Louw, 2007). Therefore, adolescence can be characterised as a stage with certain developmental tasks within various domains. One example of this explanation is provided by Piaget (1952), who maintains that the fulfilment of specific tasks in the cognitive domain is essential for the maturational process that unfolds during this life stage. In the following section, the physical, cognitive and psychosocial developments associated with adolescence will be discussed.

2.1.1   Physical development. Adolescence is characterised by multiple physiological changes associated with pubertal development (Susman & Rogol, 2004). As puberty relates to sexual and reproductive maturity, adolescents experience drastic changes in their physical appearance and

bodily processes. According to Koepke and Denissen (2012), the onset and progression of pubertal development are likely to be influenced by multiple factors, including genetic predispositions, socioeconomic status, diet, nutrition and overall mental and physical health. Resulting from a heightened production of sexual and growth hormones initiated by the hypothalamus in the brain, maturation of the adrenal glands occurs (Kerig, Ludlow, & Wenar, 2012; Salkind, 2004). The increased production of sex hormones (androgen in male persons and oestrogen and progesterone in female persons) facilitates the process of gonadarche, referring to the maturation of the testes and ovaries (Wu, Mendola, & Buck, 2002). This maturation fosters the development of secondary sexual characteristics in adolescence. In male persons, these include pubic and axillary hair growth, the broadening of the shoulders, changes in voice and an increase in testicle size (Newman & Newman, 2012; Papalia et al., 2009; Shaffer, 2002). In female persons, these include the development of breasts, increased width and depth of the pelvis, and increased growth of body, facial and axillary hair.

Mash and Wolfe (2013) maintain that changes in endocrinology and secondary sexual characteristics contribute towards the adolescent growth spurt, which is defined as the drastic increase in height and weight that precedes sexual maturity. During adolescence, sexual maturation in male persons refers to the increased production of sperm, resulting in nocturnal emissions, which can be defined as the involuntary ejaculation of semen (Newman & Newman, 2012). In female persons, sexual maturation is signalled by the onset of menstruation, which refers to the monthly shedding of tissue from the lining of the womb (Pinyerd & Zipf, 2005). A combination of genetic, biological, emotional and psychosocial factors can influence the onset and developmental course of these physical changes, highlighting the impact of contextual factors on the developing adolescent.

While adolescents manage biological and hormonal changes during this period, various psychological ramifications occur that also mark adolescence as an emotionally turbulent life stage (Mash & Wolfe, 2013). With the increasing preoccupation with outward appearance, fluctuating moods and sexual drive, and increased awareness of self and self-worth rating, adolescents experience this life stage as one that is tumultuous and uncomfortable (Kerig et al., 2012; Sigelman & Rider, 2009). As this period is characterised by increased impulsivity, poor judgement, risky behaviour and

emotional dysregulation, it is pertinent to explore the role of the developing brain and its influence on adolescent neuropsychological development.

Adolescence is marked by critical neurobiological changes in the brain structure, which contribute towards psychological functioning. Despite growing evidence that maturational brain processes continue through adolescence to emerging adulthood, significant changes occur during adolescence (Luyckx & Robitschek, 2014). These changes are central to understanding emotional regulation and behaviour and to the perception and evaluation of risk and reward during adolescence. During this life stage, the increase in white matter, which is typical of childhood brain development, continues in the frontal lobes (Blakemore, 2008, 2012). The frontal lobe is responsible for executive functions, including planning, anticipation, problem solving, emotional regulation, personality functioning, initiation and inhibition, self-monitoring and making sound judgements. Two brain networks interact during pubertal development, namely the socioemotional network and the cognitive control network (Papalia et al., 2009). During adolescence, the socioemotional network, which is sensitive to social and emotional stimuli, including peer influence, indicates increasing development. In contrast, the cognitive control network, which regulates responses from the environment, shows greater maturation during late adolescence and emerging adulthood (Steinberg, 2008). This implies that there may be a disjunction between biological maturity, cognitive development and emotional processing. The increased activity in the limbic system may also explain why adolescents are perceived to be emotional, make poor decisions, fail to plan and be hedonistic without consideration of consequences (Kuhn, 2009; Sadock, Sadock, Ruiz, & Kaplan, 2015; Sternberg, 2003).

During puberty, there is also a heightened production of grey matter in the prefrontal cortex, which decreases following the growth spurt (Lezak, 2012; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). The decrease in grey matter allows unused connections between neurons, known as 'synapses', to be pruned or eliminated, while those that remain are strengthened. In addition, as a result of increased plasticity during adolescence, the adolescent brain is more susceptible to influence by the sociocultural environment (Lerner, 2007). In this way, the neuronal connections of adolescents are advanced, promoting the development of high-order cognitive processes (Strauss, Sherman, Spreen, & Spreen, 2006).

2.1.2   Cognitive development. Kuhn (2009) states that enhanced executive functioning may be the primary advance of adolescent cognition. Development in the cognitive domain is due to the maturation of the adolescent brain, which allows for the capacity for abstract thought. According to Piaget's (1983) theory of cognitive development, individuals progress through a series of four stages. These four stages are the sensorimotor stage (zero to two years), the pre-operational stage (two to seven years), the concrete operational stage (seven to eleven years) and the formal operational stage (twelve years to adulthood). During adolescence, individuals progress from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage, acquiring the ability for abstract, rational and systematic thinking about hypothetical processes and events. Adolescents' attainment of formal thought allows for the ability to think critically as they are able to imagine hypothetical alternatives to their experienced and current realities (Mash & Wolfe, 2013). For example, adolescents are afforded the skills to explore their identity and roles, which may differ from those propagated by parental values or societal norms. As adolescents become increasingly focused on their intrapsychic processes, they tend to display a sense of egocentrism (Piaget, 1965). Elkind (1967) refers to the term 'imaginary audience' in defining adolescents' experiences of others as overly concerned with and critical of their actions and appearance. Such primitive modes of thinking are thought to surface during cognitive transition and be expressed as normative self-consciousness (Piaget, 1965). With increased verbal abilities, information-processing skills and awareness of their own mental processes, adolescents are able to reflect, reason and scrutinise the overarching ideals and norms governed by society. In this way, adolescents' increased capacity for formal thought allows them to adopt a personal set of values, known as morals. According to Kohlberg (1963), conventional morality is central to understanding the moral development of adolescents. Characterised by increased approval and acceptance by others, adolescents often internalise the moral standards of groups to which they experience a heightened sense of belonging (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). These advances in cognitive development serve as a foundation for changes in the psychosocial development of adolescents.

2.1.3   Psychosocial development. During adolescence, social relationships and psychological processes also develop and change. As adolescents' transition to adult roles and

responsibilities, adaptation to their social environment must occur too (Adams, 2014). In their pursuit of autonomy, adolescents tend to create distance in their attachment relationships with their caregivers or parents (Allen & Antonishak, 2008). This requires that authority figures establish qualitatively strong, yet permeable boundaries and manners of interaction with adolescents while maintaining trusting and secure bonds with them (Goldstein, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005; McGoldrick & Shibusawa, 2012). In this way, caregivers are perceived as being supportive of adolescents in their strivings for independence while providing comfort and guidance in times of emotional distress. This normative stride towards the development of autonomy is associated with the increased significance of peers and social group norms during early adolescence (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Larson, Whitton, Hauser, & Allen, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is generally accompanied by an increase in social networking whereby adolescents form social groups or cliques, each possessing its own idiosyncrasies in terms of interests and behaviours. Ellemers and Haslam (2011) maintain that adolescents perceive their valuable social groups as being superior to other groups. This may often result in some form of prejudice or discrimination against the groups that are unfavoured.

As adolescents transition through the education system, influenced by teachers, peer relationships and family, they are presented with a wide array of roles and responsibilities to fulfil. Adjusting to these novel demands raises questions on individuation and forming boundaries of control between the self and the external world (McGoldrick & Shibusawa, 2012). In other words, adolescents are challenged to form an identity that is co-authored by the self and the overarching social milieu (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Erikson (1968) stresses that developing a coherent sense of identity, that is, an authentic constellation of goals, values and commitments that define who one is, is crucial during adolescence.

The period of adolescence has been conceptualised differently by several theorists. Changes in the physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains characterise adolescence. Physical development is related to the onset of puberty and neurobiological changes. Cognitive development during this period includes the attainment of formal thought and enhanced executive functioning. With regard to the psychosocial domain of development, adolescents prioritise their pursuits for autonomy and their social relationships while negotiating new roles and responsibilities. During this time, the formation

of an ego identity becomes most relevant. In the following section, the concept of identity will be conceptualised.

2.2 The Conceptualisation of Ego Identity

When adolescents transition through a series of biological, cognitive and psychosocial developmental changes, normative questions regarding their identity are likely to surface. Asking questions such as "Who am I", "What do I value?" and "How am I different to others?" is central to the process of identity formation during adolescence (Erikson, 1983; Syed & McLean, 2016). In his seminal work, Erikson (1968) states that "[i]n the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity (p. 130). As one of the classical theorists to establish a tradition of identity theory, Erikson (1968) defines a subjective sense of identity as follows:

> … the awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesising methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate community. (p. 50)

Kroger and Marcia (2011) argue that identity entails having a stable and coherent mental idea about the core self and future. In a more elaborate definition of the term, Marcia (1980) defines identity as a self-structure that is internally constructed and includes a dynamic organisation of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history. In other words, the term 'ego identity' refers to a stable sense of knowing the self that others come to perceive as consistent over time. Implying that the construct of ego identity includes both intrapsychic processes and interpersonal processes, the term can be conceptualised in terms of two components, namely personal identity and social identity (Erikson, 1974; Schwartz, 2001). Personal identity refers to the identification with roles, values, beliefs and lifestyles that characterise unique individuality. Social identity refers to the way in which individuals define themselves in relation to group identification and belonging, and is therefore informed by social and cultural systems. As such, identity can be understood as a label that highlights a differentiated sense of self along a personal and social continuum (Bamberg, 2011). The traditional

studies on identity include occupation, relational, religion and socio-political stances (Alberts, Mbalo, & Ackermann, 2003; Low, Akande, & Hill, 2005). With changing cultural contexts, socioeconomic conditions and changing gender roles, the development of identity continues into early adulthood and is not limited to the adolescent period. In light of this, Marcia (1980) states that if the termination of adolescence were to depend on the attainment of a psychosocial identity, then, for some, it would not cease to end.

In light of the psychosocial aspect of identity, recent research has focused on various dimensions of identity, namely social identity, sexual identity, ethnic identity, spiritual identity and gender identity. These dimensions tend to overlap and they highlight the multifaceted nature of the construct (Van der Gaag, De Ruiter, & Kunnen, 2016). As such, identity can be understood in terms of its stability over time, such as biological gender, or in terms of its fluidity, such as gender identity. This allows individuals to define themselves uniquely in relation to the overarching social world. As the exploration of gender identity was central to this research, the gender identity dimension was of particular significance. The concept has gained attention in several aspects of psychosocial development (Egan & Perry, 2001). The development of gender identity begins in early childhood, but during adolescence, several changes in the biological, cognitive, psychological and social domains occur which prompt adolescents to question their sense of self in the social context. This entails that adolescents explore alternative gender roles, norms and practices prior to making a commitment to an authentic gender identity. Therefore, when adolescents internalise or defy the overarching gender roles into their self-concept, they develop their gender identity.

As the construct of identity has been conceptualised differently by various theorists, there has also been variance in the developmental course of identity formation for different theorists. In this study, Erikson's (1964) theory of psychosocial development was used because the researcher deemed the lifespan approach to development to be significant in a research study on adolescents. Furthermore, as the study relates to a personal aspect of individuals' lives, namely gender identity, Erikson's (1959, 1968) view of ego identity as unfolding and developing in continuity with personal character, was valued. Marcia's (1968) theory of identity status was explored in this study as the researcher was interested in what form Marcia's (1980) psychosocial processes during adolescence,

being exploration and commitment, would take in a poor socioeconomic community, such as Manguang. The social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979) was significant to use in this research as adolescents explore and develop their gender identity in relation to socially constructed gender roles, stereotypical behaviours and normative practices. Given several forms of stigmatisation of, and discrimination against, gender variance, this theory was helpful in understanding in- and out-group bias and belonging. Therefore, the contextual orientation of this theory was central to the framework of this study. Although a less familiar theory on identity, Bulhan's (1985) three-stage theory of identity formation was utilised in this study as it provided insight into the historical roots of black adolescents and acknowledged the interplay between identification with and reactive disavowal of the dominant and Western culture by oppressed groups. This is pertinent for the study as black adolescents find themselves in the position of exploring and developing their gender identity in light of a historically collective culture with a concurrent romanticism of Westernised ideals. In the following section, these theories will be thoroughly discussed.

   2.2.1   Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. Erikson (1968, 1974) was one of the classical theorists who contributed towards the tradition of identity theory. From the epigenetic principle, he described the identity formation process of adolescence as a slow process of ego growth, whereby identifications of childhood are gradually replaced by a new configuration that becomes dependent on society's identification of the adolescent (Erikson, 1968). In saying this, Erikson (1968) argues that individuals develop from an undifferentiated state following birth to a state of differentiation, a process whereby individuals become aware of their separate being in a social world. When adolescents attain a coherent identity, they are better equipped to cope functionally with the responsibilities and challenges of adulthood.

   Erikson's (1968, 1974) psychosocial theory of lifespan development is characterised by the developmental progression and mastery of eight stages in which internal psychological needs and drives are mediated by various social influences (Dunn & Craig, 2013). As Erikson (1968) views development as a process of lifelong growth and maturation, he argues that individuals are presented with psychosocial tasks in each life stage of their developmental track. As biopsychosocial changes

precipitate these tasks, the timing in which individuals are to experience these developmental tasks differs (Bergh & Erling, 2005). Depending on the successful accomplishment or unsuccessful resolution of these tasks in every life stage, individuals acquire a positive virtue versus an innate predisposition towards conflict, known as a crisis. Erikson (1968) maintains that the successful resolution of a psychosocial task within a life stage implies the strengthening and integration of the ego, which is in contrast to the unsuccessful resolution thereof, indicating a weakening and disintegration of the ego.

A strong sense of identity is established during adolescence when individuals have consolidated the psychosocial tasks and crises associated with the life stages prior to adolescence (as depicted in Table 1). In this way, Erikson (1968, 1974) states that the acquisition of the fidelity virtue will allow adolescents to remain faithful towards their personal dispositions and values while existing in a social and cultural world of difference. By this, he describes "a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of 'knowing where one is going', and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (p. 165). Therefore, identity development should not be regarded as a completed process, but rather as a working process towards greater interpersonal differentiation and personality development throughout the lifespan.

Erikson (1968) maintains that differences in the attainment of identity may exist between male and female persons. For example, he asserts that female individuals tend to develop a sense of identity through intimacy, motherhood and relationships, whereas male persons may be more inclined to establish an individual and autonomous sense of self first, prior to engaging in intimate relationships. In Table 1, the respective psychosocial stages are depicted.

Table 1

Theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968; Weiten, 2015)

Age and stage	Psychosocial stage and crisis	Virtue
0-12 months Trust versus mistrust	Through a safe and secure environment, individuals learn to trust the world as a safe place	Hope
12 months - 3 years Autonomy versus shame	Individuals learn to become self-sufficient and develop a sense of independence	Will
3-6 years Initiative versus guilt	Through exploration, individuals discover how to initiate actions on their own	Purpose
6-12 years Industry versus inferiority	A sense of mastery over one's environment fosters the development of competence	Competency
12-18 years Ego identity versus role confusion	Development of a coherent ego identity while establishing a position in the social world	Fidelity
18-40 years Intimacy versus isolation	Development of meaningful and satisfying romantic relationships	Love
40-65 years Generativity versus Stagnation	Significant contributions to society; nurture and guide the following generation	Care
65+ Ego integrity versus despair	Personal reflections allow the elderly to transfer insights to younger generations	Wisdom

The fifth stage of psychosocial development in Erikson's (1968) theory is ego identity versus role confusion. Although the development of an ego identity is critical to the adolescent life stage, its formation is not limited to adolescence but is prioritised during this period as a result of several physical, cognitive and social changes that occur in the developing adolescent (Shaffer & Kipp,

2007). During this stage of psychosocial development, adolescents experience a psychosocial moratorium whereby they are offered the opportunity to explore various identities, roles and value systems in the search for commitments to an identity that is steadfast (Feist, Feist, & Roberts, 2013).

When adolescents are not able to resolve the psychosocial crisis successfully, resulting from changing sociocultural and environmental demands, they are at risk of experiencing role confusion or a lacking sense of belonging and identification with a set of values and ideologies (Erikson, 1974, 1983). When adolescents experience role confusion, they are more susceptible to risk factors, including social inequities, conflicting cultural group norms, poor socioeconomic status, substance abuse, crime and violence. Such risk factors have a negative impact on role experimentation and impede the development of an integrated ego identity (Greene & Kropf, 2011; Holleran & Waller, 2003).

Despite valuable contributions to the identity domain of development, Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development was criticised for providing a descriptive overview of psychosocial development without an adequate explanation of why or how development occurs (Shaffer, 2009). Furthermore, critics argue that Erikson (1968) highlighted male and female personality differences that emphasise male norms and portray a sense of masculine psychology in the theory of psychosocial development that he formulated. Furthermore, it was contended that Erikson (1968) has not adequately emphasised the role of other developmental domains, such as cognitive development (Feist et al., 2013).

2.2.2   Marcia's theory of identity status. Marcia (1966) developed the construct of identity status in response to Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development. The development of identity statuses was originally formulated in order to be used for empirical studies but has since been used to inform several identity theories (Marcia, 1980). As Marcia (1966) was interested in the fundamental dimensions of exploration and commitment of Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development, he established a theory that was based on operationalising the underlying processes that are essential for ego growth to occur, namely exploration and commitment. The process of exploration is understood in Marcia's (2002) terms as a crisis whereby adolescents are active agents

searching for information from their environment in pursuit of discovering alternative choices related to establishing a coherent sense of self (Schwartz, 2001). Following several drastic changes and maturation in their biopsychosocial and spiritual make-up, adolescents are presented with a wide array of possibilities and choices to make in personal areas, including occupation, gender, relationships, friendships, religion and political ideologies. Such a period of exploration in which adolescents negotiate various aspects of their lives is crucial for their decision-making process prior to making a commitment. Despite this, Elkind (1967) maintains that adolescents lack resources and give minimal time for exploration during adolescence, resulting in their having "a premature adulthood thrust upon them" (p. 7).

The process of commitment refers to the decisions that are made by adolescents when they personally invest in a particular option or possibility related to their occupation or ideologies (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001). Commitment is made less challenging for adolescents when they explore and are adequately informed of their possibilities. Certain factors can also contribute to difficulty with committing, such as an insecure attachment style. For example, when adolescents do not experience their attachment relationships with parents or caregivers to be warm and secure, then it might be a tremendously difficult task for these adolescents to commit (DeKlyen & Greenberg, 2008; Dozier et al., 2008). As these commitments are based on personal preferences for important areas of the adolescents' functioning in society, the choices that are made by adolescents are likely to influence their course of development in significant ways.

Marcia (1980) developed an identity status theory, premised on four identity statuses that described the way in which late adolescents address making decisions that lead to a coherent identity in the vocational, sexual and value domain. These were proposed as indicating the status of identity development that is subject to change, depending on time periods and context rather than normative stages (Papalia et al., 2009). The four identity statuses include identity diffusion (no commitment, with or without exploration), foreclosure (commitment without exploration), moratorium (in the process of exploration, vague commitments) and achievement (commitment following exploration).

The diffusion status is characterised by individuals who do not seriously consider their alternatives related to vocation, beliefs and values in society through exploration and remain

uncommitted to occupational goals or belief systems (Kroger, 2003, 2004). Individuals in the diffused status have been described as lonely, dependent, apathetic, withdrawn and conforming (Marcia, 1966). Often relying on what is accepted by their peer groups, individuals occupying this identity status are perceived to be uncooperative, defiant, irresponsible and lacking commitment to meaningful life goals.

In the foreclosure status, individuals have not experienced a crisis or explored the alternatives in their environment, but they make commitments based on what their significant others regard to be normative or acceptable beliefs, roles or occupational choices (Bergh & Erling, 2005). As such, their ideological positions and occupations are strongly influenced by the process of modelling, often by parental figures. Individuals that occupy this identity status are described as obedient, rigid, conforming and lacking a sense of self-reflection, individuality and flexibility in their approach to new experiences and novelties (Marcia, 1966) but feeling content with their occupational choices and value sets.

The moratorium status is described as a period whereby individuals are grappling with identity alternatives, in terms of values, and occupational choices (Marcia, 1980). Individuals who occupy this identity status are perceived to be anxious, sensitive and critical thinkers who challenge the status quo of societal norms and expectations in their pursuit of a coherent sense of self (Kroger, 2004).

In the achievement status, individuals have endured a crisis period during which several options and alternatives are actively explored, leading to a commitment to pursue ideologies and occupational preferences of choice (Marcia, 1980). Kroger (2004) maintains that individuals in this category show more emotional maturity and social competence than individuals in the other three statuses. Furthermore, individuals who occupy this identity status are described as well adjusted, resourceful, content, ambitious and independent (Bergh & Erling, 2005).

One of the hallmark characteristics of the identity statuses is the period of exploration prior to making a commitment. Of significance in this regard is the sense of curiosity, information gathering on and active engagement with the environmental sphere and social world in the construction of a developing ego identity (Marcia, 1980). Marcia (2002) argues that gender nuances in identity

development are less likely than individual differences are. Despite this, research shows that female exploration and commitment is more prominent during early to middle adolescence, whereas male exploration and commitment is more often seen in late adolescence (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2009).

The identity statuses proposed by Marcia (1980) is a dominating theory in the study of adolescent identity development. However, critics against this approach argue that Marcia (1980) might not have appropriately conceptualised and operationalised Erikson's (1968) construct of ego identity (Côté & Levine, 2002; Hoof, 1999). These critics show reservation as to whether the identity statuses can be utilised in the study of identity development. Furthermore, in some contexts, exploration may be negatively influenced by the socioeconomic, political and cultural context, thereby marking the critical processes for ego growth, namely exploration and commitment, a privilege to adolescents living in marginal contexts.

Based on critiques of Marcia's (1980) model of identity status, Luyckx et al. (2006) and Crocetti et al. (2008) developed process models of identity development. Luyckx et al. (2006) maintain that the process of exploration and commitment can also occur in a maladaptive manner. In light of this, they introduced a dual cycle of identity development and differentiated between four identity processes. In the first cycle (commitment-formation cycle), identity formation occurs when individuals (a) actively explore their alternatives (exploration in breadth) and after that, (b) select and adhere to one of these alternatives (commitment making). In the second cycle (commitment-evaluation cycle), individuals continually evaluate the existing commitments that have been made by (c) exploring the commitments in greater detail so as to become increasingly aware of the chosen commitment (exploration in depth). After that, individuals (d) identify with the commitments they have made to ascertain whether the commitments reflect their personal template, and develop a sense of certainty regarding their choices (identification with commitment). Therefore, in the first cycle, the exploration of identity leads to initial identity resolution, whereas in the second cycle, the exploration of identity becomes targeted, which allows for a sense of verification and clarification for the developing self. As Luyckx et al. (2008) were interested in maladaptive ways in which exploration and commitment can take place, they added a fifth maladaptive identity process to their model,

namely ruminative exploration. As opposed to the functional and adaptive exploration in breadth in the first cycle, individuals who engage in ruminative exploration may experience exploration of their alternatives as being challenging and troublesome. Resulting from constant worries related to their identity exploration, such individuals struggle to make commitments.

In addition to the above model, Crocetti et al. (2008) developed a process model of identity development that was similar to the model of identity development of Luyckx et al. (2006). However, they added a dimension to their model, namely reconsideration of commitment (Meeus, 2011; Pop, Negru-Subtirica, Crocetti, Opre, & Meeus, 2016). Crocetti et al. (2008) assert that individuals have already made commitments during adolescence and that evaluation of these commitments requires that adolescents be mindful of their unsatisfactory commitments as they search for new alternative commitments (Luyckx & Robitschek, 2014; Luyckx et al., 2006).

These two process models highlight that while adolescents embark on a journey of identity exploration characterised by curiosity and openness to new experiences, there is also an increased risk of the development of anxiety and depressive symptoms following maladaptive ways of exploring and committing (Côté & Schwartz, 2002; Luyckx et al., 2008).

2.2.3   Tajfel's social identity theory. During adolescence, individuals tend to broaden their social networks by placing increasing value on their social relationships, such as peer groups, that extend beyond their family systems (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). In this way, they develop a self-concept arising from attachment and belonging to a specific social group, namely a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The premise of the social identity theory is that individuals are actively aware of their membership in a specific group and the emotional investment into that membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Acquiring a social identity requires that individuals have positive or negative perceptions regarding their belonging to a group. This promotes the tendency for group members to experience their group as favoured (in-group) versus other groups (out-groups) that have the potential to be discriminated against (Hogg, 2006). The development of a social identity allows individuals to define themselves while being psychologically positioned in a social context. Developing a social identity entails that individuals become involved in group activities and social practices that require

them to internalise the characteristics and values of a certain social group. Following that, they adopt the standards, ideals and norms of the group and continue to exercise these, which contribute towards their personal value system (Jenkins, Buboltz, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2005). Therefore, a social identity develops when individuals not only interact with their environment in such a way that they derive meaning from it but also negotiate these meanings through roles, cultural institutions and communications (Gee, 2001; Mead, 1934). Belonging to a social group can either strengthen group cohesion and identification, which contributes towards the adoption of group values, or weaken membership ties.

Given the sociological and psychological base of the social identity theory, emphasis is drawn to the importance of social categorisation and social comparison by individuals (Hogg, 2001; Trepte, 2011). Social categorisation refers to the way in which individuals perceive themselves as belonging to a certain social group, which precipitates them to classify themselves into that group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). Classification into a social group is reinforced by others who accept and embrace the membership of novel group members. However, when group members of different groups compare themselves to one another, the process of social comparison occurs (Schwartz, 2005; Tarrant, 2002). During this process, group members often engage in group bias, become intolerant of difference, show prejudice and compete with and discriminate against other groups (Newman & Newman, 2012).

The theories discussed above emphasise the multiple ways in which identity development can occur. In essence, the development of identity entails that individuals form a personal concept of the self which they experience as congruent and authentic with their internal standards. This was initially proposed by Erikson (1968), who maintained that identity formation occurs across the human lifespan when individuals progress through a series of psychosocial stages following a crisis and the acquisition of psychosocial virtues. Marcia (1980) described identity formation in terms of exploration and commitment whereby adolescents search for information from their environment prior to making informed choices related to their sense of self. This resulted in the four identity statuses proposed by Marcia (1980), known as identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement. The theory was expanded on by Luyckx et al. (2006), who developed a dual cycle

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model of identity development and distinguished between four identity processes. These were called exploration in breadth, commitment making, exploration in depth, and identification with commitment. They also added a maladaptive form of exploration, namely ruminative exploration. Furthermore, Crocetti et al. (2008) developed a model similar to that of Luyckx et al. (2006) and emphasised another dimension in their process model, known as reconsideration of commitment, which can be risky for identity formation. The social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) extends beyond a personal identity and focuses on the acquisition of a social identity deriving from an individual's perception that he or she belongs to or is a member of a certain social group.

2.2.4 Bulhan's three-stage theory of identity formation. In an attempt to explore the identity formation of individuals who are challenged by structural modes of oppression, Bulhan (1985) proposed a theory on identity formation with the aim of acknowledging and addressing the vast impact of oppression on the development of an ego identity. Although his theory has not been developed with the intention to address identity formation during the critical adolescent life stage, it provides valuable insight into the identity formation and psyche of socially disadvantaged adolescents living in sociocultural and historical contexts that are characterised by unjust impositions, restraints and ramifications resulting from the apartheid regime (Stevens & Lockhart, 1997). In South Africa, the developmental course of adolescents is critically influenced by ideological, socioeconomic, cultural and political factors. Of significance are the challenges that are presented to adolescents attempting to explore their alternatives in pursuit of developing an integrated and congruent identity.

Bulhan (1985) proposed a three-stage model, postulating three modes of psychological defences, namely capitulation, revitalisation and radicalisation. The term 'capitulation' entails that individuals engage in a simultaneous process of rejecting their culture while integrating themselves into the larger hegemonic Western culture (Muldoon, 2013; Stevens & Lockhart, 2003). Characterised by increased assimilation of the dominant cultural trends, individuals identify with the social characteristics and values associated with the dominant culture, thereby emulating the overarching cultural discourse. The process of revitalisation encompasses a realisation of difference, whereby individuals acknowledge the divides that cause separation, subjugation and incongruent identity

formation (Nelson, 2018). During this stage, individuals experience the Western culture as incongruent and corrupting, leading to a conscious disowning of the dominant culture in favour of romanticising the African culture. The process of radicalisation includes a resistance to the ideals of the Western culture accompanied by active commitments to bring about transformation in the socioeconomic, political and cultural context of black African adolescents, which is characterised by oppression and domination (Stevens & Lockhart, 1997). In essence, the identity formation of marginalised black adolescents living in South Africa is hampered by Westernised boundaries that define identity formation, making the process of self-definition a hardship for black adolescents living in marginal areas in South Africa.

2.3 The Development of Ego Identity in the South African Context

The racial and capitalist legacy of apartheid in South Africa has had enormous social and economic implications for black adolescents living in South Africa (Treacher, 2005). The formalisation of the apartheid policy in 1948 was welcomed by the Nationalist Party. During this period of oppression and segregation, the lives of black South Africans were governed by several laws that discriminated against black people in favour of white supremacy and superiority (Nsamenang, 2002). The unequal distribution of power, rights and material resources resulted in a divide between 'inferior' black and 'superior' white South Africans (Soudien, 2010). The segregation in educational and labour activities, social resources and living conditions plunged black South Africans into a position of marginalisation and financial and psychological difficulty (Wale & Foster, 2007). However, during the apartheid era, black South African adolescents might have experienced a sense of comfort, security and belonging through their shared identity (Brittian, Lewin, & Norris, 2013).

Since the democratic elections in 1994, several notable changes have occurred in the sociocultural, political and economic spheres of South Africa. Included in the idea of a multicultural 'rainbow nation' is the notion that all South Africans from the various racial groups have equal shares of resources and rights, including education, housing and access to health services (Finchilescu, 2005). Furthermore, adolescents are provided with a multicultural environment in which they can

embrace diverse languages, cultures and orientations, thereby broadening their exploration horizon, which facilitates identity development.

Despite the eradication of the capitalist framework that dominated in the apartheid era, adolescents in South Africa are currently negotiating the challenges presented to them that may continue to violate their physical, psychological, social and cultural integrity (Kamper & Badenhorst, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Melato, Van Eeden, Rothmann, & Bothma, 2017). For example, if factors such as poor socioeconomic status and diet influence puberty and brain development, then it is likely that the psychosocial tasks following this biological maturation, such as ego identity development, will also be affected. Furthermore, these psychosocial transitions also occur against the backdrop of power relations characterised by inferiority and struggle. If adolescents can resolve the difficulties associated with these transitions successfully, they are likely to develop into fruitful and dynamic individuals that are able to contribute meaningfully towards society (Glaser, 2010). With the emergence of hegemonic Western ideologies and economic transformations that have prevailed since 1994, adolescents could be at crossroads while they seek to establish their own individual sense of identity that is separate from their collective African territory (Adams et al., 2006; Bornman, 2011). When adolescents embrace their collective identity, diverse exploration of their ego identity may be inhibited by inflexible boundaries from their environment, as these may foster separation of cultural norms for appropriate behaviour and roles. Given their conventional morality during this stage of development, adolescents may be vulnerable to rejection, especially from the meaningful cultural groups to which they experience a heightened sense of belonging (Kohlberg, 1963). However, as black adolescents have evolved from a blueprint that has been regarded as primitive and inferior, they often explore the Western culture and establish an individualistic identity through white idealistic default at the expense of rejecting their own cultural heritage, known as capitulation (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2017; Bulhan, 1985; Durrheim, 2010; Stevens & Lockhart, 1997). In this way, adolescents may find themselves in the position of adopting social roles and meeting Western cultural expectations without economic and psychosocial resources and opportunities to facilitate this transition. Stevens and Lockhart (1997) use the term 'Coca-Cola culture' to refer to these adolescents who frequently suffer the ramifications of the apartheid legacy, culminating in high rates of crime and violence, initiation

into gangs, the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, premature pregnancies, substance abuse and unemployment (Glaser, 2010).

The psychological malignancy that resulted from apartheid has detrimental effects on the developmental course of black South Africans, which often conceals the resilience, strength and potential they portray (Makhubela, 2012; Theron & Theron, 2014). In light of this, black adolescents living in marginal areas of South Africa may remain in the role confusion stage of Erikson's (1974) psychosocial theory, whereas in Marcia's (1980) theory, adolescents are limited by socioeconomic resources and, therefore, restrained in their pursuits of exploration, resulting in premature foreclosure. Adolescence for black South African individuals is, therefore, a very challenging period during which they are presented with developmental tasks associated with deeply entrenched psychosocial difficulties in adjustment and identity integration. These demands make occupational choices and the exploration of gender roles and value systems exceedingly difficult without large-scale resources, opportunities and collective psychosocial support – often those community ties that adolescents are indirectly forced to neglect (Mashego & Madu, 2009).

2.4   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, an overview of adolescence was provided. The researcher discussed significant tasks in the physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains. These included, but were not limited to, the onset of puberty and neurobiological changes, the attainment of formal thought, the importance of social relations and autonomy, and the development of an ego identity. The process of ego identity development was outlined. In order to highlight the various perspectives on the development of ego identity, several theories were emphasised. The researcher discussed Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, Marcia's (1980) theory of identity status, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory and Bulhan's (1985) three-stage theory of identity development. After that, the development of ego identity in the South African context was explored and discussed.

Chapter 3

Narratives on Gender Identity

The contested term 'gender' is woven of multiple, asymmetrical strands of difference and charged with multifaceted narratives of domination and struggle. In South Africa, the concept of a 'gender non-binary' society is gaining increasing awareness and challenges the assumption of gender as invariably categorised along male and female biological binaries. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the theoretical framework and context of gender identity.

The chapter starts with the provision of conceptualisations of gender identity as it pertains to the role of biological determinants, psychological processes and gender roles. As gender roles are central to the development of gender identity, in the next section, the researcher will proceed to the discussion of gender role and gender identity theories from a psychosocial perspective. The theories are arranged from essentialist theories to socialisation theories that have a social constructivist lens. These include the essentialist theory, psychoanalytic theory, developmental theory, gender schema theory, social learning theory, socialisation theory and gender continuum theory. Following this, attention will be drawn to the 'doing' and 'using' of gender as a catalyst for exploration, followed by an introduction to the construct 'hegemonic masculinity', which will be used as a social constructivist lens for gender identity exploration. In conclusion, gender identity in the South African context will be considered, and a summary of the main arguments discussed in the chapter will be provided.

3.1 Conceptualising Gender Identity: Biological Gender, Psychosocial Gender, and Gender Roles

While adolescents face a pronounced transformation in their physical body, psyche and sociocultural environment, they also face complex identity processes during this period (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Part of their vulnerability during adolescence is that they are expected to form a coherent sense of self while negotiating hormonal changes, adopting new ways of critical and reflective thinking, and navigating their significant social world with new responsibilities and expectations from their environment. As their self-definition is primarily influenced by those around

them, adolescents also face exploring their ego identity in the context of what others will think of and expect from them (Jenkins, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, the development of such a personal sense of self as a boy or girl form part of the identity task that adolescents face, known as gender identity. As it relates to the identification with socially prescribed gender roles, adolescents can experience the exploration aspect of gender identity as challenging if they do not adhere to societal scripts of what it entails to be a boy or girl.

As such, gender identity is a complex construct that can be understood as a biological, psychological and social construct. In the following section, attention will be drawn to understanding gender identity from both a biological and a psychosocial perspective, which includes gender roles. In some academic discourses, the use of the term 'gender' refers to a classification system that is used to classify males and females based on their biological anatomy or genitalia (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). However, in other contexts, such as in South Africa, this refers to biological gender. As the focus of this study was based on a social constructivist paradigm, gender will be viewed from a psychosocial perspective and the usage of the term will be in accordance with this unless otherwise stated.

3.1.1   The biological base of gender: Hormones and chromosomes. Biological gender refers to a classification system that is used to classify males and females based on their biological anatomy or genitalia. The biological base of gender is related to the development of different physiological structures that start at conception when fertilisation of an ovum by a sperm cell occurs (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). When an individual inherits two X chromosomes (one from both the mother and the father), the individual is likely to be genetically predisposed to develop according to a female prototype (Swanson, Edwards, & Spencer, 2010). In order to be genetically endowed to develop according to a male prototype, individuals will have inherited one X chromosome and one Y chromosome (one X chromosome from the mother and one Y chromosome from the father). Therefore, the chromosomal pattern that has come to be widely accepted as female is XX in chromosome pair 23 and as male XY in chromosome pair 23 (Brannon, 2017). This stage of genetic acquisition prompts the prenatal development of the male and female gonads and hormones, as well as the internal genitalia, that relate to reproductive functioning. After that, the external genitalia

develop, which results in significant differences in the biological make-up of male and female persons, and are evident at birth. In light of this, a biological conceptualisation of gender emphasises a causal relationship in which genetic predispositions and hormonal influences produce male or female physiology, which, in turn, produces corresponding masculine or feminine behaviour (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). In light of the changes that occur in the endocrine systems of adolescents, and the development of their secondary sexual characteristics, adolescents are likely to be more aware of the meaning that society attributes to their biological body parts.

Included in adolescents' physiological system is a placement in a male or female category, of which membership of the category is established and maintained by the socially constructed representational displays that proclaim membership in the category (West & Zimmerman, 2002). In the hegemonic ideology of Western society, this classification system thus implies a guaranteeing correlation between male and female physiology and corresponding masculine and feminine behavioural traits. In other words, if adolescents can be categorised as male or female, their identity should be aligned with this. However, when the development of a congruent and authentic identity is at the forefront of adolescent exploration, this development becomes problematic as the exploration of gender identity is limited to an either-or approach as embedded in the existence of a male or female category, with corresponding binary assumptions (masculine or feminine) of gender. Against this background, Jackson and Scott (2010) contend that gender is often viewed from a biological perspective, despite being regulated by sociocultural constructions and norms. This stance promotes biological essentialism, which in its reduced form, marginalises alternative explorations to authentic identity formation and limits fluidity of gender identity (Bradley, 2013).

3.1.2   The psychosocial base of gender: Gender roles and identity. The psychosocial concept of 'gender' allows for a range of identities that are not biologically predetermined but sociocultural in nature (Chen, 2015). From this perspective, gender identity has come to be seen as a social and psychological construct, which marked the emergence of social constructionism that has its roots in phenomenological and interactionist thinking. From this viewpoint, Gagnon and Simon (1973) made vital contributions to understanding gender as a psychosocial construct, partly because

they sought to explain gendered selfhood and acknowledged that biological accounts of gendered being were only one perspective to viewing gender. For Fausto-Sterling (2000), gender identity is described as a set of socially constructed and reinforced characteristics assigned to individuals based on their biological genitalia at birth. Some variance is noted in Bradley's (2013) inclusive conceptualisation of gender identity as "the varied and complex arrangement between men and women, encompassing the organisation of reproduction, divisions of labour, and cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity" (p. 16). In contrast to this, Stoller (1968) refers to gender identity when an individual has an inner conviction that the biological characteristics that have been assigned to them were correct.

Furthermore, the concept of gender identity was conceptualised by developmental psychologists, mainly focusing on the cognitive and affective components of gender identity (Steensma, Kreukels, De Vries, & Cohen-Kettenis, 2013). Whereas Kohlberg (1981) defines gender identity as the "cognitive self-categorisation as boy or girl" (p. 88), Egan and Perry (2001) view the concept in terms of satisfaction and contentment with one's feelings of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, gender identity has also been conceptualised as the degree to which individuals identify, integrate and introject cultural stereotypes and social norms for gender conformity and societal acceptance (Carver, Yunger, & Perry, 2003; Sigelman & Rider, 2009). In addition, Tobin et al. (2010) describe the term by considering five dimensions, namely membership knowledge into a gender category, gender centrality, gender contentedness, felt gender conformity and felt gender typicality.

Collectively, the definitions provided above exemplify the significance of genital difference and the political and cultural intersections in which gender identity is produced and by which it is maintained (Butler, 2004). As such, individuals are born as biological beings rather than psychosocial ones, which emphasises that gender is not an extension of a biological stratum and that its production requires socialisation, social interaction and psychological identifications. Given the overlap in and link between gender roles and gender identity, considerable attention is given to defining gender roles and the implications thereof for gender identity (Kerig et al., 2012; Papalia et al., 2009).

According to Agrawal (2008), gender roles can be described as the socially significant activities that male and female individuals engage in or follow in order to fulfil their culturally

defined masculine and feminine roles in society (Agrawal, 2008). Despite the emphasis on the adolescent life stage in this study, it is important to note that the psychosocial acquisition of gender roles, attributes and gendered behaviours occurs during childhood. However, when adolescents endure several changes in their biological make-up, cognitive maturity, emotional processing and social dynamics, they are likely to explore and re-engage with these gender norms, behaviours and gender roles during adolescence in order to establish their own gender identity. Here, the importance of socialisation processes is acknowledged. However, of greater priority is the fact that adolescents become active agents as they navigate and explore societal gender roles, personality characteristics and behaviours before making a personal investment into them, thereby creating a gender identity that they experience to be congruent (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010). The trajectory of gender role development and norms consists of a myriad of factors, ranging from early biological to cognitive and psychosocial developments in the human lifespan (Kerig et al., 2012). Engagement with gender roles often occurs without actively considering whether these accurately reflect internal standards that are genuine to the self (Grysman, Fivush, Merrill, & Graci, 2016). Individuals are likely to show a proclivity for adhering to normative standards regarding gender-related behaviours and roles. Here, the role of early processes, such as socialisation, in the formation of gender identity is highlighted (DiDonato & Berenbaum, 2011).

As gender identity is the focus of this study, the implications of gender roles for gender identity are significant. Such implications include whether individuals will defy the gender norms and roles scripted by the sociocultural milieu or internalise them, leading to the development of gender identity (Drescher et al., 2012). Thus, the development of gender identity entails individuals either adhering to the appropriate personality characteristics, roles, activities and behaviours expected from male and female persons respectively, or challenging the status quo of what is deemed appropriate for male and female persons, thereby developing their own gender identity that reflects personal authenticity. Therefore, gender identity develops as it is constructed by the social world and is incorporated or defied to create a gendered self-concept.

Underlying the production of gender from a psychosocial perspective are cultural schemas about the naturalness of a binary gender system (Martin, 2003; Ridgeway, 2009; Ross, 2011). These

schemas constitute and are constituted by the seemingly natural heterosexual gender system, entailing heteronormative practices. In accordance with the above argument, Schilt and Westbrook (2009) maintain that a disparity between anatomical credentials and gender presentations (masculinity and femininity) is unlikely to be expected, as it is assumed that gender roles, which contribute towards the development of gender identity, reflect biologically equivalent bodies. This can be limiting to adolescents in the peak of their exploration period as they are provided with cultural scripts by models who imitate that female persons are inherently feminine and adhere to feminine traits, gender roles and norms associated with being a girl. In the same manner, adolescent boys learn, observe or are instructed that male persons are inherently masculine, engage in physical activities and are not inherently emotional or effeminate. As such, it can be said that several factors contribute towards the development of gender identity, including an interplay of sophisticated changes in physiology and brain development, changing social expectations, guidelines for acceptance and an increased engagement with cultural norms, social interaction and stereotypes (Giordano, 2003; Martin & Ruble, 2004).

As the exploration of gender identity was central to the study, a thorough conceptualisation of gender identity development was necessary. In the following section, various psychological and sociological perspectives on gender identity development will be discussed.

3.2 Psychosocial Perspectives on Gender Identity Development

As the concept of gender identity is complex and perplexing, the theories of gender identity have been presented as they broadly range from essentialist-type theories to social constructivist theories. In this section, the development of gender identity will be described by briefly discussing seven theories, namely the essentialist theory, the psychoanalytic theory, the developmental theory, the gender schema theory, the socialisation theory, the social learning theory and the gender continuum theory.

3.2.1   Essentialist theory. The focus of an essentialist theory is on the dichotomy approach to gender identity development. From this approach, emphasis is placed on the notion that gender identity naturally unfolds from biological determinants (Heilmann, 2011). This suggests that male persons have penises, are intrinsically masculine and will develop a gender identity based on the adoption of male characteristics and gender roles. Similarly, female persons are thought to have a female anatomy, which is associated with an intrinsic femininity and engagement with behaviours and personality traits associated with being a girl (Brannon, 2017; West & Zimmerman, 2002). Viewing gender identity in terms of binaries or oppositions often correlates with the essentialist theory.

3.2.2   Psychoanalytic theory. Until the 1960s, psychoanalytic thinking was the forerunner to conceptualising gender identity and its proponents. Freud (1963) argued that existing narratives were premised on innate instinctual drives and the physiological distinction between male and female persons, as well as the social location of the psychosexual trajectory. Although he did not envisage the drive language as being innately orientated towards reproduction, but rather in hedonism, his emphasis on libidinal drives is informative for the development of gender identity that occurs in the significant familial context. In Freud's (1905) psychoanalytic theory, emphasis is drawn to the role of the identification process with the same-sex parent in the development of gender roles. Freud (1963) developed a personality theory in which he described five psychosexual stages, namely the oral stage (0-1 year), the anal stage (1-3 years), the phallic stage (3-6 years), the latency stage (6-12 years) and the genital stage (12 years - adulthood). His view of instinctual drives as biologically determined was highlighted in this theory in that he named the stages sequentially, according to the associated body part that was responsible for sexual gratification and contributed towards personality formation. With regard to the development of gender roles, Freud's (1963) phallic stage of psychosexual development is significant. Interestingly, this is also the first stage in which Freud (1963) describes a different trajectory for male and female persons, which might contribute to why his theory was criticised for being sexist.

According to Freud (1963), children who occupy the phallic stage are increasingly focused on their genitals, which results in a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite gender and hostility

towards the parent of the same gender. Boys experience hostility and turmoil as they become aware that their genitals are different and they fear that their resentment towards their same-sex parent may result in their losing their penis, known as castration anxiety. For girls, feelings of inferiority are produced when they become aware of their genital differences, resulting in penis envy. However, as they have no penis to lose, Freud (1963) maintains that women experience less oedipal distress than men do during this stage of identification. In order to resolve the conflict associated with the attraction to the parent of the opposite gender, children identify with the parent of the same gender, known as the Oedipus complex in boys and the Electra complex in girls. The process of identification entails that boys develop a masculinity complex that is driven by the feeling that girls' are inferior, with a sexual attraction to women; girls develop an inferior feminine identity, like their mother, with a sexual attraction to men. Therefore, family dynamics and perceptions of genital differences prompt the development of gender-typed characteristics and behaviours, resulting in the development of gender identity.

3.2.3   Developmental theory. Developmental theorists, such as Piaget (1952), Erikson (1983) and Vygotsky (1978), maintain that developmental trajectories are influenced by normative stage-related tasks in cognitive, psychosocial and emotional processes. This allows individuals to acquire gendered knowledge or skills, manifesting in a form of psychosocial maturity, which can be incorporated into the self-structure, thereby contributing towards the development of gender identity. For the purpose of this study, two developmental theories of relevance will be discussed, namely Kohlberg's (1963) developmental theory and Bem's (1981) gender schema theory.

According to Kohlberg (1963), at the age of one year, infants are able to distinguish between male and female voices and faces. During early childhood, children are able to identify with being a 'boy' or a 'girl', but their level of cognitive development limits their understanding to categorising individuals based on their physiology (Papalia et al., 2009). As such, their preoperational stage of cognitive development allows them to categorise on the basis of manifesting differences between males and females (Piaget, 1952). During this stage, children develop the ability to label their own and others' gender, known as gender labelling. Between the ages of two and three, children acquire

the ability to show a preference for engaging in gender-stereotypical toys, dress, play behaviours and same-sex peers (Serbin, Poulin-Dubois, Colburne, Sen, & Eichstedt, 2001). In this way, individuals learn through reinforcement and modelling what normative roles and behaviours are deemed culturally appropriate for their gender (Zosuls et al., 2009). As they become aware of the stereotypical behaviours and character traits expected from boys and girls, they learn about gender norms, apply gender labels and acquire increasing knowledge of gender stereotypes (Louw & Louw, 2014). This is followed by children's understanding that gender is stable over time and that a female person becomes a mother and not a father. As they progress through childhood, at approximately seven years old, they achieve gender constancy, whereby there is a realisation that gender assignment is permanent, regardless of changes in outward appearance and behaviour (Kohlberg, 1963). Despite contestation regarding the fluidity and stability of gender, Kohlberg (1963) defines gender constancy as an individual's understanding that his or her biological anatomy is fixed and irreversible. Kohlberg (1963) argues that, in order for stereotypical behaviour to occur, known as gender typing, children are to achieve gender constancy. However, this view has been scrutinised as it does not account for early environmental influences, such as parental reinforcement. As the cognitive development of children progresses to less concrete forms in middle childhood, children gain the ability to make associations between gender roles, norms, expectations and certain personality characteristics that have come to define aspects of gender identity formation (Kohlberg, 1963).

Bem's (1981) gender schema theory is an extension of Kohlberg's (1981) cognitive developmental theory. From this perspective, it is believed that gender roles develop with increasing cognitive maturity. Bem (1981) defines a schema as a cognitive structural network that organise and guide an individual's perceptions. During cognitive development, children encode and organise information from their social environment about what is considered to be appropriate gendered behaviour, which in turn, guides their overarching patterns of thinking and behaviour related to gender. According to the gender schema theory, children are mainly influenced by the sociocultural context, which serves as a yardstick against which gender schemes are formed (Wilansky-Traynor & Lobel, 2008). As such, children process gender-related information and apply gender knowledge as this information and knowledge are aligned with the gender norms of their culture. This results in the

development of certain characteristics, activities and attributes associated with maleness and femaleness, known as gender roles. In light of this, Bem (1981) distinguishes between four gender categories, namely sex-typed, cross-typed, androgynous and undifferentiated individuals. When individuals identify with their gender and their information processing is congruent with that gender schema, they are characterised as (a) sex-typed individuals. In contrast, (b) cross-typed individuals can be distinguished by the processing of gendered information from the perspective of the opposite gender. Individuals that are (c) androgynous exhibit cognitive processes typical of both masculine and feminine individuals. When individuals do not portray a consistent use of sex-typed information processing, they are characterised as (d) undifferentiated. The development of gender schemes promotes individuals to interpret information in terms of the gendered knowledge that they acquire, which can lead to gender stereotyping (Frawley, 2008). In this way, children's gender stereotypes and self-categorisations illuminate the manner in which they form social groups and attach personal significance to them (Blakemore, Berenbaum, & Liben, 2014).

3.2.4   Socialisation theory. The premise of the socialisation theory is that the development of gender identity is a cumulative process that unfolds as it is actively constructed by the contextual situation and its counterparts, including peers, family and various significant others (Ristori & Steensma, 2016). The tenets of the socialisation theory take into account the influence of the sociocultural environment in shaping the normative attitudes and behaviours that are deemed appropriate for one's biological composition, otherwise known as gender roles (Mash & Wolfe, 2013). A valuable assumption of the socialisation theory is that individuals internalise salient gender norms throughout childhood, but the theory does not emphasise the social construction of gender and the multiple ways in which it is produced and performed across various cultures and ethnicities (Halim, Ruble, & Amodio, 2011).

In this study, a socialisation theory of importance is the social learning theory, which will be the focus of this section. From the social learning approach, attention is given to two factors that explain the development of gender roles. Firstly, children observe and learn about gender-related norms and behaviours from a wide range of sources, including family, peers, teachers and the media

(cartoons and role models), who act as influential (a) models (Bandura, 1986). These models act out or perform gender-stereotypic behaviours in a variety of contexts, such as the household, the classroom or on multimedia. In this way, children are exposed to male- and female-related personality characteristics, activities and roles, which they learn to accept as normative and appropriate (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008).

Secondly, children learn and perform gender-related characteristics, attributes, roles and activities through the process of (b) operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938). Through this, children observe or experience the consequences of behaviour. For example, children observe girls being rewarded and encouraged for exercising their feminine role in which they are sensitive to the needs of others and play with toys such as dolls. This type of behaviour is not welcomed for boys and would be regarded as out of the ordinary (Bronstein, 2006). Similarly, boys are encouraged to engage in sports that require physical strength and are told to 'man up' when they feel downhearted. Thus, when children experience the rewards associated with their behaviour, known as reinforcement, they are likely to perform the behaviour repeatedly or engage in the role again, and less likely to do so when they are punished for it (Kane & Byrne, 2006). During adolescence, the gendered knowledge acquired from this process of modelling and reinforcement during childhood unfolds when adolescents reconsider their gender roles and further explore their gender identity.

3.2.5   Gender continuum theory. In a critical analysis of gender theory, Monro (2005) and Austin and Goodman (2018) refer to the gender continuum theory that was initially developed by Rothblatt (1995). According to this theory, gender identity does not develop according to two dichotomous categories, but rather along a spectrum that reflects a multiplicity of genders. This view of gender identity provides for fluid and multiple identities that move beyond mainstream gender categories (Jourian, 2015). Furthermore, the theory allows for variance in explorations to developing a gender identity (Kuyper & Wijsen, 2013). Such variance in gender identity refers to an experience of gender identity that is contrary to that expected from gender roles associated with biological anatomy (Kessler & McKenna, 2006; Sumia, Lindberg, Tyolajarvi, & Kaltiala, 2017).

The variance in gender identity explained above is different from the extreme variance, known as gender dysphoria, in which individuals experience a marked difference between their experienced gender and their biological gender, in combination with a desire to live as a member of the opposite gender, often requiring sex reassignment surgery (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Importantly, it should be noted that clear incongruence varies from normative temporary fluctuation in the experiences of adolescent gender identity exploration. As this study is focused on the exploration aspect in the development of gender identity, attention is drawn to the experiences of adolescents as they explore their gender identity in a predominantly social world. Therefore, exploring gender identity from this perspective is regarded as a psychological and social process rather than a biological one. Without negating the importance of biological anatomy in understanding sexuality and gender relations, the researcher will use this theory in guiding the understanding of gender in this study. Reasons for this choice are that this theory correlates to a great extent with the social constructivist lens of the study, gender is viewed as continuous rather than binary and the theory is likely to offer flexibility and depth to understand the voices of the participants' experiences in a multicultural society.

In summary, this section provided an overview of gender identity theories that ranged from those that were essentialist in nature to a more social constructivist approach. The discussion began with the essentialist theory, in which gender identity is viewed as a biological construct, followed by the psychoanalytic theory of Freud (1963), who maintained that the development of gender roles occur in the phallic stage of psychosexual development when children identify with the parent of the same gender. Resulting from their perceptions of genital differences and complex family interactions, children develop masculine and feminine traits and behaviours, contributing towards the development of gender roles. After that, the developmental nature of gender identity development was highlighted with specific reference to the acquisition of skills from stage tasks in the cognitive and psychosocial domain. Then the cognitive developmental theory and gender schema theory were introduced to indicate how individuals form cognitive schemas about appropriate gendered behaviour in their environment. As these gender schemas form part of the self-concept, they influence the belief systems, values and behavioural pathways of individuals and can also lead to stereotypes. The role of

socialisation and the influence of the sociocultural environment in shaping the normative attitudes and behaviours related to gender norms were discussed along with the socialisation theory. In addition, the researcher explained that social learning theorists maintain that gender roles derive from a learnt gendered knowledge that is acquired through modelling from the environment and the performance of gender-related behaviours and roles. Lastly, the gender continuum theory was explained as it relates to the social constructivist lens applied to gender identity. From this perspective, gender identity is understood to be a psychological and social construct that develops as individuals interact with their environment. Therefore, this approach lends itself to development on a continuum with an array of identities that are fluid and not fixed.

In this study, an understanding of the various perspectives taken on how gender identity develops is crucial to understanding adolescents' experiences of the socially located exploration of their gender identity. This exploration includes that individuals are aware that they will be assessed according to normative standards that are applied to one's category, resulting in gender conformity or gender resistance through the 'doing' and 'using' of gender (West & Zimmerman, 2002).

3.3 'Doing' and 'Using' Gender as a Catalyst for Exploration: Themes of Performativity and Reflexivity

Previously, it was stated that in order for critical ego growth to occur in adolescents, the process of exploration and commitment should take place (Kroger et al., 2010). In understanding these processes as they relate to gender identity, adolescents are to engage actively with the wide array of choices and possibilities related to gender roles, personal qualities and activities as they are presented, constructed and socially performed by agents of the social environment. For black adolescents with strong cultural ties and morals, it is likely that they will also be provided with certain roles and distinctive traits and activities that their collective or communities value. Through these, adolescents discover and explore the possibilities offered to them in search of those that will contribute towards their gender identity. As such, exploring their gender identity is likely to be rooted in those things that adolescents engage in through 'doing' certain activities and roles which they

engage in that may reinforce societal stereotypes of what it means to be a boy or a girl. Alternatively, adolescents could be encouraged to 'use' their gender creatively as they reflexively explore who they are as boys and girls despite an awareness of societal definitions and constraints. This might lead to the diminishing of stereotypes and the challenging of cultural definitions related to being a boy or a girl, leading to adolescents flourishing within their sense of self as a result of ego congruence and contentment. In the following section, the 'doing' and 'using' of gender will be introduced with reference to themes of performativity and reflexivity.

The two-fold 'doing' and 'using' of gender is largely related to the work of West and Zimmerman (2009). They maintain that gender refers to what people do rather than what they are, implying behavioural repertoires that characterise boys as 'manly' and girls as 'womanly' (West & Zimmerman, 2002, 2009). This characterisation is made possible by the gender assessment system in which adolescents are indirectly held accountable by their community, schools, social in-groups, family and culture to act according to normative standards that are regarded as socially and culturally appropriate and acceptable (Nentwich & Kelan, 2013). Maclean, Sweeting and Hunt (2010) contend that gender identity is unconsciously or consciously achieved or demonstrated in social interactions that become ritualised and contribute to the construction of a gendered sense of self. In light of this, gender identity is constituted within an interconnected social milieu that is characterised by theoretically eclectic complexity, interpersonal context and intrapsychic meaning-making processes. As evident in this, gender identity construction also intersects with race, cultural underpinnings, class, sexuality, community relations, family and economic modalities (Butler, 1990).

These social interactions reinforce the 'doing' of gender and place adolescents as active agents in the construction of their gender identity (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2003). Social interactions are central to constructivist claims that individuals engage in symbolic practices that tend to reinforce the hegemonic demands of a heterorelational society, posing limitations to adolescents who experience variance in their personal conception of themselves as boys and girls (Nyman et al., 2018; Fenstermaker, 2010). Mead (1934) regards the self as a constituent of the social world and argues that the self is constructed by ongoing performance opportunities that corrupt and pose threats to the authentic quest for self. Therefore, it is through social contact and observation of others in their

social surroundings that adolescents experience the weight and burden of societal constraints in defining themselves congruently (Garcia-Falgueras, 2014; Thorne, 2004). In other words, 'doing' gender implies that, while in the presence of others, adolescents acknowledge the gendered behavioural requirements in order to act accordingly.

While the word 'do' denotes an action to be performed, executed, accomplished, completed or exerted and brings about effect (Deutsch, 2007; Green, 2005), the behaviours of individuals 'doing' their gender results in stereotypical performative acts, often maintaining conformity to masculine-feminine binaries of male and female persons within which heteronormative practices are defined (Butler, 2004). Although Butler's (1997) theory of performativity aims to deconstruct the 'doing' of gender and was criticised for not considering contextual factors and the individual effect of the performance on the individual, she made significant contributions to gender studies. She argues that gender performance refers to the notion that behaviours and attitudes serve as rehearsed performances, continually scripted by hegemonic social conventions and norms (Butler, 2004). These performances are often marked by gender roles, outward cosmetics and interests, nonverbal body language and gestures, all of which model a natural and accepted way of being for adolescents progressing through the developmental life stage (Butler, 1993).

Despite a changing environment with greater variance in the adoption of gender roles and gender-related activities in defining the self as a boy or a girl (Croft, Schmader, & Block, 2015), Fiske, Cuddy and Glick (2007) propose certain personality characteristics that continue to reflect normative traits from male and female persons respectively. During these performative acts of the self as boys and girls, boys tend to be associated with instrumental traits, such as self-reliance, assertiveness, aggression and dominance. Traits that are associated with being girls are described as being expressive in nature, including warmth, nurturance and submissiveness (Campbell & Carroll, 2007). In the context of identity exploration tasks, adolescents might be offered little room for exploration as the context of the family and peer environment constitutes socialised and cultural demands that adolescents might feel compelled to follow or adhere to. In this way, they are challenged by the overarching structures that they seek to transcend during their exploration period. This may inhibit crucial exploration of different gender roles and behaviours related to being boys and

girls in society, contributing towards possible adolescent role confusion and greater susceptibility to environmental risk factors. As such, this can contribute towards poor adolescent mental health outcomes and influence adolescents' transition to emerging adulthood (Blakemore et al., 2014).

While the 'doing' gender paradigm highlights the complexity of gendered selfhood within a performance-based society, it also refers to 'using' gender as a means to deconstruct some of the normative conceptions of gender variations through reflexivity and agency (Andersen, 2005, 2008; Deutsch, 2007; Johnson, 2009). From this stance, reflexivity refers to the habitual exercise of the mental ability, shared by most individuals, to consider themselves in relation to their context (Maguire, 2008; Martin, 2003). Implying an awareness of the gendered self within a culturally scripted environment, adolescents are encouraged to 'use' their self-definitions as boys and girls as a means to remain intentionally agentic as they explore the gender roles, activities and personality dispositions (Nyman et al., 2018). This may lead adolescents to reflect on their experiences of being boys and girls that are congruent with their intrapsychic processes rather than governed and constructed only by interpersonal and cultural narratives.

3.4 Hegemonic Masculinity as a Social Constructivist Lens to Gender Identity Development

In the exploration of gender identity, adolescents endorse normative masculine and feminine attributes associated with a sense of belonging, status and acceptance. During this period, adolescents face the challenge of separating from parental or familial values and expectations to form a congruent identity, often shaped by peer interaction and community values. Mental health status may be compromised when adolescents experience conflict or tension during the experimentation of gender-variant roles, often due to perpetual scrutiny, exclusion and rejection (Schmader & Block, 2015). Variance in a heteronormative society – generally represented by a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity – acknowledges not only how masculinity serves to undermine femininity but also considers how certain masculinities subordinate alternative forms of masculinities.

A particular perspective that is applied to gender identity in this study is the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The concept derived from a shift in gender

politics in the post-1994 period in which gender activism was mainstreamed and male hierarchy was emphasised. Despite its historical and cultural relativity, the term is defined as "the configuration of gender practices which embody the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). The idea underlying this concept is also echoed by Adler, Ansbacher and Ansbacher (2006), who proposes the term 'masculine protest', suggesting that men who exhibit compassion, sympathy, cooperation and similar 'feminine' traits are less 'manly' than those who exhibit traits such as aggression, ambition or competition. Arguments were made that, in boys, feminine traits are cautiously concealed by exaggerated masculine wishes and efforts in an attempt to overcompensate, as femininity is negatively evaluated in a masculine-dominated society (O'Donnell & MacIntosh, 2015). By highlighting the devaluation of the opposite polarity of hegemonic males, Adler et al. (2006) made promising contributions to the pre-eminence of masculinity and its influence on mental health.

Primarily entailing the most honourable way of being a 'true man' in the twentieth century, Demetriou (2001) states that hegemonic masculinity generates not only external hegemony over women but also internal hegemony of one group of men over another group of men. Such ascendancy is often exemplified by the hegemony of masculine boys over effeminate boys, or girls who do not ascribe to the feminine qualities expected from them. As mentioned previously, this notion is characterised by conformity to prevailing male norms by adopting certain socially sanctioned masculine behaviours. As such, Rizvi, Khan and Shaikh (2014) maintain that there are seven norms reflecting traditional masculine ideology, namely avoidance of femininity, sceptical attitudes towards homosexual orientations, self-reliance, aggression, dominance, non-relational views of sexuality and restrictive emotionality. Despite relentless contestation of these institutionalised differences between what it means to be a boy, the hegemonic form of masculinity manages to adapt and acclimatise its position to the changing social milieu, ensuring its continued dominance (Davis & Wills, 2014).

In a heteronormative society, physical anatomy seems to communicate and portray significant messages to individuals about social expectations related to masculine and feminine behaviour identifications. In a study conducted by Wood and Eagly (2015), differences in masculine personality

qualities, including independence, leadership, aggression, control and rationality, indicated an increase in adolescence, whereas differences in feminine personality qualities, including sensitivity and kindness, remained constant and unchanged. This might be congruent with societal expectations of boys who ought to be independent, assertive, instrumental and competitive versus the qualities of being caring, nurturing, considerate and responsible that are expected from girls (Schmader & Block, 2015). Despite some changing trends in socialisation practices, adolescent boys and girls continue to relate to socially constructed and cultural gender schemas with minimal exploration of gender-variant roles and identity (Chancer, 2018). As such, individuals adopt gender-related roles and behaviours without active experimentation of gender-related alternatives, resulting in dissatisfaction with the gendered self, internal struggles and interpersonal conflicts (Doucet, 2015).

In this study, the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is used to reveal how certain types of gendered behaviour and identity constructions are favoured in society versus those that are rejected, frowned upon or dismissed. Following Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity to Western families, it was useful to apply the term to the South African context due to its historical roots of colonialism and apartheid which caused economic and political divides in sociocultural and political landscapes (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). Furthermore, its application was useful given the composition of black African families who place worth on male valuation and dominance. In the context of black collectivistic ideals, this may have a vast impact on the mental health of black adolescents. More particularly, the interplay between felt pressures for gender conformity that adolescents are exposed to and, by implication, worthiness and acceptance versus role exploration to establish a mentally healthy sense of self, hold risks of rejection, exclusion and stigmatisation by community members, family members and cultural sanctions.

3.5 Adolescent Gender Identity Development in the South African Context

Psychological research has been dominated by several theorists who maintain that intrapsychic, interpersonal and intergroup processes are inextricably linked within the sociocultural and political contexts in which they exist (Bulhan, 1985; Erikson, 1964). As such, psychological

processes, such as the exploration to form an authentic and coherent gender identity, are likely to be vastly influenced by such contexts. Despite the resilient and adaptive nature of black adolescents in the South African context, it is likely that the environment, which is characterised by prolonged structural oppression, may hamper and influence the developmental tasks associated with adolescence (Stevens & Lockhardt, 1997). As the exploration of gender identity in South Africa was crucial to the aims of the study, a brief consideration of the South African context is necessary.

The legacy of the apartheid regime continues to shape the composition of the family in African cultures, especially in marginalised areas (Makhubela, 2012). Characterised by increased economic, racial, class and gender disparities, families of African adolescents are influenced tremendously. The African family composition in South Africa consists of three generations, including biological parental figures, biological children and extended relatives (Davids & Roman, 2013). As such, the non-nuclear family structure is favoured in the South African context over the nuclear family structure in the Western culture. As African families experience the pressure and impact of living in a marginalised society with a poor socioeconomic status, the collective identity adopted by Africans is of significance to adolescent exploration of gender identity (Henn, 2005). Diamond and Butterworth (2008) maintain that culture is central to understanding the psychodynamics of gender identity, especially in South Africa where age and seniority are valued in the family structure. Within this framework, adolescents are exposed to cultural group norms, whereby respect, conformity, social control and strict discipline by male family members are valued (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Seekings, 2008). Despite changes in African family structures as opportunities, resources and economic shifts occur, the exploration period for adolescents continue to be affected in two ways. Firstly, adolescents are prematurely separating from significant safe havens as they spend increased time away from their significant others, thereby experiencing greater exposure to peers and community networks during this risky life stage. Secondly, adolescents remain part of a collective identity, modelling the significance of masculine behaviour and expected gender roles in socialisation practices (Bandura, 1986, 2001). Furthermore, adolescents experience the valuation of their extended grandparents, who may be less tolerant of gender identity variance owing to their cemented cultural ideals of femininity and masculinity (Goebel, Dodson, & Hill, 2010). These factors have implications

for the black adolescent in South Africa, who require both the need to belong and remain true to their cultural loyalties and to explore and develop a gender identity that is congruent with their true self in a developing context.

3.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a biopsychosocial perspective on gender was provided. As it pertained to the study, gender identity was the focus of the chapter. Gender identity was, firstly, conceptualised from a biological base and them from a psychological and a social base. After that, the researcher placed emphasis on the acquisition of gender roles as they relate to the development of gender identity. Theories on gender roles and gender identity, from essentialist theories to socialisation theories, were briefly discussed and presented. The significance of the gender continuum theory for this study was highlighted. The 'doing' and 'using' of gender was explained by referring to how adolescents engage in performative acts and can be reflexive during their experimentation of gender roles, activities and personality characteristics associated with their congruent experience of being boys and girls. After that, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' was outlined, and its relevance for the study was described. In concluding, adolescent gender identity development in the South African context was considered.

Chapter 4

Methodology

In this chapter, an overview of the methodology employed in this research study will be provided. The researcher will state the aims and questions, followed by an explanation of the research design and approach. The particulars of the research participants and the sampling procedure used in this research study will be outlined. The researcher will also discuss the method of data collection and describe the data analysis. The ethical considerations relevant to this study will be highlighted, and the trustworthiness of the research study will be considered. In conclusion, a chapter summary will be provided.

4.1 Research Rationale, Aims and Questions

In the previous chapters, various arguments made about the importance of developing an ego identity during adolescence were presented. In realising what constitutes the authentic self, individuals also engage with gender-related aspects, including roles, behaviours and personal characteristics. Gender identity, as one of the identity domains, has been studied by several theorists (Agrawal, 2008; Brannon, 2017; Butler, 2004; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). However, theorists have often focused on the importance of biological and cognitive development pertaining to gender identity development and the implications of dissatisfaction with aspects related to gender identity, such as gender identity dysphoria (Chen, 2016; Johnson & Wassersug, 2010; Kohlberg, 1966). Thus, research has failed to investigate the critical processes that contribute towards overarching ego growth and personality development, namely exploration and commitment. Given that adolescence is a crucial life stage characterised by an increase in experimentation and several transformations in biological, cognitive and social spheres, it provides individuals with the opportunity for critical reflection on personal and sensitive aspects of the self (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Louw & Louw, 2014). Engaging with exploration processes during adolescence not only allows individuals to differentiate themselves from significant others in their environment but may also facilitate the development of a steadfast gender identity during emerging adulthood. This is particularly relevant for individuals from diverse

historical, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, such as those in South Africa (Beyers & Cok, 2008). Given that the colonialist and apartheid era caused several divides in society, including those related to labour relations and power hierarchy, the dynamics of gender were also largely influenced. In black African cultures, additional factors contribute to the complexity of gender relations, including the valuation of a masculine ideology, age and seniority (Morrell et al., 2012). Given that the male ideology includes core characteristics of the hegemonic form of masculinity that Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe, it is useful to apply this concept to adolescents from strong cultural backgrounds who are exploring themselves in a society governed by increasingly Westernised values.

In light of the research gap on adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration, the aim of this study was to explore and describe black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration from a hegemonic masculinity perspective.

The following two research questions were investigated: What are black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration? Are there gender-specific nuances regarding experiences of gender identity exploration?

4.2 Research Approach and Design

This study was qualitative in nature and was conducted from a social constructivist paradigm. An exploratory and descriptive research design was utilised. In the following section, the essence of these will be discussed. The researcher will provide the strengths and limitations of this research approach and design, and state the reasons and relevance for choosing these for this particular research study.

The theoretical paradigm that reflects postmodern ontology is social constructivism (Sarantakos, 2005). From this perspective, it is assumed that more than one reality exists, thereby rejecting the notion that single accounts of reality exist. Social constructivists claim that individuals interpret and perceive their subjective reality as it emerges from interaction with the social and cultural environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The inclusion of, and emphasis on, multiple realities make social constructivism theoretically relevant for this study. The paradigm is suitable for this study

as it concurs with arguments that personal stories are marginalised or subjugated in favour of dominant belief systems (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). In this study, black adolescents were in the position to describe their experiences of exploration as they voyaged through their adolescent developmental trajectory. Of importance was how the adolescents experience their exploration and not whether their reports reflect accurate accounts of reality.

The research approach employed in this study was qualitative in nature. The aim of conducting qualitative research is to explore and describe phenomena within their naturalistic context (Bryman, 2015) with the intention of developing an understanding of emotions, behaviours and meanings imparted by the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Yin, 2009). Before 1979, qualitative research approaches were criticised for their lacking objective, positivistic and rational underpinnings (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016). Qualitative research was described as an unscientific method relying on inductive reasoning skills to explain human behaviour. Following 1979, the use of the emerging qualitative approach highlighted the way in which complexity, interdependence, a mutual causality of phenomena, and the possibility of diverse interpretations on reality could be documented (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005). This view is strengthened by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), who maintain that all scientific theories are only approximations of the true nature of reality and each theory is valid for a certain range of phenomena. Against this background, the qualitative approach emerged as a means to not merely refute or verify theory but also sensitively develop and generate it.

The strengths of using a qualitative approach are that researchers can collect descriptive data by utilising language and discourse as a means of sensitively recording human experience that is value-laden, context-sensitive and subject-centred (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The idiographic nature of the qualitative approach allows the researcher an in-depth understanding of the uniquely constructed realities as it privileges the lived experiences of the insider by providing a detailed picture of the participants' experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The inseparable nature of the enquirer and the inquired into is highlighted by using this approach and should be viewed as such (Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2013). The limitations of a qualitative approach are that findings cannot be extended to a wider population because the findings are not tested to discover whether they are statistically

significant or by chance (Garg, 2018). Furthermore, the use of small samples and the subjective nature of the enquiry are criticised (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research is regarded as being time-consuming and expensive. By using the qualitative research approach, there is also an increased risk of researcher bias. In addition, the relatively unstructured nature of the data collection methods requires that researchers are competently skilled to conduct the research (Maree, 2007). The researcher acknowledged the limitations of this approach for the study and could counter some of these by considering the trustworthiness of the research study. A qualitative research approach was relevant for this study because the emphasis was on exploring and describing experiences of adolescent exploration. In this way, the researcher could enter into dialogue with adolescents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subjective exploration of gender identity and roles during the particularly sensitive life stage of adolescence.

In this study, an exploratory and descriptive design was utilised. The aim of conducting exploratory research is to explore novel subjects about which there are high levels of uncertainty, without offering conclusive solutions to existing phenomena (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Neuman, 2009). As the exploration of a new topic of interest quenches the curiosity of the researcher, the feasibility of a future study can also be assessed (Babbie, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The advantage of conducting exploratory research is that its flexible nature facilitates the discovery of initial insights, but the disadvantage thereof is that it generally requires secondary research and its generalisability is questioned (Creswell, 2013). In this study, exploratory research was relevant to explore the narratives of the black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration prior to describing their experiences. More particularly, exploring what the adolescents deemed to be gender-appropriate behaviour was prioritised.

Descriptive research is used to describe social systems, relationships or social events without manipulation of the variables (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It involves observing and describing the behaviour of individuals without exerting an influence on them in their naturalistic setting. The advantage of conducting descriptive research is that the participants are observed in a typical and unchanged environment that fosters comfort and ease (Babbie, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). However, a disadvantage of using descriptive research is that the participants may not behave in their

usual manner when they are aware of being observed. In this study, the use of descriptive research is relevant as it describes what adolescents' exploration of gender identity and roles are, and highlights whether there are gender-specific nuances regarding their experiences of gender identity exploration.

4.3 Research Participants and Sampling Procedures

In the following section, the research participants and sampling procedure will be described. The strengths and limitations of the sampling procedure will be explained and the relevance of this procedure for this study will be stated. In concluding, the composition of the final sample will be provided.

In this study, the term 'black adolescent' refers to the African ethnicity and racial classification to which adolescents belong. The population group of interest consisted of male and female black adolescents from the Mangaung area in the Free State Province in central South Africa. This neglected area is characterised by the remnants of the apartheid regime, resulting in poor socioeconomic conditions experienced by the black community residing there. The learners of the secondary school are likely to experience the detrimental effects of living in a marginal society, which has an impact on the development of their physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being (Lam, Ardington, & Leibbrandt, 2011). As such, the black learners are unlikely to be provided with resourceful opportunities that offer them a shift from their underprivileged position. Therefore, the learners of this school represent the nature of the typical communities in the Mangaung area.

Adolescence is defined as the life stage between the ages of 12 and 18, during which adolescents transition through puberty to early adulthood in order to form a coherent identity (Erikson, 1968). As an identity crisis forms part of the core developmental challenges associated with this life stage, greater exploration of roles, behaviours and activities is expected from adolescents (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Increasing plurality of appropriate cultural values, interests, intentions and norms, while remaining structurally embedded in the broader collectivistic context, makes identity formation for the black adolescent a particularly challenging period (Lemoyne & Buchanan, 2011). In

this study, the experimental nature of the adolescent life stage was significant to the researcher as the exploration of gender identity and gender roles spearheaded the aims of the research study.

In order to select the participants from the secondary school in Mangaung for the study, a non-probability sampling method, called 'purposive sampling', was employed (Maree, 2007). Non-probability sampling can be defined as a sampling procedure in which the probability of selecting a member from the population is unknown (Bryman, 2015; Springer, 2010). Purposive sampling is a non-probability method of sampling that is used to deliberately select the participants based on their ability to provide relevant data that will answer the research questions being posed (Creswell, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005).

The strengths of using a purposive sampling method include the identification and selection of participants who can provide articulate and reflective data that are rich, expressive and meaningful in nature (Maree, 2007). This allows the researcher to exercise personal agency in selecting participants who are willing to provide subjective data by virtue of knowledge or experience (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The limitation of using this sampling method is that the representativeness of the sample is compromised and concerns about researcher bias are raised (Daniel, 2011). Furthermore, it was considered a disadvantage that the participants were selected based on the awareness that they had had subjective experiences that the researcher was interested in and thus might be cautious to share their sensitive and personal narratives (cf. Springer, 2010). The purposive sampling method was relevant for this study as the learners from the identified high school in Mangaung were selected based on their expected subjective experiences of gender identity exploration.

When the research proceeded, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the life orientation teacher of the high school in Mangaung. During this meeting, the broad topic of identity was discussed with the teacher before explaining the refined aims of the study, particularly the exploration of gender identity. This accompanied a discussion surrounding the type of information that was needed to conduct the focus groups and technicalities related to focus group quantities, sizes and compositions. The researcher entered the recommended classrooms and discussed the nature of the research and what it entailed with the learners. This allowed the participants to be mindful of the type

of information the researcher was prioritising and to decide informatively whether they were interested in voluntarily participating in the research study.

The inclusion criteria for participating in this study were being an adolescent, which refers to an individual between the ages of 12 and 18, and from African ethnicity. The participants had to show interest in sharing their subjective experiences of identity exploration after being well informed about the nature of the study. The participants had to be fluent in English in order to facilitate meaningful discussions within the group context. The exclusion criteria for participating in the study were being in a developmental stage other than adolescence or school learners above 18 years old. Adolescents that were from ethnic groups other than African were also excluded from the study.

The composition of the final sample included four focus groups, which amount to 40 participants. The biographic details of the final sample are summarised in Table 2 (see Appendix B for more information).

Table 2

Biographic information

Characte-ristic	Participant information	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4	Total Sample	Percentage
	N	10	10	9	11	40	100
Age	13	4	0	0	0	4	10
	14	2	4	0	0	6	15
	15	4	5	0	0	9	22.5
	16	0	1	3	2	6	15
	17	0	0	5	8	13	32.5
	18	0	0	1	1	2	5
Gender	Male	0	10	0	11	21	52.5
	Female	10	0	9	0	19	47.5
Home Language	English	0	0	0	1	1	2.5
	Afrikaans	0	0	0	1	1	2.5
	Sesotho	8	9	4	5	26	65
	isiXhosa	2	0	2	0	4	10
	Setswana	0	0	3	4	7	17.5
	Sepedi	0	1	0	0	1	2.5

In this study, the participants were between the ages of 13 and 18. The majority of the participants were 17 years old. This implies that 32.5% of the participants fell in the late adolescent period, followed by 22.5% of the participants being 15 years old. Of the 40 participants, relatively equal numbers were accounted for by the male participants (52.5%) and the female participants (47.5%). Sesotho was the preferred language among the participants, with 65% of the participants reporting it to be their home language.

4.4 Procedures of Data Collection

In this study, the data were collected by means of semi-structured focus groups. In the following section, the essence of collecting data from focus groups will be discussed. The strengths and limitations will be provided and the reasons for employing this procedure in this study will be highlighted.

Focus group discussions are described as a method of data collection characterised by a group discussion that consists of carefully selected participants who can offer subjective and personal accounts of the topic of interest (Sarantakos, 2005). By using focus group discussions, a forum is provided for significant and core experiences to be presented as spontaneous expressions within a controlled, yet naturalistic environment (Lam et al., 2011; Maree, 2007). The essence of focus groups is a central tenet of the constructivist theoretical paradigm valued in this study (Bryman, 2015). Focus group sizes are generally limited to approximately 10 research participants, as this size can generate a reasonable discussion while allowing meaningful contact between the participants without the contact becoming distant and impersonal as has been observed in larger focus groups (Brannen, 2005). Semi-structured interviewing was conducted in this study as the flexibility thereof allowed the researcher to be cognisant of themes that naturally emerged (Creswell, 2013; Hammarberg et al., 2016).

A strength of using focus group discussions is that they are useful in obtaining rich descriptions of the participants' experiences as they generate a dynamic range of responses in which the researcher can identify nuances and expand upon in a naturalistic context (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Patton, 2002). A limitation of using focus group discussions is that they provide the opportunity for the participants to steer the discussion (Maree, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005). Thus, researchers should be cautious when conducting a focus group discussion and ensure that the participants are not offered too much agency in the proceedings as this might dilute the topic of interest. Furthermore, the researcher should moderate the climate of the group to ensure that both dominating and more reserved participants are offered the opportunity to share experiences (Babbie, 2007; Bryman, 2015; Cherry, 2000).

In this study, small sample focus groups were relevant because it afforded the researcher the opportunity to form homogenous groups that were based on gender. Homogeneity was valuable in this study considering the sensitive developmental ages of the adolescents and to foster a comfortable setting for the adolescents to express vulnerable personal material (Flick, Von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). The researcher regarded homogeneity to be suitable for the study because the adolescents were likely to offer their felt experiences on gender identity exploration should the risk of judgement and vulnerability be minimised. The participants were divided into four focus groups – two focus groups consisting of male adolescents and two focus groups consisting of female adolescents.

The focus group discussions were conducted in English, which is the medium of instruction at the secondary school and not the participants' home language. In order to conduct the focus group discussions, the following steps were followed. Prior to the focus group discussions, the researcher introduced herself and provided a background to the research study. The topic of the research was provided and the aims of the research were stated. The researcher explained what a focus group was and highlighted rules pertaining to focus group discussions, such as respect and talking one at a time. The duration of the focus group discussion was provided and a short time was offered for questions. After that, the researcher discussed the nature of informed consent and the participants completed the informed consent form (see Appendix A) and a biographic questionnaire.

The focus group discussions proceeded by starting with a general overview of identity and identity development, followed by questions on gender identity specificities. When the participants were well engaged and at ease within the group context, the personal narratives and subjective experiences regarding the topic were encouraged as far as the participants were willing to discuss these. The researcher responded sensitively to the opinions offered, mirroring their value and contribution. In this way, the semi-structured interview questions were prioritised as they afforded flexibility in obtaining meaningful and descriptive data without rigid counterparts. The interviewing approach adopted by the researcher is noted in the following three semi-structured questions: *What do you know about identity development? What are the differences between male and female gender identity? How did you come to express your identity as a male or female person?* At the end of each session, the participants were thanked for their contributions to the focus group discussions and the

researcher ensured that the participants had not been negatively affected by the focus group discussion content or proceedings. The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis (See Appendix F).

4.5 Data Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data obtained from the focus group discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By using thematic analysis, researchers aim to examine the participants' meaning-making processes of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, understandings, values and feelings in an attempt to approximate their construction of that phenomenon (Bryman, 2015). This aim is fulfilled by the inductive analysis of data employed by qualitative researchers. In this way, findings can emerge from the pertinent themes inherent in the dataset (Merriam, 2009; Sarantakos, 2005). In the following section, thematic analysis will be described and the strengths and limitations thereof will be provided. After that, the relevance of using thematic analysis for this research study will be discussed.

Thematic analysis is described as a qualitative data analysis technique that identifies, analyses and reports patterns that emerge from the transcribed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By interpreting the detail dataset, the socially constructed perceptions, attitudes and subjective experiences of the participants were highlighted (Bryman, 2015). The strengths of using thematic analysis are that it is flexible in nature and has the potential to draw attention to nuances in datasets, which makes psychological interpretations of the data promising (Sarantakos, 2005). However, the limitations of using thematic analysis are that the development of themes can be characterised by inconsistencies owing to its flexible nature. In this study, the flexible nature of thematic analysis allowed the researcher to employ a hybrid approach consisting of both inductive and deductive methodologies. This approach entails that thematic codes emerge directly from the dataset (inductive) in conjunction with using a theoretical framework to drive the coding process (deductive) (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In this study, a hybrid approach is in keeping with the social constructivist

paradigms of the study as it allowed the researcher to prioritise the participants' voices while integrating relevant theoretical underpinnings.

Thematic analysis is conducted in six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase 1, familiarisation with the datasets takes place with researchers reading and re-reading the data in search of patterns and meaning. Being immersed in the dataset allows researchers to generate several ideas that assist with the coding stage of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase 2, the coding process is initiated by categorising the data into groups of emerging patterns, and codes are formed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase 3, researchers search for themes by transforming various codes from the previous phase into sub-themes and main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase 4, the themes are reviewed and refined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase 5, the nature of the themes are described and the parts of the data that capture the themes are highlighted, thereby avoiding overlapping between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase 6, the analysed themes are used to produce a detailed report that reflects the accurate narratives of the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In this study, the data were collected by the researcher. Upon completion of each focus group, personal notes were made in order to track the thought process and ideas of the researcher as they emerged. This was used to facilitate the process of initial coding of the dataset. During the initial phase of analysis, the data was read on multiple occasions in order to become acquainted with the content of the dataset. As relationships were noted in the dataset, the researcher made use of a mind map in order to organise the relationships into codes (see Appendix C). When the codes were further refined and accordingly named as themes and sub-themes, the researcher was able to identify meaningful differences between the themes while preserving the essence of the dataset. The themes that emerged from the dataset will be presented in the following chapter in the results section.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethically sound research practices become complex when researchers are challenged by the intricacies deriving from their pursuits for knowledge versus the rights of their participants (Allan,

2011). As such, the ethical guidelines in this study served as protection against unethical practice. In the following section, the ethical considerations will be discussed as they pertained to the well-being, dignity and respect of the research participants.

In order to conduct this study, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities (see Appendix D) and authorisation from the Free State Department of Education and the Research Committee of the Department of Psychology. In order to initiate data collection, informed consent was obtained from the principal of the secondary school in Mangaung. After having obtained these, the researcher discussed the aims of the research study, the nature of focus group discussions and procedural arrangements with the life orientation teacher who gave permission to initiate the focus group discussions upon arrival at the school.

In social research, it is pertinent to recognise the participants as autonomous beings in the research process (Mertens, 2005). By this, the researcher refers to the participants' exercise of free will in deciding to participate in research proceedings. In this study, the researcher explained to the participants that participation was voluntary. The researcher ensured that the participants understood that they could withdraw from the study without consequences and that no form of compensation for participation would be awarded. After that, the essence of focus groups was explained and interview rules and time durations were stipulated. The researcher emphasised that a copy of the research findings would be made available to the school principal following the completion of the study. Only the participants involved in the study would have access to view this copy.

The anonymity and the privacy of the participants were established in this study by assuring the participants that their personal identities would not be disclosed at any point during the research process. As such, the researcher was not able to link the participant responses with biographic details. This was maintained following the collection of data in that the recordings were securely stored in a protected manner. The identities of the participants could thus not be revealed in the transcriptions or findings of the study.

The researcher took into account the sensitive life stage of adolescence and the topic of interest when she considered the way in which the content might influence the psychological and emotional health of the participants. For this reason, caution was exercised while conducting the focus

group discussions, and provision was made for referral to psychological services if the need arose. In this manner, the chances of psychological harm of the participants were minimised as their interests were acknowledged and prioritised.

In conducting social research that is fair and just, the participants are unlikely to experience the process as detrimental and unwarranted (Allan, 2011). In this study, the principles of justice and fairness were implemented by ensuring that academic activities and learning opportunities in the classroom were not forfeited by participating in the focus group discussions. The researcher remained in close contact with the life orientation teacher to plan timeslots for the discussions that would not disturb the academic timetable.

In this study, the researcher monitored her competence by adopting a professional, yet warm approach to enquiry. She engaged in self-monitoring to gain increased awareness of her researcher bias and personal processes while conducting the research. Furthermore, the researcher had adequate theoretical knowledge of the research topic and methodological skills required to conduct the research, resulting in a sound ethical practice employed in the study.

4.7   Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the qualitative concept used to ensure that research is sound and of high quality (Morrow, 2005; Willig, 2008). It entails the amount of trust that can be attributed to the research process and its findings (Merriam, 2009). Trustworthiness was established by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (cf. Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Credibility refers to when a researcher's findings depict a truthful representation of the phenomenon being studied (Golafshani, 2003; Krefting, 1991, Shenton, 2004). In this way, the findings of the study are accurate interpretations of the data gathered. Member checking, peer debriefing and persistent observation are some methods that can be used to achieve credibility (Anney, 2014). In this study, the researcher implemented the process of triangulation, by drawing up a comparison of the findings found between the four focus groups and highlighting overlapping themes and sub-themes. This ensured that the findings across four focus groups corresponded truthfully with

the participants' realities. Furthermore, credibility was facilitated by the researcher's encouragement of the participants to offer honest reflections and perceptions that reflect their felt experiences.

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalised to other groups and contexts (Golafshani, 2003). This may happen when researchers experience contextual similarities and attempt to apply the findings of another study to their own. For this to be possible, rich descriptions are required as protocols to assist others with the transferability of findings to other contexts (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Kagee, 2013). In this study, the researcher provided a detailed account of the participants' biographic information and socioeconomic context. This would facilitate others to discern subjectively whether the research findings could be transferred to other contexts reflecting similar backgrounds and demographics.

Dependability is defined as the consistency of research findings (Shenton, 2004). It refers to whether the research can be replicated and relies heavily on accurate descriptions of the research process. In this study, the researcher provided extensive descriptions of the research methodology as it pertained to sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher adopted an auditing approach to ensure that records of the notes and the transcripts of the focus group discussions were stored.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research findings derive solely from the participants and are not influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004). It entails that the researcher should not allow personal values and theoretical inclinations to manifest in such a way that these influence the conducting and findings of the research (Bless et al., 2013). In this study, the transcribed data and direct quotations were included in order to ensure that the research findings were reasonable and appropriately drawn inferences that did not reflect the researcher's propositions. In addition, the use of a reflexive journal emphasising the researcher's narrative of the personal experiences, biases and influences on the research process was prioritised. A summarised version of the researcher's reflections will be provided (see Appendix E).

4.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, an overview of the methodology employed in this research study was provided. The rationale, aims and research questions relevant to exploring black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration were stated. The social constructivist paradigm of the research study was demonstrated by explaining the qualitative approach and exploratory and descriptive designs used in the study. Black adolescent high school learners of the secondary school in Mangaung were selected as participants in the study by means of purposive sampling. In order to gain meaningful descriptions of their subjective experiences, the data collection method used in the study was focus group discussions. In this chapter, the researcher explained how these focus group discussions had been conducted. The hybrid approach to thematic analysis was explained and the ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness adhered to in this study were provided.

Chapter 5

Research Results

In this chapter, the results of the research study will be presented. Following the completion of a hybrid approach to thematic analysis, the researcher captured the black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration by highlighting four main themes, each comprising sub-themes. In the following section, the themes and sub-themes identified will be presented in Table 3. After that, the themes and sub-themes will be described in a narrative format and illustrated by verbatim quotations (italicised) from the participants, as recorded during the focus group discussions. By including the participants' voices, personal accounts and descriptions of their unique experiences and perspectives will be included.

The researcher made some minor changes to assist with the flow of reading of these quotations. For example, some word repetitions and unimportant hesitations have been eliminated. Dotted lines within brackets (...) will indicate that the participant was talking prior to or after the quotation provided. When a square bracket is provided with a word in it, the researcher is highlighting what a participant meant or is referring to, for example [girls] will be provided if the participant used the word 'they' and referred to girls. Following each quotation, an identifier in brackets *(3.22)* will be used to link the response to the focus group discussions. Given the significance of gender nuance in this research study, the identifier will also be accompanied by the letter 'M' indicating a male participant (e.g. *3.22M*) and 'F' for a female participant (e.g. *3.22F*).

Table 3

Main themes and sub-themes (colour-coded) identified following thematic analysis

Main themes	Sub-themes
Traditional views on what it means to be a boy or girl	• Being a boy is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically masculine • Being a girl is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically feminine
Exploring Who I am: Balancing social context with personal agency	• The role of parental (family) values and culture • The significance of peers and the school context • Personal agency: The role of "me"
Exploring gender identity in a changing environment	• Challenging gender roles results in change • Power relations: Shifting processes
The complexity in exploring gender identity	• Dichotomous perspectives • The significance of what can be seen: Outward aesthetics and biological characteristics • Who I am (being) is related to how I express myself through activities and roles (doing)

5.1 Traditional Views on What it Means to Be a Boy or a Girl

The first main theme that emerged was utilised to describe the participants' accounts of their exploration in terms of what it means to be a boy or a girl. Traditional views and socially appropriate and cultural definitions of what it means to be a boy and girl were demonstrated through the participants' expressions of traditional masculinity and femininity. For the participants in this study, this was significant in exploring their gender identity as a boy or girl. In the following section, the sub-themes that emerged throughout the participants' accounts will be provided. Exploration of gender identity seems to occur with an awareness of what has traditionally been defined as appropriate and acceptable roles and personal characteristics for boys and girls, as evident in the

following two sub-themes: (a) Being a boy is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically masculine; and (b) Being a girl is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically feminine

5.1.1 Being a boy is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically masculine. From the participants' descriptions, it became apparent that being a boy is associated with personality traits and characteristics that appear to be more masculine in nature. Two trends were noted in this section. The first one pertains to certain roles or activities that boys participated in, such as those separate from the home (employment) or physical activities in the home. This was evident from the participants' responses, including the following: *"Like you can even say that the man is your role model because it doesn't mean if you are a girl that your role model has to be a female" (1.20F);* and *"By doing house, yard, garden, paint outside the house" (1.49F).* Furthermore, the participants indicated the importance of boys being leaders and women being followers in the statements *"(...) as boys we have mentality, if boys were to try, also girls will follow" (3.193M)* and *"if boys would start to do things right (...) like start to participate in community centres, also girls will follow. What boys do, they* [girls] *also want to do" (3.195M).* From the above, it became apparent that the roles and activities associated with boys stem from a certain 'mentality' or characteristic way of thinking that may be related to stereotypes or traditional views of what manliness entails.

The statements *"find jobs" (2.70M), "[b]e the head of the house" (2.71M), "(...) like they don't need to go to school to get education, they work for themselves. They use their clever minds to create stuff" (3.150M)* and *"[t]hat's why we have most billionaire guys" (3.155M)* illustrate the importance of several roles and activities associated with being a boy. These include that boys should actively seek formal employment and engage with household activities that are more physical in nature; they should also lead by example in the home and be financially stable, which allows them to assume a providing role in the household.

The second trend was that there seem to be certain personality characteristics that the participants associate with being a boy, such as male leadership, intelligence and aggression. In addition, traits related to being successful, ambitious and dexterous and taking initiative were also

evident. The participants also added descriptors of boys that reflect qualities related to being a manly type of boy, as stated in the following: *"Unresponsible" (1.84F);* *"Uncaring" (1.85F)*; *"They think good about themselves" (3.138M);* and *"Boys get angry and they lose their temper" (2.35M).* In addition, for the participants, being a boy involved engagement with activities that are physical and aggressive in nature, such as the following: *"They like to strike hard with fist, to strike other people" (2.39M); "Boys solve the scenario in different manner than girls do (...) boys will fight about it" (4.36F);* and *"Boys do a lot of sports" (2.43M).*

In addition, the participants referenced that being a boy was also associated with engaging in behaviours that seemed manipulative, derogatory and reckless. These statements were included with an awareness that a *certain* amount of this behaviour is deemed normative during adolescence. Engaging in an interpersonal transaction or activity in order for a boy to get something (physical or intrapsychic) was explicated in the following statement:

> *(...) when you know that your mother is gonna have money, (...) we have to please her.*
>
> *When I am from school, I will tell her today at school it was this and this (...) the day*
>
> *she comes with money. I will be like, I think I need jeans. (3.81M)*

Similarly, the participants reference the significance of pleasing their mother figure while negotiating their pursuits for something physical, as seen in the following statement: *"Sometimes you see dishes here, you need to please your mom when you want your mom to buy you something like tekkies* [shoes]" *(3.77M).* Both the male and the female participants implied that boys can be demeaning and utilise violence to feel good about themselves, as is evident in the following statements: *"(...) When you pass by and going to the toilet or something, boys just tease you"* *(4.127F);* and "*They use violence to get self-esteem" (3.141M).* This draws attention to how boys are perceived to explore their identity in relation to personality traits and roles that appear to be stereotypically masculine. This may emphasise the lacking effeminate traits that variant boys may feel hesitant to explore.

5.1.2 Being a girl is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically feminine. During the focus group discussions, the participants tended to associate various types of

qualities and roles with being a girl. Stereotypical roles were often reinforced as they were described in terms of domesticity and expressiveness, of which both were equated with respect. Evidence of this was noted when a participant clarified that a girl must *"[r]espect herself, you need to stay home (...) make sure that you light the house, make sure that the house is basically clean, (...) that everything is fine in the house before you can go to places"* (1.35F) and *"[b]ring the kids up at home too"* (3.34M).

Additionally, a female participant shared that *"[w]omens and mothers are at home and you will find the fathers are at the mines"* (1.114F). A male participant added to this, but also highlighted the intergenerational and cultural transmission of values to girls by saying that girls should *"[b]e inside the house like cleaning, doing the dishes (...) because like back in the house that is how my mother was taught"* (3.38M). The male participants eagerly reported that *"(...) washing dishes, it is girls' stuff"* (2.58M) and *"[t]hey* [girls] *must wash laundry"* (2.63M).

The participants described that being a girl entails that girls inherently possess certain dispositions or that they adopt character traits that reflect qualities that have come to be defined as feminine. Girls' perceptions that they are associated with this distinctive way of being is reflected in the following statements of female participants: *"Principles describe women"* (4.9F); *"The way you act when you are around people"* (4.24F); and *"It's about how they carry themselves. Like do they go out on a wild behaviour or can they contain themselves"* (4.15F). These statements highlight the behaviour orientation or aspect that is related to their experience of being a girl, especially in the presence of others. Thus, the behaviours, actions and activities in which girls engage are crucial in contributing towards their womanly self-definitions.

From the participants' responses, it became evident that girls are associated with conventional roles and traits that portray nurturance, kindness and sensitivity. The participants illuminated this by reporting that girls are essentially *"[r]esponsible"* (1.66F), *"[c]aring"* (1.69F), *"[r]espectful"* (1.75F), *"[s]upportive"* (4.32F), *"(...) very sensitive people. They only care about the inner person like how you are, on the inside"* (4.14F) and *"[l]oving"* (4.31F). While these traits seem to be inherent in nature, attention is drawn to how they become pronounced when girls engage with certain types of activities or behaviours that elicit these types of traits. Another participant summarised that girls are more verbally inclined (whether this is during any form of interaction or in conflict

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situations), as demonstrated by the following statements: *"Girls will just sit down and talk about it, like talk the truth" (4.36F); "Boys like fighting and all that stuff so girls will just argue about something" (4.81F); "They're talking always" (2.52M);* and *"(...) She likes to impress other people by words" (3.165M).*

Furthermore, the female participants tended to emphasise the importance of beauty, feminine attire and outward appearance in defining themselves as girls. The female participants voiced this by saying: *(...) I'm wearing dress and I don't mind wearing a lesibana* [dress] *" (1.29F);* "*Being a girl is not only how you dress, but how you express yourself to people" (1.33F)*; and *"Beautiful" (1.70F).* A male participant elaborated on this trend and explained that on certain days, learners can come to school in their own clothes. He reported: *"Like when we have to wear 'civvies', like they* [girls] *wanna impress guys by their body" (3.165M).*

In a discussion with the female participants about describing boys, the participants made reference to the more masculine behaviours of girls who are lesbian and related this to girls continuing to have a female identity regardless of their sexual orientation: "*Nowadays, women are lesbians, they take that kind of saying* [mannerisms, behaviours] *from boys, and they say that to another girl" (1.56F),* followed by "*Yes, acting with them as if they were males* [masculine]*" (1.60F)*; and *"Yes they can still be like them* [boys], *but will still remain girls" (1.62F).* The participants did not tend to view different gender-related behaviours from some individuals as a form of challenge. Instead, they viewed these differences in terms of how these contribute towards an essentially core feminine identity. For example, girls who identify themselves as lesbians were viewed as possessing a certain type of behaviour or trait that belongs to boys. While remaining cognisant of the sexual orientation aspect underlying this and possible inadequate insight into gender variance and expression, the participants' voices described a pattern of thinking that reinforces traditional views regarding gender roles and personality characteristics that are traditionally associated with boys and girls respectively. Additionally, it was also implied that these views exist in light of potentially strong links between male and female biological anatomy and gender identity.

Thus, traditional gender roles and characteristics tend to be indirectly preserved and essentially unchanged. In light of this, the participants are inclined to explore who they are as boys or girls with relatively fixed perceptions regarding traditional gender roles and characteristics.

5.2   Exploring Who I am: Balancing Social Context with Personal Agency

The second theme that emerged from the focus group discussions illustrated that the participants attributed significance to their environment during their exploration. From the discussion, the participants clarified that exploring who they are, occurred in relation to others. In the following section, the role of the environment is explained by focusing on the following sub-themes: (a) The role of parental (family) values and culture; (b) The significance of peers and the school context; and (c) Personal agency: The role of 'Me'.

5.2.1 The role of parental (family) values and culture. From the discussion, it became evident that the way in which the participants experience who they are as boys or girls lies in their relationship with others in their environment. Significant others were predominantly family members and community members. The indirect role of familial values and culture on the participants' experiences of exploring themselves as boys and girls was apparent too. A female participant provided an overall impression of this sub-theme by referring to the following: "*You can see how they interact with people or how they act in the community, they have to greet the elders and teachers*" *(4.123F).* In the following section, attention will be drawn to the role of the family or parental influence on the participants' exploration of their gender identity.

The importance of respecting older female figures in black culture seemed to be equated with the automatic transmission of this value (respect) to a potential spouse or intimate partner, as evident in a female participant's response: *"I will go for someone who has respect for looking after his family, who respect his mom will automatically respect you" (4.120F).* Thus, she highlights that boys are respectful if they treat their mother with respect and care for their family. In a discussion about gender roles and activities that contribute towards a gender identity, a participant reported*: "My family forces*

me to do that kind of stuff [chores]*" (2.118M)* and *"My mom forces me to wash the dishes (...) when you keep on washing them, it becomes an experience so you won't have a problem because it's your mother, so you do it" (3.73M).* These responses illuminate the role of parents or authority figures in shaping gender roles that contribute to their experience of themselves as boys or girls.

Learning to be a boy who engages in household chores was attributed by the male participants to *"[a] lot of family" (2.148M)* and *"[b]ecause men know many people" (2.147M).* This highlighted that these two male participants were strongly influenced by their collective orientation. Another male participant stressed that maternal figures pass values to their daughters who internalise these values, whereas paternal figures do so for boys. He described this as follows:

> *She* [sister] *was told that she has to be inside the house, like cleaning, doing the dishes (...) because like back in the house, that is how my mother was taught. She was like, she must wash the dishes. She was like passing the same experience on her daughter. Like my father would share about his life, so I should expect such things. We would share secrets and that secret must stay between us. (3.38M)*

In this statement, the participant referred to his sister being "*told*" to adopt certain roles and do specific chores. Furthermore, he perceived the transmission of values as an "*experience*" for girls. This is in stark contrast to when he referred to his father who would "*share*" things about his life, which the participant learns from. In addition, the participant referenced secrecy, which might lend the reader to associate this with undermining traits; however, this is not an established fact. In addition, the participant also pointed out that relationships with maternal and paternal figures were sacred and shaped their continuity of being rather than contributed towards their identity formation. A participant explained that that engrained way of being was often expressed by what boys and girls were taught to do through their culture. As such, being a boy is associated with 'being' a certain way, followed by 'doing' certain things, as is made evident by his statement:

> *As part of our culture, we were taught that there is a boy and then there is a girl, and what it is to be a boy. We were told things like a man should play soccer, a man should treat a lady like this (...) (3.10M)*

This participant summarised that (a) culture influences what the composition of masculine and feminine identity is, and (b) being a boy or girl is framed in relation to what boys and girls do.

5.2.2   The significance of peers and the school context. Apart from the role of parental values and culture, the role of social in-groups and peers, as well as the school context, was noted. Being a boy was associated with wearing clothes that exemplify being popular or accepted. The male participants tended to value being 'cool' when it was associated with a sense of similarity with peers, competition or when it could be used in a transaction to receive. This was reflected in the participants' statements: *"Stylish guy clothes" (3.83M); "Cool clothes like your friends" (3.86M); "The thing is, there is competition" (3.87M);* and *"Everyone wants to do things to impress others, us blacks especially (...) maybe this one wants to have you then we* [boys] *must be on top like the best" (3.92M).* These participants highlight possible in-group norms within their social groups. A male participant shared his experience of girls borrowing clothes that are comparable from their friends in order to look pretty. This is echoed in the following statement: *"I think some girls feel pressure that some of her friends bought a new jean and top (...) they can even go to another girl to borrow some shirt so that they can look like pretty girl" (3.117M).* While this participant might demonstrate the importance that beauty plays in defining the self, he also pointed out the pertinent role of context in relation to the socioeconomic status of the participants he referred to, and the way in which this might hamper exploration of the self as a boy or girl. Additionally, exploring the self as a boy or girl was described by a female participant to be influenced by a very instinctual and primitive act, such as eating. She illustrated that being a girl was associated with manners and feminine forms of eating, as opposed to her experience of boys, as reflected in the school context: *"During break time, how boys eat and how girls eat. You get to see that girls are a bit more, you know...like ladyish, guys just gulp it in, they just eat" (4.77F).*

5.2.3   Personal agency: The role of 'Me'. It was noted that the participants described their exploration of gender roles and personality traits in terms of personal striving, self-reliance and independence. This was evident in the statements:

Like not looking up to some people you know. They [women] should look at

themselves and respect themselves. (4.47F)

Nowadays you work, like doing things that you were not supposed to do from your

culture (...) if we do the same things that we are doing now, it will helps us for when

we are having our own houses so that we may clean our own houses and do the

responsibilities like boys. (3.60M)

In addition, a female participant reported that *"if the husband leaves her, she can have money to support herself and the children" (1.96F).* Of relevance was that while exercising personal agency in defining who they are, the participants seemed to be shifting away from dependence upon the opposite gender (and collective) in shaping who they are. For example, a male participant stated:

Women are now working and back in the days, no, if we do the same things that they

are doing now, it will helps us for when we are having our own houses so that we may

clean our own houses and do the responsibilities like boys. (3.60M)

Yet, when the participants seemed to exercise agency, they had the tendency to refer to the *other,* which is significant in light of their contextual background. This was evident from a female participant's response: *"Because it seems now like they* [girls] *are just free and women get to do whatever they want, you know, and they carry themselves much like boys, you know" (4.17F).* Characteristics associated with Westernised culture also echoed from the participants' responses. Their self-descriptions tended to include a reference to independence, self-respect, future provision, financial stability and personal competence, as evident in the following: *"They* [girls] *should look at themselves and respect themselves" (4.47F); "You must use your instinct to become a boy" (2.81M)*; and *"In some instances, women look up to men for support, like financially, which is wrong" (4.49F).* A statement like this reveals that this participant relied less on a significant other [or collective] for financial support, which might involve greater independence and results in a form of unconventionality that prevails in gender identity relations. However, the participant also implied that, in some contexts, girls still do tend to "*look up to men*", which implies that girls may assume a possibly submissive position during their exploration of gender identity, which can have implications for them to remain agentic individuals in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, for the participants in

this study, their exploration of gender identity occurred when they engaged with the continuous spring between the 'other' (culture, family, significant others, peers and institutions) and themselves (agency).

5.3 Exploring Gender Identity in a Changing Environment

The third theme was used to demonstrate that the participants were exploring their gender identity in a changing environment. From the focus group discussion, it became evident that time has influenced the way in which adolescents explore who they are as gendered beings. As gender identity develops when the participants internalise or defy socially appropriate gender roles, the participants tended to place much emphasis on exploring diverse gender roles as a result of increasing transformation in society. In the following section, the sub-themes that transpired throughout the participants' accounts will be presented. Exploration of gender identity within a changing environment was evident in the following two sub-themes: (a) Challenging gender roles results in change; and (b) Power relations: Shifting processes.

5.3.1   Challenging gender roles results in change. From the participants' accounts, it appeared as if there was a shared experience that gender roles are changing and have somewhat changed. It seemed that the participants were aware of which gender roles and characteristics were deemed appropriate by society for boys and girls. With this awareness, the participants' revealed that they do attempt to challenge existing traditions and heteronormativity in their social world. This was applicable to both boys and girls and was evident in the statements*: "We can still be mums but it doesn't mean if you are a mother you have to stay at home and take care of the kids while the father works. You can also work" (1.91F)*; and *"Nowadays you work, like doing things that you were not supposed to do from your culture (...) like women are now working and back in the days, no" (3.60M).* Of importance to both the boys and the girls appeared to be the transformation of gender roles in relation to the working force and the influence thereof on parenthood, particularly motherhood.

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The participants indicated that previously, women were exclusively responsible for child-rearing and household or domestic activities, but these responsibilities do not currently appear to be central for women following their entry into the workforce. Acknowledgement of change in this regard is evident by a participant who stated*:*

> *I think that women should not stay at home. Whereas then maybe if you are married, and you have kids, then your husband says that you should stay at home and do the work, that shouldn't work these days. (1.96F)*

Similar experiences were shared by other participants: *"It's not the matter of women must look after the babies always. Even the father can look after the babies and do* [nappy] *changes" (4.106F)*; and *"If you are a businesswoman, you hire someone to look after your baby in the home" (2.131M).* In the following statements, a female participant revealed her desire to relinquish tasks and roles commonly associated with womanhood to male persons: *"Like, it's not always like that, sometimes, things that women are supposed to do, men can do, like looking after the baby" (4.103F).* Another participant echoed the way in which she challenged typical views of feminine dress code by stating: *"I can wear pants and still be a girl" (1.33F).* With the statement *"[a]fter they* [girls] *have eaten they just take the plate to the bucket, (…), boys just leave them there, just for girls to come and pick them up, but I won't" (4.85F),* a participant explained that boys have certain expectations of girls tidying up after them, but the female participants were showing less willingness to do so than in the past.

For the male participants, exploring their gender identity during adolescence was also associated with acknowledging that they are engaging in activities and roles that are generally related to domestic chores or household responsibilities. This was seen in the following responses: *"(...) Because now I can wash my washing" (3.50M)*; *"I can clean the house" (3.52M)*; *"Yes, I do shopping" (3.54M);* and *"Let me say, if I see there is dishes, I do it because I want to" (3.63M).* It was noted that there seemed to be a greater willingness among the male participants to perform activities that had previously been associated with women.

Some male participants described girls in terms of their intellectual capacity. On these occasions, this was often referenced in an unfavourable way, which might be related to the experience

that this was incongruent with traditional views of what it meant to be a girl. During their exploration of their gender identity, the boys seemed to be aware that female entry into the education system and formal employment sector has had a great impact on their acquisition of knowledge production, as reported in the following statements: *"Boys cannot be able to think faster than girls" (2.28M)*; *"Girls think too many faster than boys" (2.29M)*; and *"Sometimes the women are smart brains and bright" (2.140M).* In light of this, the male participants explained that a sense of superiority has surfaced with regard to this, as was evident in the following male participants' responses: *"I think girls are better than us nowadays" (3.180M)*; *"They always look books and (...) that is why they succeed" (3.182M)*; *"I think girls are better than us because (...) they are always studying" (3.192M)*; and *"They think they going to succeed more than guys" (3.178M)*. These responses stress that the boys might be challenged by these traits that are characterising girls. Their responses were charged with ambivalence that ranged from the male participants expressing or perceiving that *"girls think they are (...)"* to boys owning their statement "*that they* [girls] *are (...)".*

During the discussions, it also became evident that an acknowledgement of changes in gender roles and activities tend to have spearheaded changes in personal traits and characteristics too. The female participants described this by saying:

> *(...) That shouldn't work these days, like a woman should be independent on herself and make sure she works hard (...) (1.96F)*
>
> *In the modern world, the world that we are living in now, women don't carry themselves the way that they used to (...) they are just free and women get to do whatever they want you know and they carry themselves much like boys. (4.17F)*

In addition, a participant recounted that women should be focused on *"[b]uilding an empire, being independent" (4.47F)*.

It was noted that changes in female gender roles, activities or personality traits were often framed with reference to boys (being a boy, masculine traits and maleness). Thus, women are (now) because others (they, men) were (then). A female participant provided evidence of this in the statement:

(...) In any family, there could be just one boy and no girl. Like a boy can do both

chores and helping the family whereby he is the only son in the house. I do think like

things are a bit more equal. (4.62F)

This statement explains the way in which this participant viewed changing gender roles. With particular reference to equality in this statement, the participant acknowledged changing gender roles and characteristics in light of female absence, rather than change that occurs in the existence and presence of females. This may question the integrity of acknowledging changing gender roles for the participants.

5.3.2   Power relations: Shifting processes. For the participants in this study, the experimentation with traditional or unconventional gender roles during the exploration of gender identity was also associated with modifications in power dynamics. Despite traditional depictions of manliness and womanliness, the male participants in this study clearly expressed their positions as one of power and dominance alongside the female participants who are assuming greater positions of power arising from societal transformation. While this has been referred to as traditional views on what it means to be boys and girls, it highlights that certain characteristics associated with masculine and feminine identity relate to positions of inferiority and superiority. This was demonstrated by the male participants' responses indicating their conformity to behaviours and perceptions related to the valuation of dominance and patriarchal ideals. The participants' described that "(...) *the man is above her" (2.138M),* "*[b]ecause men have a mentality that because we have power. You can tell them what to do" (3.22M)* and *"[m]en are hard workers and like to be in charge" (2.153M).* The internalisation of this position assumed by boys seems to be associated with a position that is worthy of respect. This is reinforced by the male participants' references to their functioning in the community, peer pressure and gangsterism, all of which can be associated with some of the masculine traits mentioned previously, including manipulation, influence, power, violence and competition. A participant recited that *"[g]uys are impressed by being respected" (3.186M).* Another participant specified that *"[g]uys are more impressed by bad group" (3.187M).* The participants claimed that these characteristics also occurred in the workplace and the participants associated these (dominance, power and success) with monetary success, as evidenced by *"[b]usinessman is at the top" (2.144M)* and reinforced by an

agreeing participant in the group who stated: *"Like Motsepi, Patrice Motsepi" (2.145M).* A participant explicated that *"(…) there will be trouble" (2.158M)* if girls were to establish some sort of dominance or leadership positions. Reasons provided by a male participant included that *"[t]hey* [girls] *are lazy easily and can't be* [in leadership, powerful employment positions]*" (2.159M).* Perceived inadequacy and difficulties related to girls assuming powerful positions or dominating traits were themes that the male participants reflected on in these responses. This may be related to the challenges experienced by boys as they explore who they are in relation to a masculine identity that is governed by a form of male control and authority.

In this study, the responses from the female participants' indicated that being powerful individuals in society was also reciprocal. It seemed as if the female participants were becoming aware of themselves as strong-willed and capable individuals in society. They explained that *"[g]irls advise each other on certain stuff now" (1.18F),* and *"[w]hereas then maybe if you are married, and you have kids, then your husband says that you should stay at home and do the work. That shouldn't work these days" (1.96F).* From the responses, it seemed that the participants were of the opinion that societal transformations regarding the significance of women currently place women in a more powerful position than in the past. By particularly referring to the power of women when it involves claims regarding sexual abuse, a male participant clarified that protection services are likely to believe a girl rather than believing a boy. The participant insinuated that girls use their verbal abilities to undermine men and create lies of abuse, thereby exercising female control through the use of words. This was evident in the following response:

> *I think boys are better because sometimes a lot of girls can create lies (…) like they say they are raped (…) like they are not really raped, they create lies and when they go to the police station, the police just believe them because it is a girl. But when a man comes, they say he or she was forced to do sex, they won't believe him. They just laugh at him. (3.201M)*

This point also shows the way in which society perceives vulnerability to be rare in boys and unlikely to be expected, which mirrors to exploring male adolescents that sensitivity, vulnerability and gentleness are not associated with 'inherently' being a boy. As such, perceived passivity, emotional

reactivity and materialistic adornments of femininity are the exact traits that ought to be avoided in the contemporary form of masculinity. This poses threats to the developing identities of both boys and girls amidst their exploration and can be a hardship for the participants, resulting in relative positions of power for boys and girls.

5.4 The Complexity in Exploring Gender Identity

In the fourth theme, emphasis was placed on the complex nature of the participants' exploration of their gender identity. In the following section, the sub-themes that transpired throughout the participants' accounts will be presented. The complex nature of the participants' exploration of their gender identity was apparent in the following three sub-themes: (a) Dichotomous perspectives; (b) The significance of what can be seen: Outward aesthetics and biological characteristics; and (c) Who I am (being) is related to how I express myself through activities and roles (doing).

5.4.1 Dichotomous perspective. With regard to this sub-theme, it became apparent that the participants were inclined to view their gender identity in terms of binaries. Binary perceptions were noted in terms of gender roles, gender expression and gender identity. This led the participants to understand themselves, as well as others, from a dichotomous perspective, but some variance was also noted. This trend was noted in the following ways pertaining to how the discussions developed: (a) male-female (him-her), (b) boy-girl (masculine-feminine), (c) father-mother, (d) instrumental-expressive, and (e) heterosexual-homosexual. Dichotomous perspectives can be seen in the following responses from the participants: *"Identify him or her as a boy or a girl" (1.5F); "They do opposite things other than girls (...) if you are female and male, you will attract each other, but if you are both males, you won't attract each other" (1.13F)*; and *"Time goes you* [girls] *date guys, and it will be your first time with the dating thing" (1.25F).* Additionally, a binary type of thinking is evident in the following responses of the female participants: *"Boys have penises and we have wombs" (1.22F)*; and *"Common disagreement or a scenario like if you put boys this side and girls this side" (4.36F).* The

male participants expressed the same trend regarding dichotomous approaches to thinking about gender relations, as stated in the following: *"There is a boy and then there is a girl" (3.10M);* and *"Like my mother and my sister (…), me* [male participant] *and my father" (3.38M).*

5.4.2   The significance of what can be seen: Outward aesthetics and biological characteristics. Both the male and female participants reported that their physical appearance and biology played a pivotal role in their self-definition as boys and girls. In a discussion about how the participants understood their identity as boys or girls, they responded with the following statements: *"It's how you look like" (4.4F)*; *"Like your face and your body" (4.5F)*; *"When you speak to someone face to face" (2.5M)*; and *"(...) the way you look like, your face" (2.8M).* In these responses, the participants expressed that identity is personal and includes an element of observable characteristics. The participants drew attention to both primary and secondary gender characteristics when referring to being boys or girls. A female participant indicated what makes her a girl by voicing the following: *"My top* [point to breasts] *... my breasts has* grown [giggles] *... that's what makes me a girl. (1.31F).* A link was noted by another participant who related male and female anatomy with identity as a boy or a girl, along with associated typically masculine and feminine types of play, by stating that *"[b]oys have penises and we have wombs, and we don't play with cars sometimes you know, they play with cars and we* [girls] *play with poppies* [dolls] *(...)" (1.22F).* By making reference to biological anatomy, the participant also indicated stereotypical gender play as an expression of gender identity. Additionally, a female participant added her insights regarding her identity as a girl, by summarising her understanding of female biological maturation, in the statement:

> *(...) Teenage girl you start first by like body changes, hormone changes, you start menstruating, your hormones change, and your attitude toward people and as time goes you date guys, and it will be your first time with the dating thing. (1.25F)*

Being a girl for this participant is related to experiencing female secondary sex characteristics, certain attitudes and dispositions towards others, and the naturalness of entering into a relationship with a male.

Unlike the female participants who made implicit associations between physical anatomy, aesthetics and identity, the male participants tended to reference aesthetics and physical characteristics without reference to identity as significant factors that play a role in exploring who boys and girls are. The male participants explained as follows: *"Guys have a penis" (2.19M)*; *"Big chest" (2.23M)*; *"Boys have a deep voice" (2.26M)*; *"Must wash when you go to school" (2.107M);* and *"Cut your hair short" (2.108M).* In addition, their reference to being a girl was focused on outward appearance, including aesthetics, as evident in the responses: *"Make-up" (2.91M)*; and *"Wear skirts, short skirts" (2.93M).* In a different context, a female participant acknowledged the importance of her body in communicating a message to her regarding her worth and ability to be loved by boys. In her report, *"[b]oys do not love girls for who they are, they just love them because of their figure, their beauty, and all of that but not knowing what the girl is really like on the inside" (1.55F),* she emphasised male valuation of the body and referred to a lack of worth placed on female character by boys.

5.4.3   Who I am (being) is related to how I express myself through activities and roles (doing). In a previous section, stereotypical gender roles and activities that are associated with being a boy or a girl have been discussed. In the following section, the action and behaviour orientation of these activities and roles, known as the 'doing' aspect, in shaping who the participants are (being), will be the focus. Therefore, what the activity or role is, is less important; instead, attention is drawn to the way in which the participants describe their gender identity in terms of what they do. In this study, the participants referred to several behavioural aspects in describing who they are as boys and girls, as stated in the following responses: "*It's what kind of a person you are and how you behave*" *(1.9F)*; "*(...) There is a difference between male and female because boys like to do certain things*" *(1.13F)*; and *"Being a girl is (...) how you express yourself to people (...) it depends how I behave myself towards other people" (1.33F).*

The participants previously referenced that being a boy of a girl is associated with certain characteristics that have come to be defined as masculine for boys and feminine for girls. Personality traits are generally associated with a way of being or understood to be characteristic in nature. However, in this study, the participants shed light on certain personality qualities that emerge when

individuals engage in certain roles or behaviours. A female participant illustrated this by reporting on girls being respectful in nature and, by proxy, not engaging in activities associated with troublesome consequences and risk, stated as follows: *"When you respect yourself you don't do 'lalabukas'* [engage with activities that can result in troublesome consequences], *you come back at home fast" (1.45F).* This point was also echoed by other female participants as they provided accounts of describing who girls and boys are: *"Responsible" (1.66F)*; *"Caring" (1.69F)*; *"Gentle" (4.72F)*; *"Uncaring" (1.85F)*; *"Unresponsible" (1.84F)*; and *"Naughty" (1.78F).* While these descriptors are personally significant to these participants, the *nature* of these described are significant to this sub-theme. Important to note in this regard is that these qualities are expressed through the things that boys and girls do. For example, boys and girls can be described as caring in nature, but the trait is expressed through engaging in activities that would show concern and nurturance. In another example, boys and girls can be described as being naughty or irresponsible, but the trait is likely to be expressed through boys and girls performing certain activities that are perceived to be careless, negligent and mischievous. Similarly, a male participant indicated that the things he did should be performed like a boy, suggesting that there are certain ways of engaging with an activity or responsibility like a boy. Here, he linked 'doing" certain things with his identity as a boy, as evident in the following statement: *"(...) clean our own houses and do the responsibilities like boys" (3.60M).* This participant stressed that being a boy and having a masculine identity will result in certain forms of behaviour. Similarly, another participant added*: "You must use your instinct to become a boy" (2.81M).*

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, four main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis were described. In the first theme, the participants clarified their accounts of traditional views of what it entails to be a boy or a girl, as well as the associated masculine traits that accompany boys and feminine traits that accompany girls. Stereotypical personality traits and roles, as well as the trait of male dominance, featured strongly in these sub-themes. In the second theme, the participants

highlighted their experiences of exploring their gender identity in context. Here, the role of the social environment, as it pertains to family and culture, as well as peers and the school context, was emphasised in the sub-themes. The roles of individuality and personal agency were also presented. Theme three pertained to the participants' exploration of their gender identity within a changing environment. The roles of time, changing gender roles and cultural values were emphasised in the description of the sub-themes. Theme four was related to the complexity of the participants' exploration of their gender identity. The sub-themes focused on the importance of binary thinking, biological and observable characteristics in their self-definition, and the 'doing' aspect in describing themselves as boys or girls. In the following chapter, the presented themes will be discussed as it pertains to the theoretical framework of the research study.

Chapter 6

Discussion of Research Results

In this chapter, a discussion of the research results will be provided. A deductive lens will be utilised in this section in order to provide an integrated discussion that includes the relevant theoretical framework with the research results. The discussion will proceed by referring to three overarching sections, namely: (a) Gender identity exploration: A multidimensional phenomenon; (b) The social construction of gender identity exploration; and (c) Challenging hegemony: Implications for change.

6.1 Gender Identity Exploration: A Multidimensional Construct

The research results indicated that exploring gender identity is a complex task for multiple reasons. In this study, consideration and acknowledgement were given to the difficulties of gender identity exploration for black South African adolescents. Not only do these adolescents already have to negotiate several challenges in their communities, but they are also expected to engage actively with their alternatives related to occupational, religious, spiritual, cultural and political ideologies, in conjunction with gender, in order to develop an ego identity (Schwartz, 2001). Given that these overlapping dimensions are multifaceted in nature, exploring a certain dimension, such as gender identity, remains a complicated task for adolescents. Furthermore, the construct of gender identity is a complex and versatile one, possibly because the essence of what gender truly constitutes remains debatable and contested (Van der Gaag et al., 2016). Provided that gender has been conceptualised from a biological and psychosocial base in various academic discourses, it can be expected that adolescents are finding it difficult to comprehend these differences (stability versus fluidity and biological versus psychosocial). This has significant consequences for awareness raising and adolescent ego integration in an evolving society (Fox & Ore, 2010). Ambiguities in this regard may also be related to the challenges that adolescents endure in poor socioeconomic settings, especially as they pertain to shortcomings in education, parental or adult guidance, and possible cultural

limitations. Nevertheless, in this study, exploring gender identity was associated with physical, behavioural and psychological dimensions.

For the participants in this study, emphasis was drawn to the importance of outward aesthetics (e.g. jewellery and clothing) and biological characteristics (e.g. breasts and hair) in exploring the self as a gendered individual. They realised that observable characteristics were central in contributing towards the construction of their self-definition and experienced this area as personal. For example, the participants are sensitive to being gender-assessed by members in their environment. According to Newman and Newman (2012), adolescents are subjected to several changes in their physical development during adolescence, including puberty, heightened production of sexual and growth hormones and the development of secondary sexual characteristics. These are often associated with adjustment problems, psychological insecurities, heightened self-consciousness and an increased preoccupation with physical appearance (Bradley, 2013).

During this study, more female participants seemed to link biological chromosomes and anatomy with masculine and feminine identity. The female participants asserted that biological maturation, with specific reference to secondary sexual characteristics, signified the onset of a feminine identity. Additionally, it was noted that several female participants demonstrated the importance of biology for setting social and cultural expectations regarding gender identity and appropriate gendered behaviour. For these participants, exploring the self as an attractive and valuable individual seemed to be associated with biology and aesthetics. This relates to the work of Nentwich and Kelan (2013), in which they state that the body serves as a site of representation that is subject to social and cultural conditioning and scrutiny. In light of the uncomfortable changes that occur during this stage of development, adolescents are likely to feel challenged by exploration processes when considering that the media portrays human flawlessness as an ideal indicator of beauty and worth.

For the male participants in this study, exploration of the self was correlated with physical characteristics and outward beauty, without mentioning the associations that these have with identity exploration and development. For example, while the male participants often placed emphasis on the human body, they did not recognise the possibility that male and female anatomy results in certain identity developments or expressions. Applying the lens of hegemonic masculinity to this pattern may

reinforce the idea that women are firmly expected to engage with certain performative psychosocial acts given their anatomy in order to conform to dominant presentations of femininity (Grysman et al., 2016). In contrast to male persons, it is less necessary to act in certain ways or engage with what is perceived as manly aesthetics based on male anatomy because hegemonic masculinity, in essence, is an unquestioned given in society, meaning that male persons need not strive for something that is fundamentally regarded as being part of the core human condition.

The results indicated that the participants related how they behave or act with their gender identity. They often provided explanations of their experiences by referring to words, such as 'express', 'behave', 'do' and 'act'. The participants indicated that their gender identity exploration was strongly related to the things that they actively engage with or do, including roles, activities and chores. Included in this was the participants expressing certain character traits or psychological qualities during their exploration of the gendered self. More particularly, for the participants in the study who value their collective culture, it seemed as if they entered into difficult negotiations between engaging with certain roles, traits and activities that their collective or communities value, versus their own unique pursuits for individuality. As such, exploring the self was largely influenced by the socialised and cultural demands of their environment, mirroring a certain way of 'being' through 'doing' certain things. According to West and Zimmerman (2009), individuals are likely to act out who they are as male and female persons in social situations, and this contributes towards the construction of a gender identity. For West and Zimmerman (2009), a gendered sense of self is expressed when individuals engage with gender-appropriate activities, gender roles and character traits that they imitate from their social environments (Deutsch, 2007; Johnson, 2009). The participants in this study demonstrated that such behaviours, actions and roles tended to serve as a baseline for their exploration of identity, resulting in what Butler (2004) called 'stereotypical performative acts of the self'.

During the participants' exploration of their gender identity, they explained that they were likely to adopt or perform certain roles and behaviours that lead to what society perceives to be a masculine or feminine identity. Therefore, the exploration of the participants' gender identity was often described in terms of what they do. With regard to the application of the 'doing' gender concept

in this study, it was noted that while actions (doing) precipitated certain dispositions or qualities (being), these two processes seemed to be invariably reciprocal, which contradicts previous theoretical debates (Drescher et al., 2012; Johnson, 2009). A reason for this was that the execution of activities and roles (doing) was originally influenced by cultural and societal conceptions of male and female persons (being). Butler (2004) asserted that this notion is a forerunner to individuals maintaining conformity to masculine-feminine binaries of male and female within which heteronormative practices are defined.

6.2   The Social Construction of Gender Identity Exploration

In this study, the participants related their exploration of gender identity with their social environment. It became clear that the participants acknowledged the importance of their context as they were exploring their gender identity. This raises awareness regarding the social construction of gender identity exploration. During the focus group discussions, this trend unfolded on a content level, as well as a process level. By this, the researcher aimed to highlight the extent to which participants were observed to preserve their collective identity in the group setting or explain something with the help of another participant, which was also reflected in the content of their responses.

In this study, the participants acknowledged that learning about gender-related roles, behaviours and norms begins during childhood. For example, they recognised that caregivers and significant others in the community play an important role in socialisation processes during their developmental path. This emphasises the importance of viewing adolescents from a lifespan development approach. From this approach, it is noted that the participants are presented with certain developmental tasks in specific domains across various developmental stages in the human lifespan (Newman & Newman, 2012).

For the participants in this study, exploring gender identity was deemed a tough task as it involves personal differentiation from significant others, who often play the role of fulfilling relational needs. As such, developing a stable sense of self during adolescence seemed to be coupled

with adjustment to several novelties associated with this life stage. During adolescence, several changes occur in the social environment, ranging from the transition to more permeable boundaries in the family and the exploration of adult responsibilities and roles (Adams, 2014).

For the participants in this study, the exploration of the self occurred with an active awareness of cultural respect for the elder generation. For example, the participants recognised that respecting their elders included a consideration of community cohesion, shared cultural group norms and interconnectedness, all of which the participants showed a sensitivity towards. This corresponds with the work of Durrheim and Dixon (2010), in which they describe that individuals who form part of a collectivistic culture tend to define themselves in terms of valuable relationships and group membership, and find it difficult to view themselves as separate from their cultural ties. The valuation of collective orientations tended to influence the participants' gender identity exploration significantly. Given the heightened sense of belonging derived from their cultural groups, the participants tended to explore who they are with the awareness of familial expectations and cultural norms of who they should be.

From the results, it was ascertained that the intergenerational transmission of feminine and masculine values and norms by their culture and family members contributed towards the participants' exploration of their gender identity. The participants identified certain character traits and gendered behaviours that were encouraged and taught in order to express traditional masculine and feminine identity. For example, both the male and the female participants were likely to be influenced by what male and female authority figures deemed culturally appropriate regarding the exploration of their gender identity. According to Bandura (1961, 1986), individuals learn from their caregivers, parents and family members through the process of modelling and reinforcement of various gender-related activities and preferences. During these early learning processes, individuals are pre-operational thinkers, meaning that they typically rely on biological differences to comprehend gender variations (Piaget, 1952).

The implications of internalising these value orientations that are learnt from culture and family regarding appropriate gender roles and identity were significant in this study as they highlight the importance of the intergenerational transmission of gender role attitudes, norms and beliefs. In a

research study on the intergenerational transmission of values over the family life course, Min and Lendon (2012) assert that the transmission of normative gender roles was weaker and less stable over time than it was for religious ideals, but tended to have a significantly lagged impact under conditions of high solidarity. Against the background of the participants' collectivistic culture, this finding was important because conditions of high solidarity are likely to resonate with the black African participants' in this study, who value unity and cohesion. Furthermore, this finding is telling in that it provides useful insights regarding the influence of adolescent exploration processes following former years where early learning occurs.

In this study, while both the male and the female participants acknowledged the role of their culture and caregivers in influencing the development of gender roles and gender identity, they recalled other factors, such as agency and social relationships, which are predominant during adolescence as opposed to childhood years. This point is helpful in understanding that individuals do not succumb to a gender identity that is solely based on early learning experiences of gender roles from parents and caregivers. In addition to this, the research study also showed that there was a significantly *lagged* impact on gender values where unity, commonality and cohesion where valued, characteristic of the black collectivistic culture. This could be beneficial for understanding the way in which learnt gender perceptions, values and experiences influence adolescents, especially as they occupy a life stage that is described as stormy and turbulent as a result of several biopsychosocial transformations (Louw & Louw, 2014).

For the participants, learning about and exhibiting traditional masculine type traits and gender roles are crucial aspects of expressing the self as a cultured male individual. In addition, the participants recalled that they adhere to traditional masculine roles and activities which are often associated with a physical task or a task that requires distance from the household. They also referred to traditional personality characteristics that are often associated with maleness, namely leadership, intelligence, ambition and aggression. This is substantiated by Jonason and Davis (2018), who proposed that traditional characteristics associated with being male are described as instrumental traits, including being aggressive, autonomous, bold, competitive and dominant. For exploring adolescents in a new-generation society, this is significant in that individuals express their gendered

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selfhood through *habitually* engaging with certain activities and roles, thereby implying a lack of reflexivity, agency and consideration of exploring the developing self within a culturally scripted environment (Johnson, 2009; Nyman et al., 2018). Furthermore, the use of manipulation and disparage in order to ridicule others seemed to form part of how traditional masculine identity was perceived by the participants. This can be explained by Morrell et al. (2012), who state that boys jostle for ascendancy as they exercise several ways in which they can accentuate their masculine identities.

Learning about typical femininity was often associated with what cultural groups and families deemed socially appropriate for girls to portray within a culture. The participants revealed that being girls required a warm approach to others, an inclination to be verbal in nature and kindly serve, care and submit to others in social relationships, particularly male figures. This seems to be in line with what Campbell and Carroll (2007) describe as traditionally expressive traits associated with femininity, including being nurturing, empathetic and expressive of emotion. A defining pattern with regard to this notion was that girls were said to inherently own these traits and dispositions, implying greater difficulty in challenging and changing these traditional descriptions. The participants related these forms of accepted femininity with (a) an increased sensitivity to the perceptions and critical evaluations of others and (b) greater conformity to traditional stereotypes while in the presence of others. As such, the female participants showed greater sensitivity to the expectations of others during their exploration of the self. Exploring their gender identity on a macro level was often met with a form of social yielding, whether this was evident in the way that the female participants submitted to cultural ideals regarding femininity or to heteronormative ideals regarding male supremacy. According to the participants in this study, acting out these forms of femininity contributed towards their self-definition, which highlights the weight that is attached to significant social others for the female participants.

Additionally, the participants tended to relate beauty and intelligence with femininity. For example, the participants tended to relate ideal perceptions of beauty with conventional views of womanhood. According to Urbatsch (2018), physical attractiveness is also often understood in terms of how it can contribute towards the construction of meaning for feminine identity, including in

social, political and economic situations. With regard to female intelligence, the male participants tended to accentuate that girls are more cognitively inclined, but inconsistent responses regarding this trend were noted in the research results as well. Solon (2014) asserts that intelligence has a significant association with future economic growth, earnings and income equality. Against this background, it is likely that this may challenge aspects of the male ego in an evolving society and result in bringing about disequilibrium in gender relations, to which individuals are often resistant.

In this study, it was recognised that the participants appeared to have made some commitments relating to their gender identity; however, the quality of their exploration and commitment was questionable. For example, some of the participants illuminated their attempts of exploring roles and behaviours that are diverse and diverge from their family and cultural norms, but their constructions of roles and gender identity continue to be defined by limited exploration, resulting in eventual adherence to overarching systems and hegemonic institutions. Consistent with this finding is what Marcia (1966) termed 'foreclosed individuals'. According to Bergh and Erling (2005), individuals that occupy the foreclosure identity status of Marcia (1966) have not experienced a crisis or adequately explored their alternatives, resulting in commitments that are made based on what significant others deem to be acceptable, appropriate and normative. As the participants in this study are currently negotiating the physical, psychological, social, economic and cultural ramifications that resulted from apartheid in South Africa, it would seem improper to apply this to them. Perhaps, this trend should be viewed in terms of how the participants in this study are limited by psychosocial support and socioeconomic resources in exploring their gender identity. This might be useful in understanding that black African adolescents are finding it challenging to engage with exploratory processes in a self-reflective and flexible manner while dealing with their social environment as co-authors of their identity constructions.

The results showed that there were few participants who exhibited contentment, emotional maturity and social competence, commonly associated with the achieved identity status of Marcia (1966). However, many of the participants' responses indicated that they appeared to be grappling with exploring and comprehending gender roles and gender identity. For example, the participants in this study provided several inconsistent responses, ambiguities, inappropriate answers and exceptional

concrete understandings of themselves as gendered beings. This is characteristic of the moratorium identity status proposed by Marcia (1966).

According to the participants in this study, gender identity was not only influenced by the social constructions of familial and cultural norms and values. Other noteworthy influences were peer relationships and the school context and environment, including teachers and school learners. For the participants in this study, the valuable nature of peer clothing items or possessions was imperative during their exploration of the self. While this point may represent societal and media emphasis on beauty and attractiveness, it also stresses the role of poor socioeconomic status and identity, as well as the limitations it brings. Whilst being cognisant of the fact that girls borrow clothing from one another because they value the stylistic nature of their clothes, which can result in increased acceptance and popularity, a male participant made a vital point regarding socioeconomic status and its influence on developing and exploring adolescents. Given the likelihood of a poor socioeconomic community, such as in Manguang, the girls in this community may be relying on one another for 'acceptable' clothing, which has implications for black adolescents in marginalised contexts.

Transitioning to mature roles and responsibilities and establishing meaningful and deeper friendships during adolescence are often accompanied by normative experimentation with aesthetics and unique clothing (Bamberg, 2011). For the participants in this study, it was clear that limitations in their economic and psychosocial resources impede their exploration of things on a micro level, which they regard as essential trends for remaining part of the embraced and fashionable in-group. This can be substantiated by what Stevens and Lockhart (1997) referred to as the 'Coca-Cola Culture' in which South African adolescents suffer the consequences of the past political regime, which obstruct their exploration of psychosocial tasks. In addition, Hendry and Kloep (2010) state that enduring structural modes of oppression is likely to hamper important developmental tasks associated with adolescence, influencing the transition towards adolescents becoming prolific and dynamic young adults.

In light of this, it can be said that not only do adolescents experience the possible interpersonal impact and risk of rejection and ridicule by their social groups, but the outcomes that this may have on their personal psychological processes remain vast too. Questioning their position in the world, engaging with existential dread and facing some of the injustices of their situation are

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likely to culminate in high risks for poor mental health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse (Glaser, 2010). In addition, Yunger, Carver and Perry (2004) conducted a study on the influences of gender identity on adolescents' psychological adjustment over time, and found that the combination of low gender typicality with high-felt pressures was especially conducive to internalising problems.

For the participants in this study, exploring gender identity during adolescence was associated with normative strides towards independence, interpersonal connectedness and social belonging. For them, this was achieved through social networking and engagement with peer groups of similar qualities and valued characteristics. For the participants, the expression of masculine and feminine identity and the exploration thereof seemed to be congruent with that of their social group, often resulting in a sense of familiarity and group acceptance. For example, the male participants were likely to engage with gender roles and behaviours that their peers perceived to be "*cool*". It was also noted that these were congruent with heteronormative standards for male and female individuals. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), membership of social groups that embrace similar gender roles and behaviours regarding gender identity exploration allows adolescents to develop a social identity. In this way, exploration of gender identity occurs when individuals interact with their preferable social groups, resulting in another aspect of social constructivism in the creation of a gender identity.

In this study, there was a greater propensity for the participants to attribute their gendered self-definitions to themselves rather than their collective. For example, the participants were reflecting on the possibility of taking personal accountability and initiative for their gender identity exploratory processes rather than attributing it to familial and collective norms. According to Piaget (1952), as cognitive development progresses, adolescents gain an increased capacity for critical reflection and abstract thought, which allows them to inquisitively and actively begin to engage with their social and cultural milieu in pursuit of alternatives related to developing an authentic sense of self. This draws attention to the participants attempting to strive for individuality as gendered beings in society. As such, they showed greater proclivity as agentic individuals in exploring variant gender roles and behaviours that might be challenging several forms of societal and cultural hegemony. According to

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Croft et al. (2015), when individuals exercise reflexivity, they consciously engage in personal confrontation with themselves as they interact with the changing social environment. This is consistent with Thom and Coetzee's (2004) assertion that there is a definite increase in Westernised thinking and behaving among black African adolescents living in democratic South Africa. For Bulhan (1985), this process is called 'capitulation', whereby individuals discover Western cultural group norms for appropriate gendered behaviour and roles, but in doing so, relinquish aspects of their culture to explore alternative avenues that relate to Westernised values and cultural ideals about gender.

For the participants in this study, conflicts related to an increase in Westernised thinking were noted. For example, ambiguities noted from the participants' responses were surrounding what constitutes the authentic self, versus existing in a cultural context of reverence, respect, living up to cultural ideals, and the moral inclination to comply with traditional and familial values and norms. The internalisation of parental and community values did seem prominent in this research, but the participants' responses did not seem to reflect this notion as strongly. This could be related to the work of Kohlberg (1969) and Bulhan (1985). While adolescents occupy the conventional morality stage of moral development whereby they are sensitive to parental or communal rejection, they are also at crossroads as they seek to explore different cultural and value systems related to their self-definition, while realising how these individualistic trends can result in division and subjugation (Muldoon, 2013; Nelson, 2018). This is reflective of what Bulhan (1985) termed 'revitalisation'.

Conflicts like these manifested through inconsistent responses and in cases where the female participants tended to describe exploring who they are in terms of gender roles and characteristics that mimic individualistic culture, including self-determination, ambition, quiet assertiveness and autonomy, despite being highly receptive of collectivistic influence. The female participants related ambivalent shifts away from males, representing a form of intrapersonal conflict arising from gender relations. They recognise how they value male persons in their lives, while acknowledging how detrimental reliance upon them can be for society. In light of this, the participants are becoming agentic as a result of the 'other'. In other words, for the participants, increasing agency is occurring

due to environmental influences or interpersonal failures. For example, female persons are exploring their position as women in society and what it entails due to (a) an increasing awareness that the order of society is changing, and (b) preparing for the future when men do fail them in terms of provision and financial security. According to Kamper and Badenhorst (2010), this trend may be the result of dominating Western ideologies and economic transformations that have prevailed in South Africa through which individuals are attempting to exercise personal agency in the formation of their identity that is free from cultural constraint, male definition and societal oppression (Adams et al., 2006). While this can contribute to feeling a sense of environmental mastery and psychological well-being, it can also have implications for their mental state. In light of this, adolescents are encouraged to engage with what Crocetti et al. (2008) called 'reconsideration of commitments' in which individuals critically reflect on and evaluate their gender identity in a social world with the hope that they will commit to internalising gender roles and characteristics which they experience as congruent with their true self (Luyckx & Robitschek, 2014; Pop et al., 2016).

In opposition to the above, for the male participants, exploring their gender identity was often equated with reference to girls, whether this meant female absence or presence, implying less of a shift away from the opposite gender. For example, the exercise of becoming accountable and responsible for future domesticity was reflected on by the male participants in the absence of females. Interpreting this implies that the male participants are exploring diverse roles because women are no longer solely responsible for household tasks and responsibilities. According to Jonason and Davis (2018), increased female entry into the workforce has brought about societal transformation in several institutional spheres, including romantic relationships, parenthood, occupational identity, financial realms and domesticity. Therefore, for the male participants in this study, exercising agency occurred as a result of no other social alternatives, rather than occurring as a result of social changes in gender relations and individual reactions, and the responsibility taken in light of this. While this point is multifactorial and complex, the essentials thereof are that adolescents are becoming increasingly self-sufficient in exploring their gender identity. However, for female adolescents, their strivings are based on deficiencies in social relationships, for which they wish to make up. For males, their sense of

agency is related to possible socially constructed threats to their masculine identity and difficulties pertaining to gender transitions and shifts in power dynamics.

The results indicated that the social construction of gender identity exploration was related to underlying meanings, perceptions and discourses attached to gender relations. The participants were influenced by dominant discourse surrounding gender identity and the expression thereof. It was found that the participants learnt from their social environment about an essentialist type of thinking regarding gender identity, resulting in a form of binary descriptions and understandings about gender identity. For example, without explicitly referring to oppositions regarding gender identity, it was noted that the female participants were more likely to view male persons as opposed to female persons and masculinity as opposed to femininity. This is consistent with the 'relational meaning' behind masculinity, which was emphasised by Connell (1995) when he stated that "masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity" (p. 68).

For the male participants in this study, fewer binary accounts of gender identity were provided. For example, the participants provided more subtle accounts rather than clear patterns of dichotomous thinking related to gender identity. Interpreting this from a hegemonic masculinity perspective may be related to the perceived power of male dominance in the gender equation, as evident in several accounts provided by the participants where male persons exist in the absence of female persons, or female persons exist as a result of male persons. Trends like these reveal how masculine gendered behaviour and identity constructions continue to contribute towards unequal power disparities in South Africa, influencing how male and female black adolescents explore their gender identity (Chen, 2015). Furthermore, patterns like these tend to reinforce a robustly masculine-dominated society in implicit ways. This frames non-conforming or fluid adolescents as the 'other', a process whereby variance (effeminacy in male individuals and masculinity in female individuals) results in subordination, and has detrimental effects on those who strive for authenticity with regard to their gender identity and expression thereof. According to Schilt and Westbrook (2009), when individuals view biological sex and gender identity in terms of binaries, it reinforces the linkage between biological anatomy and socially constructed gender, as explicated by the cisgender model. In

addition, the participants in this study seemed to conform to socially constructed stereotypes, resulting in the cementing of heteronormativity.

Despite the binary thinking that surfaced from the participants' accounts, a nuance was noted in that the participants perceived their gender identity to also be influenced by conflicting sociocultural spaces, resulting in it being in a constant state of flux. This largely correlates with social constructivist claims regarding gender identity and the underpinnings of the gender continuum theory (Austin & Goodman, 2018; Rothblatt, 1995). From this perspective, gender identity develops along a spectrum that reflects masculine and feminine identity on a continuum, allowing for variance in exploration (Sumia et al., 2017). Although the participants tended to view gender identity in terms of dichotomies, they also showed openness to novel experiences and greater fluidity during their exploration.

6.3 Challenging Hegemony: Implications for Change

The results of this research indicated that the participants were exploring their gender identity in the realm of an ever-changing environment. It was found that the role of history and time had influenced both the way in which adolescents explored who they were and what they explored in search of an authentic gender identity. As such, transformation in the social, economic and political spheres seems to have prompted opportunities for adolescents to challenge several underlying systems and institutions related to gender dynamics, roles and expected behaviours and personal characteristics that are traditionally expected from male and female persons.

The results indicated that the participants exhibited a heightened awareness regarding conventional gender roles and personal characteristics associated with male and female persons. However, from the participants' accounts, it was revealed that they desired change. For the female participants in this study, however, it appeared that transformation was related to breaking down normative gender roles. For example, it was found that while they do acknowledge and value the biological differences between male and female persons, it was indicated from the content of their responses that biological differences do not result in correlating stereotypical character profiles that

place girls in a submissive and weak position as opposed to boys' strong and authoritative position. In light of this, it was noted that the female participants were less welcoming of heteronormative standards in society, leading them to question and subvert hegemonic structures resulting in transformation of how gender identity is perceived and constructed. This is in opposition to some theoretical claims, such as those of Fiske et al. (2007), who proposed that certain personal characteristics continue to reflect heteronormative traits from male and female persons respectively. While this may emphasise biological determinism, it also invalidates the participants' efforts in challenging the hegemonic structures that they seek to surpass.

With regard to changes on a micro level, the participants suggested that gender identity exploration was not solely limited to biological determinacy, but also to the sociocultural environment. For example, the participants were likely to refer to the notion that male persons have penises, are intrinsically masculine and will develop a gender identity based on adopting male gender roles and masculine personal characteristics (Heilmann, 2011). However, the participants also had the tendency to highlight the influence of the contextual environment in shaping fluid attitudes and behaviours surrounding gender (Bornstein et al., 2011; Ristori & Steensma, 2016). These micro-level changes were viewed, by the participants, as different, variant and possibly defiant as oppose to challenging existing regimes that result in authentic meaning-making processes. Despite some awareness raising, it was noted that traditional conceptions of gender identity remain preserved and essentially unchanged.

Challenging hegemony was noted in the participants in that they alluded to the experience of women being less exclusively accountable for child-rearing responsibilities and household duties. For example, they recognised the potential of women facilitating socioeconomic growth in the formal employment sector. With this transition, it was found that women are expected to adopt implicitly certain personality characteristics that put them in the position to cope with environmental and institutional demands, such as independence, ambition and confidence. For the male participants in this study, these changes seemed to bring about disequilibrium in societal systems, whereas, for the female participants, it served as a catalyst for empowerment. This relates to the work of Butler (1990), who stated that for men, it would be counterproductive for transformation to occur in the socio-

political realm of women because, from this perspective, to be a woman is, by implication, to be part of an oppressed empire (Butler, 1990). Oppression forms such as these serve to mimic the unequal distribution of power and resources characterised by inferiority in much the same way that the apartheid struggle did (Melato et al., 2017; Nsamenang, 2002).

In this study, it was found that the male participants were less inclined to challenge hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity explicitly. However, their accounts suggested otherwise in that they were increasingly engaging in domestic and household responsibilities. For example, they exhibited greater themes of autonomy, domestic competence and responsibility in their approach to exploring their gender identity. However, when it involved personality characteristics and dispositions, which are mainly reflective of identity constructs, the male participants were less tolerant of experimenting with and exhibiting effeminate-type traits. According to Kane and Byrne (2006), several racial, class and cultural backgrounds are becoming more accepting of tendencies that they consider to be atypical for boys to possess. However, these authors maintain that this acceptance is balanced by efforts to approximate hegemonic ideals of masculinity. If this is true, then for exploring male adolescents, it is likely that pursuing effeminate-type behavioural repertoires and characteristics will be associated with possible rejection, stigma and cultural disgrace, leading to possible exploration inhibition for these adolescents. This point is in stark contrast with the ideals of a multicultural rainbow nation in which individuals ought to embrace cultural diversity, thereby leading to a broadening of their exploration and the facilitation of identity development (Rothmann & Bothma, 2017).

For the participants in this study, some difficulties seemed to surface in how they attempted to exercise change. For example, while they showed an eagerness to engage purposefully with various gender role and characteristic alternatives during their exploration, they were met with an increased sensitivity to the perceptions and evaluations of social others. This might be related to the significant neurobiological changes in brain development during adolescence, which may have an impact on the manner in which adolescents attempt to challenge gender roles and personal characteristics during their gender identity exploration (Lezak, 2012). Firstly, an increase in their socio-emotional network makes challenging the deeply existing structures and gender ideologies a tough task when adolescents

are more aware of others in their social environment than usual. Secondly, a less developed cognitive control network is likely to have an impact on their executive functioning, such as decision-making skills, reasoning and judgements, contributing to further difficulties related to transcending hegemonic structures versus being challenged by them.

It was noted that with an increase in challenging gender roles and identity constructs, power dynamics have also been influenced. Consistent responses were provided by the male and female participants regarding male positions of power and dominion in exploring the gendered self. The male participants provided accounts of self-awareness regarding their position as being a powerful one, worthy of respect and being surrendered to. For example, they tended to be advocates for the normality behind masculine righteousness and heteronormative practices. Connell (1992) described these features as characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, which also includes aggression, dominance, limited emotionality and heterosexuality. Characteristics such as these tend to reflect a hegemonic form of masculine identity that has often been associated with undermining alternative forms of identity, such as effeminacy or femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Implicit hegemony was evident in this research study in that the male participants' accounts were not viewed as being considerate or accepting of alternative forms of masculinity. For example, the male participants provided definitions of male persons that mostly adhered and related to the hegemonic form of masculine identity. According to Demetriou (2001), this gender struggle often manifests when one group of male persons dominate and scrutinise another group, often hegemonic male individuals over more effeminate male individuals, leading to possible social comparison and group bias regarding gender roles and expressions thereof. For adolescents who explore variant gender roles, this may imply a greater risk of prejudice and social exclusion (Trepte, 2011).

For the female participants, their challenging various forms of hegemony in society resulted in power shifts. While the female participants were likely to engage with the institutionalised trend of male dominance, they often colluded with male positions of power by emphasising their positions, rather than deconstructing their dominant positions. For example, the female participants did not overly emphasise their attempts at challenging the macro order of society, which have resulted in female empowerment, but rather emphasised the role of the male in establishing hegemony in society.

Although this brings about shifts in dynamics between male and female gender politics, it indirectly contributes towards a primarily entrenched system of male power that implicates adolescents' gender identity exploration processes. This can be substantiated by Foucault (1980), who argued that truth should not be liberated from every system of power, but rather be detached from the forms of cultural, social and economic hegemony within which it operates. This point offers useful insights in that male and female adolescents are exploring their gender identity in light of well-established institutions in society, making gender identity exploration for black African adolescents a difficult task in South Africa.

6.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research results were discussed in relation to existing literature. A theoretical perspective, namely hegemonic masculinity was applied to the discussion. Given the complexity of gender identity exploration for adolescents, various psychological terms and constructs were integrated into describing the participants' experiences. Among others, the lifespan perspective, the developmental approach, identity theories, the social constructivist perspective, the socialisation theory and the gender continuum theory were referenced. Gender nuance was considered by providing discrepancies and consistencies between male and female participants' voices. Included in the discussion was the complexity of gender identity exploration, the social constructivist nature of the construct and challenging hegemonic gender ideologies and practices. In the next chapter, a conclusion of this study will be provided by focusing on a summary of the noteworthy findings, limitations and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 7

Summary of Noteworthy Findings, Limitations, Recommendations and Conclusion

The aim of this final chapter is to conclude the research study. In the first section, the findings of the study will be provided. Secondly, a discussion on the limitations of the study will follow. In the third section, the recommendations for future research and concluding remarks will be given.

7.1 Summary of Noteworthy Findings

In this section, emphasis will be drawn to the findings of the study as they pertain to adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration from a hegemonic masculinity perspective. In this study, four themes emerged from a hybrid approach to thematic analysis, namely: (a) Traditional views on what it means to be a boy or girl; (b) Exploring Who I am: Balancing social context with personal agency; (c) Exploring gender identity in a changing environment; and (d) The complexity in exploring gender identity. The results of this study were mostly consistent with existing theoretical underpinnings, but inconsistencies and ambiguities were present too.

Given that gender identity has strong theoretical roots with psychology and sociology, several theories were considered in this study as they provided rich, diverse and nuanced descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. More particularly, the exploration aspect of gender identity was of relevance in this research because (a) adolescents are exploring who they are in an ever-changing environment, and (b) implications of these exploratory processes may result in psychological vulnerability for adolescents living in marginalised areas. For this reason, psychological theories were prioritised in the interpretation of the research results as these were most relevant to understanding the impact of context and psychological processes on a developmental phenomenon, such as gender identity. However, in light of the social constructivist paradigm of the study and the valuable psychosocial base of gender that informed this study, some relevant socialisation theories were also incorporated and influenced a significant part of the research study. A particular theoretical perspective that was utilised in the interpretation of the research results was 'hegemonic masculinity'. Overall, the theoretical frameworks that were utilised in this study were consulted because they

facilitated in answering the research questions being investigated. In the following section, the experiences of the participants' gender identity exploration will be highlighted, and gender-related differences in their exploration will be indicated.

With regard to the noteworthy findings in this study, it was found that exploring the sense of self as a gendered individual is a perplexing and personal task, as evident in the participants' overall difficulties in describing gender relations and complex identity constructions. From the participants in this study, it was determined that exploring gender identity is a complex task because exploration involves several dimensions, including physical, social and psychological dimensions. While the participants in this study referred to the importance of biological anatomy (breasts or penis) in communicating certain messages to them about their identity, they also emphasised the role of their sociocultural environments in shaping gender roles (expressiveness or domesticity) and normative behaviour associated with expressing their gender identity. In addition, certain psychological traits (empathy or aggression) that the participants possessed were also telling in terms of how they linked personal characteristics with conceptions of masculine and feminine identity. Understanding this experience as a personal and multidimensional one lends interesting insights pertaining to sexual and gender development orientation and education and highlights the necessity for increased emotional support and psychological guidance.

Taking into account the various dimensions of exploration implies that adolescents are presented with several challenges that are based on the essence of these dimensions. For example, if adolescents are basing their exploration processes on physical aspects, they are likely to be challenged by the stability of biological anatomy if they experience some form of non-conformity to the associated identity that follows from it. From a difference stance, if adolescents perceive their exploration to be influenced mainly by their contextual environment, they may indicate the tendency to be preoccupied with social expectations, cultural values and familial norms. Therefore, a balanced perspective is required in how adolescents perceive their gender identity exploration and the implications that this has on their identity development. Nuanced understandings regarding exploratory processes that occur in interaction with the gendered self as a physical, psychological, social and cultural being, are required. Understanding the challenges with which adolescents are

presented can be valuable for mental healthcare workers who therapeutically work with adolescents presenting with psychological difficulties arising from these challenges.

In this study, gender identity exploration was regarded as a predominantly social construct. This raises awareness regarding the importance of gender identity that develops as it is constructed by the social world. This perspective shifts the attention away from understanding gender from a biological base (chromosomes or biological anatomy) and emphasises the significance of the contextual environment and the meanings that are derived from these contexts. Exploring gender identity seemed to be co-constructed by several social systems, including cultural institutions, media, family values, community dynamics, peer groups and the school environment. As a psychosocial construct, however, exploration processes also reside within the personal realms of individuals, thereby highlighting the role that adolescents play themselves in their gender identity exploration and developmental processes. From this perspective, adolescents were found to engage strongly with performative acting out of their gender identity. Using various types of discourse, the physical body and interaction with a social audience were pertinent to exploring the gendered self in a reflexive manner. Here, the role of structure versus agency in gendered self-definition was evident.

One of the most relevant findings in this study pertained to the challenges surrounding structure versus agency. While cultural orientations and heritage were crucial to the adolescents, strong ties to these sometimes seemed to inhibit diverse exploration of gender-related roles, behaviours and norms. Nevertheless, strides towards normative individuation were noted, whereby individuals were inclined to practice agency increasingly as it related to their exploration of gender identity. Initiating personal responsibility, accountability and willingness to challenge underlying institutionalised structures, such as traditional gender roles associated with masculine and feminine identity, was evident in this study. As such, adolescents are experimenting with increased Westernised standards and norms, which reflects a shift away from their collectivistic loyalties. This transition seems to be characterised by not only adjustment challenges but also liberating opportunities.

In light of several changes in the socioeconomic and political realities of the participants in this study, it was found that transformation on a macro scale, such as increasing globalisation and technological advances, is providing new-generation adolescents with increasing opportunities to

challenge important micro aspects of their contextual milieu. For example, this entails challenging gender-related aspects of individuals, which are deemed such a vital and personal aspect of the human core. In this study, the exploration of gender identity was related to changed perceptions of roles surrounding male and female employment and parenthood. Although institutions such as these remain vastly entrenched in society, adolescents are encouraged to pursue challenging the status quo, while being educated on how their efforts might contribute towards the reinforcement thereof. This is of value to adolescents as it is important for them to be cognisant of the novel responsibilities that will accompany them with transitional changes and developments in society.

In addition, it was found that traditional power dynamics within gender relations also represents a change from its baseline. Disequilibrium in this regard may be related to threatening the hegemonic institutions, such as certain forms of masculinity or heteronormativity, which can serve to uphold male domination in society. When these structures are maintained by social and cultural hegemony, it was found that adolescent individuation is limited, and true psychological connection with the self and others is disrupted or inauthentic. Despite this, changing gender roles and the implications thereof seemed to spearhead threats to masculine identity constructs. This finding showed that hegemonic masculine gendered behaviour and identity constructions are mostly valued in a heteronormative South Africa. In conjunction with this finding was the important role of cultural and social stereotypes associated with these values, resulting in gender identity exploration experienced as dichotomous rather than flexible and continuous.

7.2 Limitations of the Research Study

In this section, the limitations of this study are described. According to Babbie (2007), inherent in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are strengths and limitations. Depending on the particular aims of the research, the strengths and limitations are often related to diverse ontological and epistemological foundations, as well as various data collection methodologies (Creswell, 2013). The aim of this research was to explore and describe the participants' experiences of gender identity exploration. In order to gain an in-depth inquiry into a sensitive phenomenon, such as

gender identity, it was important to conduct qualitative research, which allows the researcher entry into the socially constructed and value-laden experiences and meaning-making processes of the adolescents.

In this study, some identity theories, which were not primarily developed for the South African context, were used to inform the study. Using these theories in a South African context is worth mentioning as a limitation in this study. For example, identity theories, such as Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1968) and Marcia's theory of identity status (1980) were utilised in this study to inform baseline understandings of the development of ego identity and identity processes in adolescents, especially exploration and commitment. These theories were primarily formulated for application to a European and American context. According to Adams et al. (2012) and Alberts et al. (2003), the nature of identity development and the processes related to the construction of identity are influenced mainly by socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts. In light of the historical roots and unique contextual environment of South Africa, which influence identity development, the use of these theories should be exercised with caution, and appropriate consideration should be given to understanding the nature of these constructs for black African adolescents living in marginal communities. Despite this, a strength in this research study was that South African research studies were also utilised, which accounted for some of the exceptional contextual factors in South Africa (Adams et al., 2012; Makhubela, 2012; Stevens & Lockhart, 1997).

The research process was influenced by the researcher's personal dispositions, experiences, perspectives, values and emotions, which raises awareness regarding the possibility of bias in research. Presenting as a white, middle-class feminine female, the researcher acknowledges that her interaction with the participants and the findings of the research were coloured in by her subjective lens. In order to ensure that the research findings derived from the participants' accounts as far as it was possible, the transcribed data and direct quotations were included in order to ensure that the research findings were reasonable and arose from appropriately drawn inferences. Given the significance of gender nuance in this research study, being a female researcher might have inhibited a thorough understanding of the male participants' experiences and responses. Furthermore, as a female researcher, less clarification of personal experiences from the female participants might have been

requested. This might have communicated a shared experience or sense of relatedness with the female participants, resulting in the possible withholding of pertinent information for group processes to occur. As a female individual, the participants might have drawn their own conclusions as to what the researcher's perception regarding being male and female essentially entails. This might have shaped the nature of how and what the participants expressed to the researcher during the discussions. In order to gain the participants' honest and truthful experiences, the researcher shared with the participants that each experience is personal and encouraged them to offer honest reflections and perceptions that reflect their felt experiences, known as credibility in qualitative research studies (Anney, 2014; Golafshani, 2003; Krefting, 1991). Ensuring credibility is one aspect of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research and entails that the findings of the study are honest representations of the phenomenon being explored and accurate interpretations of the data gathered (Shenton, 2004).

Furthermore, being a white middle-class individual who conducted the focus group discussions, the participants might have felt more hesitant to share certain socioeconomic-related experiences in the group for fear of not being able to be related to. The researcher's culture and religious values were also considered in how these might have influenced her approach to the research study and her interpretation of the participants' unique experiences. As such, supervisor feedback and a reflexive journal were prioritised in this research study in order to eliminate the possible effects of any researcher bias.

During the research study, the manner in which the qualitative methodology was applied by the researcher brought about some limitations pertaining to sampling methods and focus group dynamics (Creswell, 2012; Maree, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005; Springer, 2010). While purposive sampling methods were used to compile the sample, a limitation of using this sampling method is that the representativeness of the sample is compromised. In addition, small participant sample sizes were obtained for this study, which could influence the results of a study being generalised. According to Maree (2007), representativeness is a characteristic related to quantitative research that ensures the reliability and validity of the research findings. While this would facilitate the utilisation of the findings of this research study, this limitation was countered in that the aim of this research study was

merely to explore and describe the experiences of the participants, and not to generalise the findings that were found in the sample. Importantly, it should be noted then that the results that emerged in this study should not be viewed as universal experiences of black African adolescents but rather as the personal narratives of the participants in the sample.

The focus group discussions were conducted in English, which was not the home language for most of the participants. This served as a limitation in the study because the participants were sharing their experiences of an already sensitive and complex phenomenon in a language with which they were not most comfortable. Difficulties with language proficiency might have clouded the participants' ability to express appropriately their experiences of exploring themselves as gendered beings.

Furthermore, the use of focus group discussions for a personal and sensitive topic, such as gender identity, might have been limiting. Given adolescents' heightened sensitivity to social relationships, it is likely that the participants might have been hesitant or cautious to share their truthful experiences for fear of being judged or ridiculed in a group setting. However, as the researcher was interested in adolescents' experiences related to their identity as it is co-constructed in a social setting, the group interaction was valuable in this research. According to Sarantakos (2005), the theoretical paradigm of social constructivism is relevant for studies that focus on the interpretation and perception of subjective reality as it emerges from interaction with the contextual environment.

In addition, as the researcher was a novice at research at the time of conducting the focus group discussions, she reflected on the fact that she might have approached the focus group discussions in such a way that it would have fostered greater opportunities for the participants to express their stories and for her to clarify them. This was noted when the researcher critically reflected on the semi-structured questionnaire schedule and verbatim transcriptions.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to explore and describe black African adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration. In light of this research, recommendations are made in order to expand the

knowledge base regarding meaning-making processes and constructions of gender identity for South African adolescents. In the following section, these recommendations are provided.

In this study, the influence of the researcher's gender, ethnicity, culture, language and personal dispositions was considered. In light of this, it is recommended that the researcher's gender and language are accommodated in the sample as far as it is possible and reasonable. Given that gender identity was experienced as a personal and private domain for the participants in this study, it could be fascinating to explore the participants' experiences of gender identity when they interact in the language of their choice, as well as with someone of the same biological gender with whom they *might* feel more comfortable.

In terms of the application of the qualitative methodology in this study, it is recommended that some focus group discussions are conducted with groups that are gender heterogeneous. Conducting focus group discussions that are homogenous (as in this study) and heterogeneous in gender might create interesting social dynamics in the group and add value in understanding adolescents' experiences as they unfold in front of the other gender. This might add another dimension to understanding the portrayal of gender identity in social settings where both male and female persons are present.

Given that this study was conducted in the Manguang area of the Free State Province, it would be valuable to repeat this study in Manguang, utilising a different and more representative sample, including religion and ethnicity. Repetition of this study is also encouraged in other neglected areas of South Africa. Understanding whether the experiences of the participants in this study are similar or not to those of other adolescents living in marginalised contexts can facilitate the development of psychoeducation programmes. Such programmes can be aimed at providing targeted psychological support to adolescents experiencing difficulties as they transition through these exploration periods in a poor socioeconomic environment. Utilising a more representative sample should also enable the research to be of impact in other contexts and settings.

As gender identity develops from early childhood and then peaks during adolescence and emerging adulthood, it might be relevant to conduct a longitudinal study in order to explore how a developmental phenomenon, such as gender identity, unfolds and transforms over time in certain

contexts. Ployhart and Vandenberg (2010) are of the opinion that utilising longitudinal approaches for research topics in which developmental changes occur over the lifespan can add valuable contributions to existing knowledge bases. Not only can opportunities such as these allow for existing theories to be critically reflected upon, but they can also facilitate the development of novel, evidence-based and context-appropriate theories. Furthermore, this would shed light on the importance of investigating a developmental phenomenon as it occurs and adds to the scientific base of developmental psychology with regard to how individuals explore their gendered identity in different ways during childhood, adolescence and emerging adulthood, respectively.

In this research, it was found that culture influenced the development of gender identity; however, adolescents are attributing less significance to the role of culture in their gender identity exploration during adolescence. In light of this, it is recommended that further exploration and investigation into the relationship between culture and gender identity be conducted. Future research that focuses on the role of the intergenerational transmission of gender-related values and roles from various cultures to adolescents might provide useful insights regarding the weight of different cultures and how these influence adolescents' internalisation or defiance of gendered behaviours and roles. Furthermore, exploring individualistic and collectivistic culture during this investigation might facilitate understanding gender constructions that evolve from diverse cultural values.

One of the relevant findings in this study pertained to the complexities surrounding gender identity exploration. It is recommended that future studies focus on the multidimensional aspects of gender identity exploration, highlighting the physical, behavioural, social and psychological dimensions and how these contribute towards developmental processes, stereotypes and binary mentalities.

The results from this study indicated that gender identity exploration is regarded as a social construct. Against this background, it is recommended that future studies build on the notion of social constructivism and gender identity. Exploration of various tenets of social constructivism and how this relates to the development and creation of gender identity would be relevant. Included in this endeavour might be the exploration of the various contributing factors in adolescents' sociocultural environments. In this way, voices can be given to important aspects and systems in their environments

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(family, community members, teachers, peers and media), resulting in a holistic account of factors that influence the social construction of gender identity.

A noteworthy trend that surfaced in this research study was that black African adolescents are increasingly shifting away from their collective ties to experiment and adopt more Westernised orientations and values related to gender. This corresponds with the work of Kamper and Badenhorst (2010), who acknowledged the importance of culture for black African adolescents while referring to an increase in the adoption of individualistic values. In order to explore this phenomenon more comprehensively, it is recommended that future studies are conducted to investigate (a) how Westernisation influences the development of gender roles in a transforming society, (b) how the adoption of Westernised gender roles and gender identity are different to traditional expectations, and (c) the implications thereof on individual mental health and family and community systems. This could be relevant as it might result in the evaluation of existing theories and be followed by the development of more appropriate theories to understand gender identity in a globalising society. Additionally, the results could yield discrepancies between more traditional approaches to the development of gender identity versus Westernised approaches to development. This can aid in supporting families to cope with adjustment to societal changes and guide mental healthcare workers in understanding the identity-related challenges that adolescents are facing and being competent in treating the psychological problems arising from these.

The findings from this study indicated that the hegemonic form of masculinity is a valued identity construct among the black adolescents in the study. For future research, it would be beneficial to focus on femininity as a hegemonic concept and its role in the development of various identity formations, including occupational identity, ethnic identity, spiritual identity and gender identity. This would steer away from femininity existing in relation to masculinity and highlight the role of various identities adopted by women in various domains of their lives.

In this research, it was found that adolescents are challenging various forms of hegemony, which serves to bring about some change in societal power dynamics. The recommendations for future research are aimed at expanding on how and what individuals are challenging with regard to

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hegemonic institutions and conventions in society. In conjunction with this is also to investigate how agency, whether this means challenging or not, contributes towards meaning-making processes.

During this research study, the idiosyncratic nature of gender identity exploration, expression and development was highlighted. The researcher deemed it relevant to recommend that psychologists are encouraged to attend training workshops regarding the significance of current gender-related challenges in South Africa. This might equip psychologists to engage therapeutically with diverse gender and sexual minorities in ways that empower them and contribute towards multicultural competence in the profession of psychology.

7.4 Conclusion

The primary aim of the study was to explore and describe the experiences of gender identity exploration of black African adolescents living in the Manguang area of the Free State Province. The social constructivist paradigm governed the study, and it was approached in a qualitative manner. By using focus group discussions as the preferred data collection method in this study, meaningful and personal experiences were gained from the participants, whereby four main themes and eleven sub-themes emerged, respectively. A hybrid approach to thematic analysis allowed the researcher to prioritise inductively the voices of the participants, while deductively applying the lens of hegemonic masculinity in the interpretation thereafter.

Given that the literature base indicated a lack of qualitative research on gender identity in the Manguang area of the Free State, this study provided valuable insights regarding the exploration and description of experiences related to gender identity for minority adolescent populations.

The outcome of this research could highlight the influence of the sociocultural milieu on adolescents' gender identity development and elucidate the extent to which adherence to inauthentic gender identity or roles contributes towards the development of mental illness. This can lead to diverse therapeutic and psychoeducation interventions that promote exploration in unique contexts and provide psychological support and guidance to adolescents. Furthermore, understanding the implications of developmental processes and contextual development for adolescents can contribute

towards empowering the youth in their preparation for the opportunities and challenges of emerging adulthood.

The value of these contributions relates to informative training programmes for higher education, psychologists in training, education departments planning life orientation curriculums and community healthcare workers. Accessibility to this research study facilitates the continued professional development of professional healthcare workers.

Furthermore, it informs therapeutic practice in the form of being mindful as to how these experiences influence therapeutic approaches, treatment regimes, transference and countertransference. Although the research results are not representative, it can promote and facilitate insightful new theoretical developments and research, which can have a far-reaching impact on individuals in marginalised contexts, especially those battling with their identity in a critical and stigmatised society. By offering these experiences, allied healthcare workers are able to gain increasing awareness regarding the implications of gender identity and its role in contributing towards mental illness. Conducting this research contributes to empowering those who are afflicted and strengthening those who are flourishing. For psychologists engaging with psychological difficulties that pertain to gender identity, it is hoped that vulnerable individuals will be approached with greater empathy, unconditional positive regard and respect so as to facilitate a journey of purposeful and courageous living.

In this chapter, the aim was to conclude the study by referring to the noteworthy findings of the study, the limitations thereof and the recommendations for future research. It can be concluded that the aims of this research study were met.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Researcher:	Carmen Higgs	Supervisor: Professor L. Naudé
	Campus Key	Department of Psychology
	Universitas	University of the Free State
	BLOEMFONTEIN	BLOEMFONTEIN

Telephone:	0731568346	051 4012189

Email:	carmenhiggs@gmail.com	naudel@ufs.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS'   August 2016

Dear Participant

I, Carmen Higgs, am currently registered for a master's degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Free State. Please read this document carefully as your signature is required for participation in the study. The topic of my research is: Black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration from a hegemonic masculinity perspective. The study has been approved by the Research Committee of the University of the Free State.

It will be asked of you to participate in one focus group discussion of one hour. During this focus group discussion, I would like to discuss your views about the ways in which you form an identity by exploring the avenues that you take in order to establish who you are and how you express your identity. If there are any unpleasant emotions which arise during the course of the focus group discussions, psychological services will be provided.

Your participation is this study is voluntary, which means that you may withdraw from the study without explanation or decline participation without any penalties. You will not receive any compensation in return for your participation. I would like to assure you that the study will be conducted in a confidential manner and that your identity will be protected in the study.

By signing below, you are agreeing that (1) you have read and understand the abovementioned information, (2) questions regarding participation have been answered according to your satisfaction, (3) you are aware that you will not be compensated and what the potential of risk is, and (4) you are voluntarily participating in this research study.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. It is greatly appreciated. If you are comfortable and willing, please complete the following:

Participant's Name (Please print name)   Participant's signature

Name of Researcher (Please print name)   Researcher's signature

Date: Date:

Kind regards,

Carmen Higgs   **Professor L. Naudé**

Researcher   **Supervisor**

Appendix B: Biographic Information Form

All personal information will be kept confidential

Title of the research study: Black adolescents' experiences of gender identity exploration from a hegemonic masculinity perspective.

Please complete the following:

School: ....

Age: ....

Current grade: ....

Gender (Male/Female): ....

Home language: ....

Language of school instruction: ....

Ethnicity (African/White/Coloured/Indian/Other): ....

Appendix C: Thematic Analysis: Colour-coded Themes and Sub-themes correspond with Transcriptions

Main themes	Sub-themes
Historical views on what it means to be a boy or girl	• Being a boy is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically masculine • Being a girl is associated with personality traits that appear to be stereotypically feminine
Exploring Who I am: Balancing social context with personal agency	• The role of parental (family) values and culture • The significance of peers and the school context • Personal agency: The role of "Me"
Exploring gender identity in a changing environment	• Gender roles and personal characteristics remain essentially unchanged • Challenging gender roles results in change • The holders of power: Reciprocal processes
The complexity in exploring gender identity	• Dichotomous perspectives • The significance of what can be seen: Outward aesthetics and biological characteristics • Who I am (being) is related to how I express myself through activities and roles (doing)

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA

UFS·UV
HUMANITIES
GEESTESWETENSKAPPE

25 January 2016

Prof L. Naudé
Department of Psychology
UFS

Application for extension for ethical clearance: Living and learning in Central South Africa (UFS-HUM-2013-30)

Dear Prof Naudé

With reference to your application for extension for ethical clearance with the Faculty of the Humanities, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Research Ethics Committee of the faculty that you have been granted extension with the assumption that there are no major changes with regards to the study.

Thank you for submitting the application for extension. We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Prof LJS Botes
Dean: Faculty of the Humanities

Copy: Charné Vercueil (Research Co-ordinator: Faculty of the Humanities)

Office of the Dean/Kantoor van die Dekaan/Ofisa ya Dine
T: +27(0)51 401 2240 | F: +27(0) 401 7363 | E: beukeshs@ufs.ac.za
P.O. Box/Posbus 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa/Suid-Afrika | www.ufs.ac.za

Appendix E: Researcher's Reflections

In the following section, the researcher will provide some of her significant reflections throughout the research process. The personal accounts will be given by providing experiences and reflections in the first person.

Upon initiating this research study, I was overwhelmed by the selection of my research topic. As an eager, academic and ambitious student of 26 years old, I was fascinated by various research areas of the psychology profession. In light of personal experiences that I have had with several loved ones, I came to realise my keen interest in gender studies. Due to several life circumstances and losses, I came to value living a distinctive life that no other human being would ever be able to live. For that reason, pursuing studies in identity was motivating to me. Combining gender and identity was a challenging endeavour, partly because the nature of the topic is complex, and the concept can be conceptualised in several ways. Embarking on the study, I was uncertain of the research process itself as I had not conducted an actual research study previously. It required that I checked (and double-checked) that I was on the right path in taking any next step in the process.

One of the highlights of the research study was my engagement with the participants. Their excitement, approachableness and cheerful spirits were an aspect of the process that I thoroughly enjoyed. Given the demands of the academic programme at the time of conducting the focus groups, I was aware of the significance of personal responsibility in balancing academic demands with research-related activities and priorities. Throughout the research process, I realised that the participants found it difficult to articulate relevant experiences related to their gender identity. When I reflected on this trend, there were several factors that I experienced to be influential, including level of education, cognitive development, socioeconomic context, language proficiency, group dynamics and researcher-participant interaction.

One of the subtle inclinations that I noted during the focus groups with the female participants were that they would often say "...you know..." as if they related to me because I was female, indicating a sense of shared commonality. I was mindful not to present as agreeable in these instances, as I was aware of how this dynamic interaction could influence the expression of their personal and

unique experiences. Upon reflecting on the focus group discussions, I recall feeling frustrated with myself that I had not had more experience with previous data collection. At that point, I also felt a sense of disappointment with systemic influences, such as school bells ringing and difficulties with venues. At times, I was also met with feelings of disbelief when participants engaged on topics about another gender. Additionally, I experienced myself to be concerned about collecting sufficient data during the discussions. The responses of the participants were also touching to me. I became aware of their limited education and guidance in this respect and to set appropriate boundaries to not overstep my role as researcher versus therapist. For the most part, I experienced the participants to offer honest reflections. However, there were a few occasions that I experienced some participants attempting to impress me or elicit other emotions from me, such as surprise.

Throughout the participants' reflections of their experiences, I gained more understanding of my gender identity. As a feminine female with strong Christian values, I grew up with two brothers, and without a father. My mother became ill when I was 13 years old. In light of this, I often adopted several roles and engaged with traits that have been associated with males and females. Whilst I have not ever found my own gender identity development or exploration to be challenging, I have frequently struggled with the manner in which submissiveness is associated with timidity and fragility. Despite the fact that I do not strongly engage with gender activism, I am an advocate for males and females to flourish in their unique and respective rights. As a humble individual, I consider my identity as a female as one that is feminine, yet strong and independent. As such, when the participants in this study emphasised that male individuals are mostly dominant and female persons are predominantly submissive and nurturing, I became aware of personally conflicting feelings. In order to embrace diversity in South Africa and adapt to evolving societal transformation, I am of the opinion that traditional roles and conceptions of male persons as masculine and female persons as feminine ought to be greatly challenged.

During the process, I was able to acknowledge various cultural differences. Although, I expected this have a greater impact in this research study, it was not entirely the case. I found that the participants were aware of the fact that I came from a different cultural background, but they were experienced as eager to educate me in these instances and often giggled at my unfamiliarity with their

implicit cultural meanings behind words and experiences. This was relevant as it fostered clarity and group dynamics.

During the analysis of the research results, I worked tirelessly to develop themes that were in accordance with the actual dataset. I found myself struggling to capture the participants' accounts 'perfectly', often resulting in becoming fatigued and demotivated. During moments like these, I put my research priorities aside, and re-engaged with it following a short break. While pursuing the completion of the research study, there were moments that I felt completely bewildered, and others where I experienced peace and satisfaction with the way in which the study unfolded.

Focus group discussions 1: Female adolescents (11 participants in Grade 8)

1.1   **Interviewer:** Good afternoon everyone!

1.2   **Participants**: Good afternoon

1.3   **Interviewer:** It's nice to have you here today. I'm a researcher and I'm doing research on identity and more specifically, I want to look at how are boys different from girls.

1.4   **Interviewer:** So the first question that I would like to ask you is what do you know about identity? What is identity?

1.5   **Participant**: I think Identity is when you are boy or a girl. When you identify him or her as a boy or a girl.

1.6   **Interviewer:** Okay, so when you identify one person as a boy and another person as a girl. Okay, what else?

1.7   **Participant**: I think identity is who you are.

1.8   **Interviewer**: Okay, and what do you mean who you are?

1.9   **Participant**: I think that it's what kind of a person you are and how you behave.

1.10 **Interviewer**: Yes, okay. Do you think there is a difference between boys and girls? So, in other words, is there a difference between male identity and female identity?

1.11 **Participant**: Yes

1.12 **Interviewer:** Okay.

1.13 **Participant:** Yes, I do believe there is a difference between male and female. Because boys like to do certain things and they do opposite things other than girls. And the way they react towards each other. As it is said, if you are female and male, you will attract each other, but if you are both males, you won't attract each other.

1.14 **Interviewer**: So, she said a few things, she said that boys do the opposite of girls, and she also said that they behave very differently. Boys will be attracted to girls and girls will be attracted to boys, but a male will not attract another male?

1.15 **Interviewer**: What do you think about that?

1.16 **Participant:** (silence)

1.17 **Interviewer:** Okay, let me ask it in another way. You mentioned that boys do specific things and girls do specific things, what are some of the things that boys do and what are some of the things that you do as girls?

1.18 **Participant**: As girls, like as girls, girls advise each other on certain stuff, but then boys don't. They just let you be like that without advising you.

1.19 **Interviewer:** Okay. Are there are specific roles that girls take on and boys take on?

1.20 **Participant**: If you are a girl you can even take a man's role, like you can even say that the man is your role model because it doesn't mean if you are a girl that your role model has to be a female. Because someties our minds differ from each other even if we are both females.

1.21 **Interviewer:** Right, I understand. And what are the specific things that boys do that girls don't do?

1.22 **Participant:** You see, boy have penises and we have wombs, and we don't play with cars sometimes you know, they play with cars and we play with poppies (dolls), yes something like that.

1.23 **Interviewer:** So she spoke a little bit about the female body and the male body. And that boys play specifically with cars and girls play maybe with dolls.

1.24 **Interviewer**: What are some of the things that you do as teenagers that makes you a girl?

1.25 **Participant:** As a teenage girl you start first by like body changes, hormone changes, you start menstruating, your hormones change, and your attitude toward people and as time goes you date guys, and it will be your first time with the dating thing.

1.26 **Interviewer:** Okay. And what else do girls do? Maybe you can speak a little bit about, do girls wear makeup, do girls wear dresses or don't girls have to do that? What makes you a girl in this group today?

1.27 **Participant:** What makes me a girl in this group today?

1.28 **Interviewer:** Yes

1.29 **Participant:** Is that I'm wearing dress and I don't mind wearing a lesibana (laibana dress)

1.30 **Participants:** (giggles)

1.31 **Participant:** I can wear a track suit, but I'm wearing a dress and my top (point to breasts).....my breasts has grown (giggles)....that's what makes me a girl.

1.32 **Interviewer:** So does everyone feel like that in the group, that it's all about the physical body or are there other different things?

1.33 **Participant:** Well, I think that being a girl is not only how you dress, but how you express yourself to people. Like as she said that uhm wearing a dress makes you a girl, I can wear pants and still be a girl, it depends how I behave myself towards other people...Yes

1.34 **Interviewer:** And what are some those ways of behaving towards people that makes you a girl because you mentioned that you can still wear a tracksuit, but you can still be a girl because it's the way in which you relate or interact with other people that makes you a women.

1.35 **Participant:** Basically, on weekends, most people go out and get drunk and stuff. So, if you are a girl who respects herself, you need to stay home, even if you don't stay at home, but go to places where they are nearer home. Stay there and come back and make sure that you light the house, make sure that the house is basically clean, and that making sure that everything is fine in the house before you can go to places.

1.36   Interviewer: So would you say that, a women is someone who works in the house, a women is someone, you mentioned the word respect, if you respect yourself then is a women then a responsible person, that doesn't go out? Who goes out and gets drunk?

1.37   Participant: Some people are not responsible, even boys go out, most boys go out than girls do.

1.38   Interviewer: So are women then more responsible than boys in your opinion?

1.39   Participant: Yes.

1.40   Interviewer: Okay. And who agrees with that?

1.41   Participant: I agree. I was one of them, but I was really (giggles), I respect myself. I would go out with my friends and come back late. I know today I'm going out; my father would beat me, and forget about it. I will go out again but I respect really, I respect myself. I agree with her

1.42   Interviewer: So when she feels like she didn't go out, she respects herself; you do go out, but you can still be a responsible person who respects herself but your father punishes you? Is that what you meant by beats you?

1.43   Participant: Yes.

1.44   Participant: Okay when she says she goes out with her friends and comes back late and her father beats her, it's not like you are respecting yourself. If you respect yourself then you should respect other people too. Because you cannot go out without your father's permission and then say that you respect yourself and yet you don't respect your father.

1.45   Participant: There is a thing that you don't know; when you respect yourself you don't do "lalabukas" you come back at home fast, that's the thing. And I respect myself but I will tell you later.

1.46   Interviewer: Okay so what I'm hearing is that there are different degrees of respect and we view respect very differently. One person sees respect as defined as how this lady sees it and you see respect as something different. So that is fine because we all have different opinions about what respect is.

1.47   Interviewer: So if we move back a little, then do you think there specific things that boys do that you don't do? What makes a boy a boy other than his physical body?

1.48   Assistant: Yes, you can say something....

1.49   Participant: By doing house, yard, garden, paint outside the house.

1.50   Interviewer: So you say that what makes a boy a boy is that he does the more physical work? He works in the garden, paints the house, he does the more rough things, the physical things, is that what you mean?

1.51   Participant: Yes

1.52   Interviewer: Okay. Does anyone agree?

1.53   Participant: Can I add something?

1.54   Interviewer: Yes

1.55   Participant: Well boys do certain things. Like they sometimes do go out. But the negative thing about them going out is they drink to an extent that can at times rape a girl or even forget what they were doing that night. Boys have different attitudes towards girls, like even when they speak to each other "tsotsi"(criminals) like "hemabebeza" (he is bad) you know, all those kinds of things. When they see a girl they will be like "chesas, that girl's feet", because sometimes boys do not love girls for who they are, they just love them because of their figure, their beauty, and all of that but not knowing what the girl is really like on the inside.

1.56   Interviewer: Okay, so what you are saying is that men go out and they are less responsible at times. Because they drink too much at times without worrying about the consequences. Men also seem to talk to other men and women differently according to you. They also tend to value what girls look like and are not as focussed on their personality? Does this only apply to men?

1.57   Participant: Some women do.

1.58   Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me more?

1.59   Participant: Because nowadays, women are lesbians, they take that kind of saying from boys, they say that to another girl

1.60   Participant: Yes, acting with them as if they were males.

1.61   Interviewer: So you see it that women that are lesbians take their ways from men and apply it to other women and you connect that with being a lesbian.

1.62   Participant: Yes they can still be like them but will still remain girls. Even I sometimes say those "tsotsi" sayings like when I speak to my friends, like when I speak to Thato on weekends, just stop with that kind of thing, but yet I'm still a girl.

1.63   1.65 Interviewer: And if you had to think of a few words that describe girls, what would those words be? Like if you think of a girl, what words come to your mind?

1.64   Participant: Soft

1.65   Interviewer: Soft yes

1.66   Participant: Responsible

1.67   Participant: Clever

1.68   Participant: Taken care of

1.69   Participant: Caring

1.70   Participant: Beautiful

1.71   Participant: Intelligent

1.72   Interviewer: Intelligent

1.73   Participant: Confident

1.74   Interviewer: Confident, what do you mean?

1.75   Participant: Respectful

1.76 **Participant :** And Kind

1.77 **Interviewer:** And boys, if we had to use words to describe them what would those words be?

1.78 **Participant:** Naughty

1.79 **Interviewer:** Naughty, okay...

1.80 **Participant:** Gentlemen

1.81 **Participant:** Awesome

1.82 **Participants:** (giggles)

1.83 **Participant**: Awesome

1.84 **Participant**: Unresponsible

1.85 **Participant:** Uncaring

1.86 **Interviewer** Uncaring

1.87 **Participant:** Lazy

1.88 **Participant:** Very ugly

1.89 **Interviewer:** Very ugly

1.90 **Interviewer:** And what about women, must women, if you think of yourselves in the future, then what must women be?

1.91 **Participant:** We can still be mums but it doesn't mean if you are a mother you have to stay at home and take care of the kinds while the father works. You can also work.

1.92 **Interviewer:** Okay, so you are mentioning that women are not only mothers nowadays but they actually also women that go to work and they lead jobs and can still live their dreams.

1.93 **Participant:** Some of them are businesswomen.

1.94 **Participant:** because of their hard work

1.95 **Interviewer:** okay, what else?

1.96 **Participant:** I think that women should not stay at home. Whereas then maybe if you are married, and you have kids, then your husband says that you should stay at home and do the work. That shouldn't work these days, like a women should be independent on herself and make sure she works hard in order...... like maybe if the husband leaves her she can have money to support herself and the children.

1.97 **Participant:** Yes

1.98 **Participant:** That's true

1.99 **Interviewer:** Do you know what stereotypes are?

1.100 **Participants:** No

1.101 **Interviewer:** Stereotype is a big word that means some standard accepted views or ideas that others have about someone or something. For example, if you think of a stereotypical women, then a women must be gentle and stays at home to look after children.

1.102 **Participant:** Does that means she has to be a housewife?

1.103 **Interviewer:** That would be a stereotype of women. Do you think stereotypes still exist?

1.104 Participants: No

1.105 Group Participants: Yes

1.106 Participants: Yes, I think it still exists.

1.107 Interviewer: Yes

1.108 Do you think stereotypes still exist?

1.109 Participants: No

1.110 Group Participants: Yes

1.111 Participants: Yes, I think it still exists.

1.112 Interviewer: Yes

1.113 Participant: When you go to Umakaya Ukwzulunatal, you will find that family womens.

1.114 Participants: The womens and mothers are at home and you will find the fathers are at the mines

1.115 Interviewer: So are the dads the ones who bring in money for the family?

1.116 Participants: yes

1.117 Interviewer: and have things changed today?

1.118 Group Participants: no

1.119 Interviewer: So are the dads the ones who bring in money for the family?

1.120 Participants: yes

1.121 Interviewer: and have things changed today?

1.122 Group Participants: no

1.123 Participant: Yes, alot

1.124 Participant: Here, it's perfect now

1.125 Interviewer: Here, it is perfect so things have changed a lot?

1.126 Participant: Yes

1.127 Interviewer: Ok thank you ladies, I appreciate you being here today and thank for opening up and sharing your thoughts and opinions with me.

Focus group discussions 2: Male adolescents (10 Participants in Grade 9)

2.1   **Interviewer**: Good afternoon everyone

2.2   **Participant**: Good afternoon

2.3   **Interviewer**: It's nice to have you here today. I have already briefed you a little bit about my research, so I'm going to start with my questions. There is no right and there is no wrong answer okay. I would like you to know what you know about identity. What do you think identity is?

2.4   **Participant**: Its personal

2.5   **Participant**: I think identity is when you speak to someone face to face.

2.6   **Interviewer:** Okay.

2.7   **Participant**: when you speak with someone behind you.

2.8   **Participant**: me, I think it's the way you look like, your face.

2.9   **Group Participants**: ja

2.10   **Interviewer**: the way you look, your face, how you look.

2.11   **Interviewer:** do you think identity is the way you are as a person? Is that also identity or is it not identity?

2.12   **Participant**: it is identity

2.13   **Interviewer:** is that what it is as well. Ok do you think there is difference between boys' identity and girls' identity?

2.14   **Participant**: yes

2.15   **Interviewer:** you all say that so confidently! what would you say is the difference?

2.16   **Interviewer**: you can still think a bit

2.17   **Participant:** me I think the difference is that girls or females can be treated the other way and boys the other way.

2.18   **Interviewer:** ok for you the difference is that girls get treated one way and gather get treated in a different way. And what are some of those ways? Maybe you can try and describe boys to me. What is a boy to you? What is a male? There is no right or wrong.

2.19   **Participant:** guys have a penis

2.20   **Interviewer:** okay what else?

2.21   **Participant:** (giggles)

2.22   **Interviewer:** it's true, it's true.

2.23   **Participant:** they have a big chest

2.24   **Participants**: (Whisper, giggles)

2.25   **Interviewer**: anything else, remember that there is no right or wrong answers.

2.26   **Participant:** boys have a deep voice.

2.27   **Interviewer:** boys have a deep voice ok.

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2.28   **Participant:** and cannot be able to think faster than girls.

2.29   **Interviewer:** ok so are you saying that girls think faster than boys?

2.30   **Participant:** Ja, yes

2.31   **Participant:** girls think too many faster than boys

2.32   **Interviewer:** and how are boys when you speak about your personality? What are some of the things that boys do?

2.33   **Participant:** sometimes boys get angry

2.34   **Participant:** they are aggressive

2.35   **Participant:** boys get angry and they lose their temper

2.36   **Participant:** they can be very angry, quickly, like aggressive.

2.37   **Participant:** abusive

2.38   **Interviewer**: do they get angry quickly? Okay

2.39   **Participant:** they like to strike hard with fist, to strike other people.

2.40   **Interviewer**: they like to strike? What is strike? is that fight?

2.41   **Group Participant:** yes, they argue alot, yes

2.42   **Interviewer:** so boys like to argue, strike and fight with their hands. What else?

2.43   **Participant:** boys do a lot of sports

2.44   **Interviewer:** okay, boys are sportsmen for you. Yes okay. And girls? how do you describe girls?

2.45   **Interviewer**: how do girls become girls?

2.46   **Interviewer**: what do girls do? If you say boys are all of these things then tell me a bit about girls.

2.47   **All Participants**: girls like to shout at each other.

2.48   **Participant**: they are greedy.

2.49   **Interviewer**: they are? Are they greedy? Okay, I hear you yes.

2.50   **Participant**: some are too forward

2.51   **Interviewer**: they are too forward, so they just speak their mind?

2.52   **Participant**: yes, they talking always and they can do sports too

2.53   **Interviewer:** they also play sport.

2.54   **Interviewer:** and do you think there are specific roles that men must do and other roles that a women must take on?

2.55   **Participant:** yes

2.56   **Interviewer:** ok. Speak a little bit about that to me. What roles must boys take on? When you are boy, what must you do? Are there specific things?

2.57   **Participant**: clean the yard, not wash dishes

2.58   **Participant:** ja, washing dishes, it is girls' stuff

2.59   **Interviewer:** ok, so girls must wash dishes

2.60   **Participant:** look after babies

2.61   **Interviewer:** and look after baby, is that what you say?

2.62   **All Participant**: Ja, Ja (giggles)

2.63   **Participant**: they must wash laundry

2.64   **Interviewer:** they must do laundry

2.65   **Interviewer:** so if I understand you correctly, women must do the household jobs, in the home. So what must men do and how do they know this?

2.66   **Participant**: ja

2.67   **Participant**: outside the home

2.68   **Participant**: no

2.69   **Interviewer:** ok let's start here, so they must?

2.70   **Participant:** find jobs

2.71   **Participant:** be the head of the house and tell what women must do

2.72   **Interviewer:** So must they be the authority in the house? How do they hold power in the house?

2.73   **Participant**: yes

2.74   **Interviewer:** okay

2.75   **Participant**: they must not make strikes (argue) in the house

2.76   **Interviewer:** boys mustn't fight in the house?

2.77   **Participant:** must do the garden

2.78   **Interviewer:** maybe you can tell me a little bit about yourself, how do you come to act as a teenage boy today?

2.79   **Participant:** you must respect yourself.

2.80   **Interviewer**: Ok does that make you become a boy?

2.81   **Participant**: you must use your instinct to <u>become a</u> boy

2.82   **Participant**: yes

2.83   **Interviewer:** okay

2.84   **Interviewer:** what else? What makes you a boy today? How are you boys and not girls today?

2.85   **Participant:** by respecting each other

2.86   **Interviewer:** by respecting. So do boys have a lot of respect? Boys must be respectful?

2.87   **All Participant**: yes

2.88   **Interviewer**: Ok and if you think of girls in your classrooms, what makes them girls? Do they do specific things that you think that's a girl?

2.89   **All Participants**: Ja, yes

2.90   **Interviewer:** what do they do?

2.91   **Participant:** makeup?

2.92   **Interviewer:** they use makeup, yes

2.93   **Participant:** wear skirts, short skirts

2.94   **Interviewer:** short skirts?

2.95   **Participant:** too many

2.96   **Interviewer:** too many short skirts and too much makeup?

2.97   **Group Participants**: Ja, yes mam

2.98   **Participant:** they respect the teachers.

2.99   **Interviewer:** do they respect the teachers? And the boys?

2.100   **Participant**: sometimes

2.101   **Interviewer:** and, what else makes them girls? Must you wear skirts and make up if you are a girl?

2.102   **Participant**: no

2.103   **Participant**: nah

2.104   **Participant**: no, not really

2.105   **Interviewer:** no you mustn't wear makeup.

2.106   **Interviewer:** are there specific things that you boys must do?

2.107   **Participant:** ja, you must wash when you go to school

2.108   **Participant:** cut your hair short

2.109   **Interviewer:** so, if I understand you correctly, you need to be hygienic?

2.110   **Interviewer:** so must boys have short hair

2.111   **Participant**: yes

2.112   **Interviewer:** you can't have long hair?

2.113   **Interviewer**: what else can you say about that?

2.114   **Participant:** silence (No response)

2.115   **Interviewer:** remember earlier you had mentioned that girls must be in the home and boys must do the outside work. Is it still like that? Do you think that there are some men that actually do work inside the home and girls are responsible for work outside the home?

2.116   **All Participants**: yes

2.117   **Interviewer**: how do you think it happens like that?

2.118   **Participant**: my family forces me to do that kind of stuff

2.119   **Interviewer:** so your family tells you that you are responsible for work in the home?

2.120   **Participant:** yes and then I must do

2.121   **Participant:** and they are meant for girls

2.122   **Participant**: yes, I agree.

2.123   **Participant**: Ja man

2.124   **Interviewer:** and do you think that women must be feminine and moms at home or can women be businesswomen?

2.125   **Participant:** yes, they can work

2.126   **Interviewer:** so they don't have to be in the house

2.127   **Participant:** yes, they must be like a lady working and mom

2.128   **Interviewer:** and men, what would make you feel more like a man?

2.129   **Participant**: to have jobs

2.130   **Interviewe**r: you must have a job?

2.131   **Participant**: if you are businesswomen, you hire someone to look after your baby in the home

2.132   **Interviewer**: okay and if you are both business people?

2.133   **Participant**: yes

2.134   **Participant**: Ja, equal

2.135   **Interviewer**: and the rest of you feel they are not equal.

2.136   **Participant:** man

2.137   **Interviewer**: What do you mean by that?

2.138   **Participant:** ja, the man is above her

2.139   Participant: man is first

2.140   **Participant**: but sometimes the women are smart brains and bright

2.141   **Interviewer:** so you mean that if women are clever, then they can be above and the men.

2.142   **Participant:** yes

2.143   **Interviewer**: but most of the time?

2.144   **Participant:** businessman is at the top

2.145   **Participant**: like Motsepi, Patrice Motsepi

2.146   **Interviewer**: what do you think is the reason for this? How do men and women learn to be like this?

2.147   **Participant**: because men know many people

2.148   Participant: Alot of family

2.149   **Interviewer:** do you think it's something that has got to do with your personality?

2.150   **Participants**: yes

2.151   **Interviewer**: okay, why would you say that?

2.152   **Participant:** men respect others

2.153   **Participant:** men are hard workers and like to be in charge

2.154   **All Participant:** yes!

2.155   **Interviewer**: you all say that with confidence!

2.156   **Participant:** yes

2.157   **Interviewer**: and if women are in charge?

2.158   **Participant**: then there will be trouble.

2.159   **Participant:** they are lazy easily and cant be

2.160 Interviewer: okay everyone, we have come to the end of our interview. thank you for your time and your participation today.

3.1   **Interviewer:** Good morning Everyone

3.2   **Participants**: Morning

3.3   **Interviewer**: thank you for being here this morning. We have already spoken about the informed consent and your biographical details. So we are going to jump right into it. So the first thing that I would like to chat about with you is what is identity according to you?

3.4   **Participant**: according to us?

3.5   **Interviewer**: yes

3.6   **Participant**: I think identity is a person. I can say <u>everything about a person</u>...saying where he lives, his behaviour, when he was born, everything.

3.7   **Interviewer**: okay so for you, identity is everything about a person. Who you are, where you were born, and what you do? Okay, do you think that there is a difference between male identity and female identity?

3.8   **Participants**: Yes.

3.9   **Interviewer**: right, what are some of those differences? What make you guys have a male identity?

3.10   **Participant**: as part of our culture, we were taught that there is a boy and then there is a girl, and what it is to be a boy. We were told things like a man should play soccer, a man should treat a lady like this....

3.11   **Interviewer**: okay, so he mentioned some things that you leant about being a boy, and about what do men do, and what do girls do. Amongst others, you said guys should be sportsmen and you were taught how to treat a girl.

3.12   **Participant**: yes.

3.13   **Interviewer**: Okay, so you used words like what a man is. Maybe you boys can tell me, what is a real man this morning to you and how do you become that man?

3.14   **Participant**: Take responsibility for it

3.15   **Interviewer**: Yes…and

3.16   **Participant**: respect women.

3.17   **Interviewer**: respect women. Okay. What else?

3.18   **Participant**: Do the right choices.

3.19   **Participant**: a real man doesn't put a hand on a lady.

3.20   **Interviewer**: a real man doesn't put a hand on a lady, so what do you mean by that?

3.21   **Participant**: you shouldn't abuse women.

3.22   **Participant**: because men have a mentality that because we have power. You can tell them what to do.

3.23 **Interviewer**: Okay, so you mentioned an important aspect that men sometimes feel they have power and that they can sometimes abuse women because of that. What do the rest of you think?

3.24 **Participants**: (Silence)

3.25 **Interviewer**: Okay maybe we should ask the other way around. What about women? What makes them female? Other than obvious things like private parts. What else other than that?

3.26 **Participant**: here is the thing is their character.

3.27 **Interviewer**: their character?

3.28 **Participant**: way too forward

3.29 **Interviewer**: what does forward mean to you?

3.30 **Participant**: it means they talk a lot, they can gossip….they grow faster than boys also.

3.31 **Interviewer**: okay and the rest of you this side. What makes a women a women?

3.32 **Participant**: they are responsible

3.33 Participant: Very ja

3.34 **Participants**: to bring the kids up at home too

3.35 **Interviewer**: Okay, so you feel like they are also responsible like men are, but women are more responsible because they get the chance to raise a child. Is that right? what are some of those household things that women do and men do?

3.36 **Participant**: like….I have a younger sister. I was taught that I must clean the yard.

3.37 **Interviewer**: yes

3.38 **Participant**: she was told that she has to be inside the house like cleaning, doing the dishes and like ja…because like back in the house that is how my mother was taught. She was like she must wash the dishes. She was like passing the same experience on her daughter. Like my father would share about his life, so I should expect such things. We would share secrets and that secret must stay between us. Like my mother and my sister, they have their own secrets. So like ja…Me and my father have our own secrets. Like my salary, I mustn't tell.

3.39 **Interviewer**: okay so you say a few things here. Something that you mentioned to me is that your father plays a big role in your life and your mom play a big role in your sister's life. And part of that is that you have secrets with him and those are personal secrets and your sister has got secrets with your mom.

3.40 **Participant**: yes.

3.41 **Interviewer**: alright, what do the rest of you think about that?

3.42 **Participants**: about the secret

3.43 **Interviewer**: well not only about the secrets, but overall what are your thoughts about this? Is it like that still today? Can you challenge this or do you do what is expected, like for example the gardening.

3.44 **Participant**: ja, I don't always do

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3.45 **Participant**: no we doing them

3.46 **Participant**: I don't always do what I must do like garden

3.47 **Interviewer**: things seem to be a bit different now than in the past for you?

3.48 **Participants**: Ja, it is

3.49 **Interviewer**: and what is different?

3.50 **Participant**: because now I can wash my washing.

3.51 **Interviewer**: Sure, okay

3.52 **Participant**: I can clean the house

3.53 **Interviewer**: you do household things which in the beginning we mentioned very often that is associated with women. But some of you do those things.

3.54 **Participants**: yes, I do shopping

3.55 **Interviewer**: okay, I see

3.56 **Participant**: and cleaning

3.57 **Interviewer**: Do you think that doing and being all these things that you have mentioned, does it change anything about you as a boy or you as an adolescent growing up in this time and what does it change?

3.58 **Participants**: Ja, it does change.

3.59 **Interviewer**: how does it change?

3.60 **Participant**: nowadays you work like doing things that you were not supposed to do from your culture. Women are now working and back in the days no. if we do the same things that we are doing now, it will helps us for when we are having our own houses so that we may clean our own houses and do the responsibilities like boys.

3.61 **Interviewer**: earlier you mentioned that "in our black culture, we were taught...". Do you think that you do a lot of these things because you want to or is it because culturally it's actually more appropriate because maybe someone asked you to do it and within black culture family is important you. Is it like that or isn't it like that for you?

3.62 **Participant**: No

3.63 **Participant**: let me say, if I see there is dishes, I do it because I want to.

3.64 **Interviewer**: Okay, so for you it is because you want to.

3.65 **Participant**: yes…i want to…

3.66 **Interviewer**: so for you it's not a cultural thing?

3.67 **Participant**: not a cultural thing.

3.68 **Interviewer**: and even if it's a girl thing, that view is according to other people?

3.69 **Participant**: I see that there are lots of dishes that needed to be washed. I must wash them

3.70 **Interviewer**: okay. For you, if you are available, then why not wash the dishes.

3.71 **Participants**: Ja.

3.72 **Interviewer**: okay, so you challenge this idea about what is expected from men and women.

3.73   **Participants**: Ja. For me, sometimes, I just don't wanna wash the dishes. My mom forces me to wash the dishes. So uhm...when you keep on washing them, it becomes an experience so you won't have a problem because it's your mother so you do it.

3.74   **Interviewer**: Okay, so for you doing it means that you gain some experience and you don't have a problem with your mother forcing you then.

3.75   **Participant**: Ja

3.76   **Interviewer**: Okay, I understand.

3.77   **Participant**: sometimes you see dishes here. you need to please your mom when you want your mom to buy you something like tekkies.

3.78   **Interviewer**: okay, so you do it to get something from her?

3.79   **Participant**: a lot of us is like that. You wash dishes because you want somethings.

3.80   **Interviewer**: okay, I see.

3.81   **Participant**: especially when you know that your mother is gonna have money. What are we gonna do is like we have to please her. When I am from school, I will tell her today at school it was this and this…the day she comes with money. I will be like, I think I need jeans.

3.82   **Interviewer**: Okay, but some of you say you want to do it. Others say, you do housework because you getting something out of it. Okay. Something else you mentioned here is clothing and you mentioned tekkies (shoes), so do you think that boys at this age must dress well? Manly type of clothes or is it fine to wear clothes that aren't masculine?

3.83   **Participant**: nah, stylish guy clothes

3.84   **Interviewer**: And what does that mean to wear stylish clothes?

3.85   **Participants**: the swagger man (all talking at once)

3.86   **Participant**: Cool clothes like your friends

3.87   **Participant**: the thing is there is competition.

3.88   **Participant**: everywhere you go there is a competition.

3.89   **Participant**: its only for blacks.

3.90   **Interviewer**: only for black people?

3.91   **Participant**: no.

3.92   **Participant**: I don't think so. Everyone wants to do things to impress others us blacks especially. Like when we are like this and this way maybe this one wants to have you then. we must be on top like the best

3.93   **Participants**: (Giggle)

3.94   **Participant**: we always want to be on top. Ja that's part of life, peer pressure.

3.95   **Participant**: sometimes you just wanna buy just to impress them.

3.96   **Interviewer**: Okay, impress who?

3.97   **Participants**: the biggest part of buying nice clothes is to impress girls.

3.98   **Interviewer**: to impress girls? So you have mentioned quite a lot now and a lot that comes out of this is competition. And if you have to take women versus men, who is more competitive for you?

3.99   **Participants**: girls

3.100   **Interviewer**: girls

3.101   **Participants**: ja

3.102   **Interviewer**: not the guys.

3.103   **Participant**: not the guys.

3.104   **Interviewer**: and you say guys?

3.105   **Participant**: no, I say girls. Why because a lot of women like to choose men's clothes. Women buy a lot of clothes than guys too. A lot of times…Joh.

3.106   **Participant**: they will even buy clothes for a night. They always buy clothes so for us it's hard.

3.107   **Participants**: (Laugh)

3.108   **Interviewer**: So, you have less, but you must still look cool?

3.109   **Participant**: you see with a R500, girls can go to Mr Price and get a jean, shirt, tops; With R500 a guy can only get a jean.

3.110   **Participant**: with R200…

3.111   **Participant**: Just a jean and some pair of socks.

3.112   **Participant**: a girl can get high waist crop tops…

3.113   **Interviewer**: R50 crop tops.

3.114   **Participants**: (Giggle)

3.115   **Interviewer**: Yes, what do you have to say?

3.116   **Participant**: when they say, they is no competition with the girls, I mean they don't compete because their clothes are much cheaper than us. So girls ma'am they just wear non-label. There is competition in guys.

3.117   **Participant**: I think some girls feel pressure that some of her friends bought a new jean and top. She also want maybe. let's say we were like at school. They have…I don't know how to say it. But they can even go to another girl to borrow some shirt so that they can look like pretty girl

3.118   **Interviewer**: Okay. So it's still this competition thing?

3.119   **Participant**: yes…

3.120   **Interviewer**: so am uhm…and if you…if you have to think of boys, grade 11 boys. How do you describe them and how are they like this?

3.121   **Participant**: imperfection of pressure.

3.122   **Participant**: imperfection

3.123   **Interviewer**: imperfection of…

3.124 Participant: to pressurise.

3.125 Interviewer: to pressurise. Okay. What do you mean by that?

3.126 Participant: as boys, we pressure, we pressurise this boy…uhm…I don't know how to put it. Pressure this guy.

3.127 Interviewer: yes.

3.128 Participant: eish, I don't know, how can I explain it.

3.129 Participant: maybe like…

3.130 Participant: let me say, here's different guys so what he is trying to say is maybe some of my friends smoke, so when I come to school, I will pressurise you to say let's go to smoke.

3.131 Interviewer: Okay. So you are saying that boys are more vulnerable to peer pressure?

3.132 Participant: yes

3.133 Interviewer: I just want to understand, are you saying that guys give into peer pressure or are you saying that guys put pressure on their friends?

3.134 Participants: both of them…

3.135 Interviewer: Both of them…okay, how does this happen?

3.136 Participant: high self-esteem

3.137 Interviewer: high self-esteem. What do you mean?

3.138 Participants: they think good about themselves.

3.139 Participant: some boys are violent

3.140 Participant: whispers violate

3.141 Participant: they use violence to get self-esteem.

3.142 Participants: yes.

3.143 Interviewer: okay and what else?

3.144 Participant: they confident.

3.145 Interviewer: confident

3.146 Participant: Ja

3.147 Interviewer: okay uhm and anything else?

3.148 Participant: attitude.

3.149 Participant: they are well mannered

3.150 Participant: even if like you don't go to school…Ja even some other guys create work for themselves like they don't need to go to school to school to get education, they work for themselves. They use their clever minds to create stuff.

3.151 Interviewer: okay, so am I hearing you correctly, that what you mean is that men think sharply,

3.152 Participants: Participants talking at once.

3.153 Interviewer: Remember to talk one at a time please guys

3.154 Interviewer: so they think of solutions, they are strong thinkers?

3.155   **Participant**: that's why we have most billionaire guys.

3.156   **Interviewer**: so billionaires they are generally males?

3.157   **Participant**: ja

3.158   **Interviewer**: okay for you, men have to be successful?

3.159   **Participant**: yes.

3.160   **Interviewer**: okay, thank you boys. And what about girls? when you think of a girl, then what words describe them well?

3.161   **Participant**: Gossipers

3.162   **Participant**: I think of laziness.

3.163   **Participant**: wildness

3.164   **Interviewer**: wildness, what do you mean by wildness?

3.165   **Participant**:. Wildness like, I don't know how to explain it. She likes to impress other people by words or like sometimes behaviour like when we have to wear "civis"…like they wanna impress guys by their body.

3.166   **Interviewer**: with their bodies? They want to impress boys with their bodies and this happens when there's "civis"at school?

3.167   **Participant**: yah.

3.168   **Interviewer**: Okay.

3.169   **Participant**: jealousy.

3.170   **Participant**: girls are jealous.

3.171   **Participant**: talkative

3.172   **Participant**: I think they are also kind

3.173   **Interviewer**: you think they are also kind.

3.174   **Participant**: and forgiving

3.175   **Interviewer**: And what about the way women think and behave.

3.176   **Participant**: they think they are better.

3.177   **Interviewer**: Like superior?

3.178   **Participant**: Ja. They think, they going to succeed more than guys.

3.179   **Interviewer**: okay. Do all of you experience it like that?

3.180   **Participant**: me I think girls are better than us nowadays because…

3.181   **Participants**: (Laugh)

3.182   **Participant**: because now, boys are participating in drugs. And girls don't do this stuff…they are not like boys. They always look books and ja…that is why they succeed.

3.183   **Interviewer**: Okay, so you spoke a bit about women that are succeeding, they appear to be more academic and boys engage with risky behaviour.

3.184   **Participant**: Yah.

3.185   **Interviewer**: Okay.

3.186 Participant: guys are impressed by being respected…

3.187 Participant: guys are more impressed by bad group

3.188 Interviewer: help me to understand, so guys are impressed by…

3.189 Participants: bad groups.

3.190 Participant: and peer pressure.

3.191 Participant: especially in the locations.

3.192 Participant: I think girls are better than us because we are all gangsterism and they are always studying. The things we do they do. Like We smoke they smoke. We are only the same thing in just school things.

3.193 Participant: the thing is as boys we have mentality…if boys were to try, also girls will follow. <u>Do you understand what I am trying to say?</u>

3.194 Interviewer: mmmm, I don't think so.

3.195 Participant: if boys would start to do things right like participate in things like start to participate in community centres, also girls will follow. What boys do, they also want to do.

3.196 Interviewer: Okay, so are you saying that when boys do something, then girls follow them? So am I correct then that guys are actually a bit at the top and girls are little lower.

3.197 Participant: yes.

3.198 Interviewer: is that what you mean by that?

3.199 Participant: yes.

3.200 Interviewer: Okay. Good. What did you want to say?

3.201 Participant: I think boys are better because sometimes a lot of girls can create lies…like they say they are raped…like they are not really raped, they create lies and when they go to the police station. The police just believe them because it is a girl. But when a man comes they say he or she was forced to do sex, they won't believe him. They just laugh at him.

3.202 Interviewer: okay.

3.203 Participant: so I think girls are liars.

3.204 Participant: According to our law, I think girls have more power than men.

3.205 Interviewer: is that what you guys meant? So let's quickly get back to what you said. You said if a guy or a girl goes to the police station and claims that she was raped, then the police will believe her because she is a bit more vulnerable than a guy. But then if a guy has to go do that, then they will be laughed at because its unlikely that that will happen to a man.

3.206 Participants: yes

3.207 Interviewer: so because of that you guys believe that according to the law a women has got more power than men. Is that right?

3.208 Participants: yes.

3.209 Interviewer: Okay guys. We have come to the end of our group, thank you very much for coming today.

Focus group discussions 4: Female adolescents (11 Participants in Grade 11)

4.1   **Interviewer:** Okay, Morning Ladies

4.2   **Participant**s: Morning Ma'am.

4.3   **Interviewer**: it's nice to have you here. I am Carmen. We have already discussed the informed consent and the biographical questionnaire that we need before we can continue. So the first question is what is identity?

4.4   **Participant**: it's how you look like.

4.5   **Participant**: like your face and your body

4.6   **Interviewer**: Okay and for the rest of you?

4.7   **Participant**: I think like identity could be like who you are, like your date of birth or something that best describes who you are.

4.8   **Interviewer**: okay so we have a little bit of identity defined as how you look and then we have who you are, your character, what describes you, and when you were born you said?Okay, and when you think of a women or yourselves, how do you describe yourselves as women?

4.9   **Participant**: I believe in principles. Principles describe women.

4.10   **Interviewer**: Principles, and what do you mean by principles?

4.11   **Participant**: Ma'am, as a person you have to set your own principles.

4.12   **Interviewer**: Okay, so…

4.13   **Participant**: Respect, love, loyalty.

4.14   **Interviewer**: Respect, love, loyalty. Okay. So it sounds to me that you are referring to some values that women hold. Okay and if you think of a women's character or their kind of a personality, what would you say that is?

4.15   **Participant**: I think it's about how they carry themselves. Like do they go out on a wild behaviour….or can they contain themselves

4.16   **Interviewer**: Okay. So how they carry themselves is what you say and say whether they go out and they just act wildly or do they have the ability to practice self-control. And what do the rest of you say about that, how do women carry themselves? There is no right or wrong answers.

4.17   **Participant**: well in the modern world, the world that we are living in now, women don't carry themselves the way that they used to. Because it seems now like they are just free and women get to do whatever they want you know and they carry themselves much like boys you know. There is no more that women are respecting themselves. they are very few out there that respect themselves because we getting some instances, women use their bodies to get some of the things that they should be getting due to heart break.

4.18   **Interviewer**: so, do you mean that women are using their bodies to make up for some heart break.

4.19   **Participant**: yes

4.20   **Interviewer**: Okay, so how do you ladies express who you are? How do you show other people I am a women.

4.21   **Participant**: By respect.

4.22   **Participant**: personality

4.23   **Interviewer**: and what about that personality? When you get up in the mornings, what is it that shows you or shows other people that you are a women?

4.24   **Participant**: the way you act when you are around people.

4.25   **Interviewer**: Okay and how do women act when they are around people?

4.26   **Participant**: They are humble.

4.27   **Participant**: sensitive

4.28   **Participant**: confident

4.29   **Participant**: caring.

4.30   **Interviewer**: caring, yes

4.31   **Participant**: loving.

4.32   **Participant**: supportive.

4.33   **Interviewer**: And are there specific things if you think about, what women do versus what guys do? So what girls do is that different to what guys do?

4.34   **Participant**s: yes.

4.35   **Interviewer**: yes. Okay what is different, what do girls do and what do boys do?

4.36   **Participant**: in some instances, when there is a common disagreement or a scenario like if you put boys this side and girls this side. You get to see that boys solve the scenario in different manner than girls do. You get to see that boys will fight about it and girls will just sit down and talk about it like talk the truth.

4.37   **Interviewer**: so if I understand you correctly, boys will fight something through, whereas girls will sit down and try to talk through and discuss it through. So are you saying then that men are aggressive?

4.38   **Participant**s: yes

4.39   **Interviewer**: Okay and women?

4.40   **Participant**: are less aggressive.

4.41   **Interviewer**: less aggressive… so they can be aggressive but they are less aggressive?

4.42   **Participant**: yes.

4.43   **Interviewer**: okay and if we speak about some of the tasks or things that girls are supposed to do. What are some of those things that happen in your lives?

4.44   **Participant**: things they supposed to do?

4.45   **Interviewer**: Anything if you think of things that women are supposed to do because they are regarded as women, what are those things?

4.46   **Participant**s: I think they should focus more on their careers.

4.47   **Participant**: yes and building an empire, being independent like, not looking up to some people you know. They should look at themselves and respect themselves.

4.48   **Interviewer**: Okay, then who would those people be that they looked up to in the past?

4.49   **Participant**: in <u>some</u> instances women look up to men uhm, for support like financially, which is wrong.

4.50   **Interviewer**: for you that is wrong?

4.51   **Interviewer**: yes.

4.52   **Interviewer**: so you mentioned a fact that women should build their own empire, that was your words and that you should learn to be more independent and they should almost not look up to men for support and independence even if it's financially and they should almost stand on their two feet to be able to function.

4.53   **Participant**s: yes

4.54   **Interviewer**: Okay.

4.55   **Participant**: they should motivate and inspire each other.

4.56   **Interviewer**: Okay and what are some of the chores that they have to do. Are there even chores? Is it still like early on…I think you mentioned in the modern world? If we take those words again and say in the modern world now, what are some of the things that girls are supposed to do. Maybe in the home, is it like that now?

4.57   **Participant**: no things are different

4.58   **Participants**: no, things are different now

4.59   **Interviewer**: so things have changed, do all of you feel that?

4.60   **Participant**s: Yes

4.61   **Interviewer**: and what is different?

4.62   **Participant**: let me say in any family, there could be just one boy and no girl. Like a boy can do both chores and helping the family whereby he is the only son in the house. I do think like things are a bit more equal.

4.63   **Interviewer**: things are more equal now?

4.64   **Interviewer**: and do all of you experience it like that?

4.65   **Participant**: Yes

4.66   **Interviewer**: you don't feel like that?

4.67   **Participant**: equal…ja it is

4.68   **Interviewer**: and what are some of the things if you must describe a man, what makes them a man? What makes them guys, if you think of the boys in class, what makes them a guy?

4.69   **Participant**: how they treat girls…

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4.70 **Interviewer**: is there a specific way that they get taught or they learn to treat girls?

4.71 **Interviewer**: and what is that specific way?

4.72 **Participant**: by being gentle.

4.73 **Interviewer**: gentle

4.74 **Participant**: and motivate us.

4.75 **Interviewer**: What else makes them guys? If you have to look at yourself and if you have to look at a guy, how can you tell there is a difference?

4.76 **Interviewer**: Okay, I am sorry about the disturbance.

4.77 **Participant**: During break time, how boys eat and how girls eat. You get to see that girls are a bit more, you know…like ladyish… guys just gulp it in. They just eat.

4.78 **Interviewer**: Okay.

4.79 **Participant**: and during break time, boys play soccer and girls play basketball and skip

4.80 **Interviewer**: so both boys and girls play sports

4.81 **Participant**: yes mam and boys like fighting and all that stuff so girls will just argue about something.

4.82 **Interviewer**: Okay so you mentioned manners, that women are a bit more lady like and guys will just gulp all their food down. So before we get to you, what do you mean by lady like?

4.83 **Participant**: You know they carry themselves, like the way they eat, they eat gentle, and they just don't rush it.

4.84 **Interviewer**: Okay.

4.85 **Participant**: after they have eaten they just take the plate to the bucket. You know, boys just leave them there, just for girls to come and pick them up but I won't.

4.86 **Interviewer**: Okay, so is there almost the expectation that women will clean up after men?

4.87 **Participant**: yes, I can say that.

4.88 **Interviewer**: For you it's that, okay. And you mentioned the different types of games or what you would do in your free time so guys go play soccer and girls will play the skipping rope. So both of those are quite active sports.

4.89 **Participant**: so when the guys play you can see, they are always fighting and making noise. But when girls play, they are just polite.

4.90 **Interviewer**: Okay. And what else ladies, what else…what roles do you take on to become a women?

4.91 **Participant**s: (Silence)

4.92 **Interviewer**: Do you know what a stereotype is?

4.93 **Participant**: stereotype?

4.94 **Interviewer**: yes…stereotypes are the specific things expected from boys and girls, like you know when a girl wears pink, then that is a stereotype, because society teaches us that girls are supposed to wear pink because its girly like. Do you think there are stereotypes that girls

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have? So for example, girls must be moms, you touched a bit on it. Girls must be moms, they must be in the home, they must wash dishes, they must bring up children. Are things like that still true in modern living or not?

4.95   **Participant**: Ja

4.96   **Participants**: No, uh uh.

4.97   Participant: Yes

4.98   **Interviewer**: so this side say it is not true. And from there, you said it's true. Okay, let's start with you.

4.99   **Participant**: I said that it's true cause it is mam

4.100   **Interviewer**: So what makes that true that women still lives up to those roles?

4.101   **Participant**: It's not always like that .

4.102   **Interviewer**: hmm, okay.

4.103   **Participant**: like…it's not always like that. Sometimes, things that women are supposed to do men can do, like looking after the baby.

4.104   **Interviewer**: and do they do that?

4.105   **Participant**: Ja.

4.106   **Participant**: it's not the matter of women must look after the babies always. Even the father can look after the babies and do changes

4.107   **Interviewer**: So fathers are more involved with caring for their children now?

4.108   **Participant**: Ja, this has changed.

4.109   **Interviewer**: Okay. So you do feel that there are some changes? If we go back in history, girls did that and guys worked in the garden and they worked on the car etc.

4.110   **Participant**: yes, but now we changing

4.111   **Interviewer**: and it's not like that anymore?

4.112   **Participant**: no

4.113   **Interviewer**: Okay and what else? Are there still specific things that you have in mind maybe if and when you look out for a relationship? Are there specific things that you would look for?

4.114   **Participants**: (Silence)

4.115   **Interviewer**: or are you not interested in partners at the moment?

4.116   **Participant**: yes, just school

4.117   **Participants**: (Laughing)

4.118   **Interviewer**: are you all shy? Which ones, these one?

4.119   **Interviewer**: so if you are looking for a relationship, what is it? How should they be?

4.120   **Participant**: now of lately, men lack respect for women, so I will go for someone who has respect for looking after his family, who respect his mom will automatically respect you.

4.121 **Interviewer**: and how do you know that men are respecting women less and less? What are some of the things that they are doing that you know they are not respecting you as much or women in general?

4.122 **Participant**: sometimes you can see at school how they touch you

4.123 **Participant**: you can see how they interact with people or how they act in the community, they have to greet the elders and teachers

4.124 **Interviewer**: Okay.

4.125 **Participant**: in your relationship, you will be going to your boyfriend and tell him I must go to university and this and that. As a boyfriend he must be able to support you other than just saying no you can't do that, you are supposed to do this rather. Then he is not respecting you and in the future it will show that he will not be able to respect you.

4.126 **Interviewer**: Okay, so all of you value respect a lot and you feel you may be aren't respected as much as what you'd like to be respected by men. Okay and even though you are equal, you still feel you need to be respected?

4.127 **Participant**: we need to be respected because sometimes at break when you pass by and going to the toilet or something, boys just tease you. They will tell you how tall, big you are, how this, that you are. they tease you.

4.128 **Participant**: I have to be respected the way I am, so that I can also respect them.

4.129 **Participant**s: (Group agreement)

4.130 **Interviewer**: okay so you say that boys will call you out on how you look.

4.131 **Participant**: yes.

4.132 **Interviewer**: so they don't accept women for who or what they really are.

4.133 **Participant**: and sometimes they compare you with other people, when you pass by then they just say this one is dirty, this one is beautiful, this one is ugly.

4.134 **Interviewer**: Is that so?

4.135 **Participant**s: yes.

4.136 **Interviewer**: so do they, do men put a lot of focus on beauty?

4.137 **Participant**s: yes (Group agreement)

4.138 **Participant**s: (Giggle)

4.139 **Interviewer**: Okay, so okay so guys put emphasise on the outward appearance, am I right? So they will make comments on how you look, how big you are, how small you are or your hair or if your overweight etc.. Okay, so it's very much about the physical appearance.

4.140 **Participant**s: yes

4.141 **Interviewer**: and women, what do they put focus on?

4.142 **Participant**: I would say, women are a very sensitive people. They only care about the inner person like how you are, on the inside.

4.143 **Participant**: Ja

4.144 **Participant**: Yes

4.145 **Interviewer**: Okay, so am I right in saying that men will see her as being tall, you guys will see her as being caring or loving…

4.146 **Participant**s: talkative

4.147 **Interviewer**: humorous

4.148 **Interviewer**: Okay, so that is the big difference between the two of you. So there is almost a difference in values, where you feel men value physical appearance and they act on it. Whereas you girls feel like you will be able to look at someone and say they are patient or kind.

4.149 **Participant**s: Yes, mam.

4.150 **Interviewer**: Okay ladies, Thank you for the personal interview today and for being here today. I really appreciate you sharing your experiences with me.

Appendix G: Turnitin Report