Invisible Boy

The making of contemporary masculinities

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Chapter 1

Exploring the making of boys
Camilla Häggren, Elza Dunkels and Gun-Marie Frånberg
Sweden

Sexism could be understood as a two-sided coin that spins through our lives uninvited. No matter if we are women or men, if we are boys or girls, if we are young or old, it will find us. We cannot escape it. But we can explore ways to identify how the two-sided coin of sexism affects us and continue the work of finding strategies to deal with it. Three years ago, in 2012, we finalised a research project about how girls become girls in contemporary society: the Invisible Girl. It was an international, Swedish-based and multi-disciplinary research project in which the interplay of power relations, gender, and age was the primary object of study. The project was global in its scope and included researchers and artists from all over the world. It was underpinned by the assumption that girls and women are underprivileged, stereotyped and discriminated. However, this does not mean that men in general suppress women or that men and boys in general are privileged. Men generally have a shorter life expectancy than women, boys can be noted to under-achieve in certain school subjects, boys who are sexually abused and boys with eating disorders are made invisible. At the end of the Invisible Girl project then, it became clear to us that we also needed to take a close and critical look at boys’ situations. Our understanding about girls’ gender making had been explored, but what practices are instrumental in boys’ gender making? How does boyhood manifest itself in different contexts? How can we describe fathers and sons in contemporary society? And can we make the invisible boy visible in ways alternative to those of media?

To find out what it means to become a boy today we designed a similar project about boys: The Invisible Boy. Our call for participation was similar to the Invisible Girl call. Again, the response was fantastic. The Invisible Boy project became global in its scope and gathered artists and researchers from all over the world. Altogether 24 artists and academics have contributed to the Invisible Boy publication with 20 chapters, contributions including genres such as; poetry, video, drawings, digital imaging and photography.

We wanted to identify, illustrate, describe and explore any practices that are instrumental when boys become boys. Is the boy made socially and linguistically invisible and not seen as a real person in the same way as girls are? What does it mean when we talk about boys as little heros and give them weapons to play the savior of our world? What does it mean when we conceptualise boys as violent and competitive? Are they violent? Are they supposed to live more dangerously than girls? As we know, men are overrepresented at the top-power positions of societies. They are also overrepresented among the most exposed and vulnerable at the bottom of our societies, on the streets and in prisons. To expose sexist stereotypes that are targeting boys we have been working, looking out from a norm-critical window. Our aim has been to question accepted worldviews or implicit agreements about what a real boy is and what it means to become one.

Becoming a boy is something personal. But this becoming is also done in relation to collective ideas of boyhood. We suggest that the understanding of the concepts and practices associated with ‘boys’ and ‘boyhood’ is socially constructed in a similar way as the concepts of ‘girls’ and girlhood’. We understand the boy as a verb rather than as a noun. We also suggest that the meanings of masculinity are continually shaped and re-shaped by social actors in particular situations in which both men and women are involved. Certain historical, social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, religious and gender values may also affect how men and boys construct their identities. Similarly to girls, boys individual formation of
Exploring the making of boys

boyhood intersects with fields of power linked to identity dimensions such as ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, class, religion, bodily and mental abilities. But even if boys and girls work on their gender projects in similar ways we have discovered that they have different gender related experiences. Boys become boys on other social premises. They shape their identities in a different and much harder dialogue with society. This is evident from the difference in content between the contributions in the two different projects, Invisible Girl and Invisible Boy. One immediate reaction from us editors was that the contributions to the Invisible Boy project painted a darker image than did the contributions to the Invisible Girl. This is one of the interesting discoveries that we have made.

Another finding is that when it comes to contributions to the project, we have received more chapters in the format of research reviews rather than being empirically based. We can see work that are exploring and philosophical, very much like the early days of feminist research or women’s studies. Why are these differences so obvious? In the next section we will discuss our ideas concerning this.

First of all, we can conclude that the research field of boys’ and men’s studies is a research field in the making compared to girls’ and women’s studies. If we compare boys’ studies with girls’ studies, there may be explanations to find in the fact that new fields have harder to attract funding. The research interest is clearly there, but the common knowledge of the area is rudimentary and therefore it can be hard to find funding as well as research contexts. Our call seems to have provided such a context; an arena in which the research questions can be posed and a friendly environment for experimenting with new ideas and novel projects. Lack of funding can explain why the Invisible Boy research chapters are more probing and testing than we saw in the Invisible Girl project. The contributions appear to be hovering around the articulation of a distinct research object.

Secondly, the darker picture has to be explained. Why do we see a more grim depiction of boys’ lives than we did when girls were the study objects? In fact, we had expected the opposite. Normally, when girls and women are portrayed in research and art, their lives and circumstances are described in terms of vulnerability, misery, and abuse on different levels. We did in fact receive narratives of girls as victims but depictions of strength, coping strategies and compassion in the girl’s marginalised lives, were much more frequent. The discourse of boys as vulnerable and abused, contains very few stories of coping and survival strategies. This could be an expression of masculinity norms about men and boys as invulnerable and capable at the top of the social hierarchy. When we discovered this major difference between boys’ and girls’ victim discourses, we understood it in terms of social status-drop. The norms of masculinity are superior to those of femininity and place boys higher. Could it be that girls have lower expectations regarding how to manage their lives, both externally and internally, and thus experience a shorter drop on the social scale, if things go wrong? And could it be that boys who drop out of society face a longer and harder fall?

Another interesting discovery emerging is that contemporary masculinities are both static and dynamic. Boys and men conform to norms imposed by society but there are movements in this making that tend towards more androgynous forms of masculinities. The contributions in this book also show that masculinities are multiple. There is not one, single masculinity. Additionally, among these multiple masculinities there is always one that is seen as the most desirable and associated with the highest social status. It is the hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). It is a global stereotype that is continually shaped and re-shaped by social actors, both men and women. But even if men are generally assigned a high social position it does not necessarily render a good and healthy life style to those who try to live under the commands of the hegemonic masculinities. This identity package often comes with expectations of violence, denial of emotions and risk taking behaviour. Performing as a proper boy may be severely dangerous.

The contributions are all dealing with structures, situations, relations and identity. These are soft values that may be illusive and hard to capture in research and artistic work. When we analysed the content of the contributions to the Invisible Boy project we were looking for themes which were in line with our research aims. Not surprisingly we found that the themes from girls’ gender making in the Invisible Girl project also covered the patterns that emerged from boys’ gender making. The themes of Identity
making, Bodily Existence, Interrupted boyhood and Contemporary Media are adequate for both girls and boys. We therefore decided to use the same themes and extend them with boys’ gender makings.

Therefore the overarching themes are the same but what they contain is different. As in the Invisible Girl publication we have organized them into four overlapping and interrelated parts. The reader who begins with the first theme, Negotiating identity, will get a start from the inside and a possibility to reflect upon the inner thoughts of identity work. Following the next themes chronologically will take the reader from the inside to the outside: Bodily Existence, Boyhood Interrupted and Gender and Contemporary media.

**Negotiating identity**

Grim Dunkels’ contribution **Empathy** (in Swedish **Empati**) is a song about youth from a young man’s perspective. The song will speak for itself, but if we dare to interpret the lyrics, it paints a picture of a melancholy search for affection and social cohesion: "I hope she can pretend to love me for thirty minutes, let me be dangerously close". The song is in Swedish and this volume contains the Swedish lyrics and an English translation.

In the chapter called - **Be a man! Blending art and theory to explore contemporary masculinity makings** Camilla Häggren brings together her professional practices as a researcher and an artist. She blends theories about gender into photographs of everyday items and model train figures. The overall aim is to explore the dimensions of contemporary masculinities and boys’ identity makings from a norm-critical perspective by using both theoretical reasoning and artistic expressions: How could children’s gender projects be understood? What can the combination of gender theories and art tell us about the making of boys?

Josip Horvat deals with gender identity from a very personal stand point because his research mostly includes his personal experiences as a member of LGBTIQ community in Croatia. In his art work he is materializing echoes from severe emotional and physical traumas that he is trying to confront and to resolve. He has turned his traumas into a myth. Odd and unforeseen moments, codes and hermetic closure of his art pieces, are used in order to create mystical, fetish pictures of his suffering, questions and fears. He is using his art to process the insecurity in his identity and himself, which he has discovered and made himself aware of. He does not want to evoke an imaginary spectacle in his audience, but create emotional reactions and feelings of confusion, discomfort and insecurity – the same feelings that he has had most of his life.

Rana Kumud asserts that studies on masculinities often tend to focus on the negative connotations of the term, associating men with problematic behaviour. In her chapter **Negotiating masculine identities as dependents of high-achieving female migrants** she moves away from the trap of viewing men as perpetrators and instead problematizes the social approval and internalization of masculine role identities. She does so by presenting cases of migrant married couples who are in an unconventional situation with regards to gender roles and marital expectations. Her chapter shows that ambivalence over gender roles creates anxieties, not only in men who are expected to adhere to certain standards set by their societies, but also in their partners who struggle with their conscious or unconscious desires to see them fulfil these standards. Kumud argues that it is important to recognize that masculinities and femininities do not exist in a vacuum but rather exist within socio-cultural realities. It is pertinent to address the correlation between the two if men and women are to complement each other’s lives while fulfilling their aspirations. Such conceptualizations are already under development whether through cognizant or incognizant processes as men and women negotiate lives in an alien land like in the case of couples discussed in this chapter.

The development of boys and male adolescents has been a prominent topic in professional and public debates, Peter Rieker and Melanie Wegel assert. In their chapter **The importance of fathers for boys’ development – a comparison between the perspectives of male adolescents and adult men** they recapitulate arguments brought forward in scholarly debates, showing the importance of fathers and father figures for the gender development of boys and male adolescents. On the basis of interviews with male adolescents and adult men, experiences of living with fathers and other adult men and the extent to which indications of deprivation or problems appear in this context are examined.
Exploring the making of boys empirically. Therefore a comparison regarding the perspectives of the various age groups is possible. As a result this comparison shows similarities between the perspectives of adult men looking back on their youth and adolescents talking about their current experiences. Statements from both groups are dominated by experiences of fathers who are or were perceived as absent and inaccessible. Relationships with these fathers are or were perceived as limited and in some cases conflicted. But a closer look also shows that the process of distancing oneself from a father figure seems to have great relevance for the adolescents. When reflecting on the experiences and needs of male adolescents concerning their fathers or father figures, this strive for distance needs to be considered more carefully.

Harry Lunabba’s chapter Recognizing boys from a relational and emotional perspective deals with the recognition of boys in a relationship perspective. The aim is to introduce how the theory of social bonds can be implemented in understanding how boys achieve recognition in schools as well as in the studies of masculinities in school. The chapter presents three analytical categories of boys in classrooms that can further be linked to a broader analysis on why and how some boys are misrecognized in society as well as in gender studies. Boys that are not taken seriously constitute a group of boys with typical boy tendencies of bad behaviour and lack of engagement in school work but whose problems are not recognized as “real” problems. Boys who evoke negative emotions are a category of boys whose problems are often obvious but who are interpreted negatively. The main focus is often on how these boys are a problem for the learning environment. Boys who do not evoke emotions make up a group of ordinary boys in the midst of a crowd of other ordinary boys. Despite the intensive debate on boys schooling, there are boys who fall outside the gaze of gender research.

Bodily existence

In Mia Fernau’s drawing project Men in pink she has used male models who got to adopt traditionally feminine poses and wear traditionally feminine clothing. Through the drawings she wants to discuss what is normally associated with femininity. With the drawings she has found the more subtle nuances and played with the limits of what is read as a heterosexual man in traditionally visual language. The pictures are drawn with felt-tip pens and markers.

Daniel Hedlund explores in his chapter “Beard boys: Standing in the way of a transformation of the self, how the thought construct ”beard boys“ is constructed. It constitutes a distinct form of hate speech, targeting unaccompanied refugee minors in Sweden, and finds its echoes particularly on far-right internet sites. By taking a cue from psychoanalysis and its two-way perspective on both inner world and society, the meaning of facial hair in relation to the “racial” Other is interpreted as an example of how racist fantasies and caricatures can emerge. The analysis herein presented describes in what ways the Others, the “beard boys/children”, are degraded, as they come to represent an obstruction that frustrates one’s possible self belonging to a unified society.

In their chapter Dazzling yet invisible? The curious cultural location of boys in cheerdance, Beccy Watson and Ian Rodley explore complex and contradictory masculinities in an all boys’ cheerdance group in an inner city area in the north of England, U.K. They are interested in how boys are invisible in cheerdance, how working class boys are invisible in dance more generally and how a ‘hyper visibility’ occurs when boys are active in feminised terrain. Thus the chapter offers an analysis of continuing hegemonic practices and gendered normativities, in addition to assessing some of the disruptions in these practices. Working class identities are salient and inextricable from the meanings of masculinity expressed and embodied by the boys here. They challenge conceptualisations of a masculinity/femininity binary and approach it as relational rather than oppositional. The chapter is a collaborative piece from an academic researcher and a dance practitioner. Qualitative data was generated through informal, conversational settings, in addition to observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The research is ongoing and ethnographic in nature. Both the ‘academic’ and the ‘dancer’ consider the ‘location’ of the dance groups as entirely significant to the findings that emerge. Rather than claim ‘new’, alternative and/or inclusive masculinities we need to engage with articulations whereby working class masculinity and involvement in (cheer-)dance is analysed as a complex, dynamic process in and
through which different configurations are often simultaneous, and being visible and invisible is not always oppositional.

**Boyhood interrupted**

Smriti Mehra’s film *Muthu & Shaktivir* is about two friends from the same village who have been working for ten years as “building nomads”, migrant construction labourers form a large part of the unorganised labour sector in India. Work contracts are short term and labourers are compelled to move frequently. Contractors supply labourers based on their skills, usually sourced from adjacent states or states where the skills are localized or where the contractors themselves come from. These workers remain largely anonymous and interchangeable at the sites at which they work and they do not stay in one place long enough to build any significant relationships. In most cases they do not speak the local language, with the help of which they might be able to build social ties that would give them a sense of belonging. In addition, as most of them are young men, they are often considered to be wild, rootless, and recently, to be aggressors against young women in the cities.

Jenn S. Garnett’s chapter *Don’t drop the soap: the reality behind a quip*, deals with prison rape, which in spite of social awareness often remains an ignored reality of the prison experience. Her chapter looks at the history of sexual violence and the focus third wave feminism brought to the issue, then going into the specifics of male prison rape and its worldwide prevalence. Because of the high incidence and large academic focus of prison rape in the United States, much of the discussion is centred around the US and its prisons. Looking at the issue in the context of prison culture and its exaggerated masculinity a gendered understanding of prison rape is offered. Finally, there is a discussion of responses to prison rape, both at a domestic and international level, with a suggestion that the issue be reframed to be understood in the context of systemic rape.

Alankaar Sharma uses Hegemonic masculinity as a conceptual lens, in his chapter *Hegemonic masculinity and child sexual abuse*, in order to understand the experiences of boys and men who are survivors of child abuse. He asserts that many men and boys who are survivors of child sexual abuse face silencing, blaming, fear, stigmatization, and ostracization when others or they themselves perceive the abuse they were victims of as a transgression of gender norms. Hegemonic masculinity is an important conceptual lens that can help illuminate ways in which many men and boy survivors experience child sexual abuse, and how they make meaning of their abuse experiences as men in patriarchal societies. In his chapter Sharma, in addition to introducing the concept of hegemonic masculinity, also describes some of its core elements, and discusses some of the ways in which these might intersect with men and boy survivors’ abuse experiences and contribute to the oppression of sexual violence survivors.

Aysegul Tasitman writes about circumcision as a ritual in her chapter *The circumcision ritual as a rite of passage into manhood: the narrative of becoming a man through a case study of Turkey*. Her point is that it is important to incorporate man and masculinity into the complex of problems when considering the relation between men and women as a social construct. This is in order to emphasize the need for understanding gender inequality, which is a particular concern necessary not only for the oppressed but also for the oppressor, the one who has the power and who is known to have the privileged potential of masculine practices. Thus, while analyzing practices of masculinity, working with the knowledge of how masculinity is defined, produced, and knowing what it means to society is helpful in explaining the reasons for the continuity of male hegemony, both geographically and historically.

Andreas Dannelöv’s chapter *Depiction of masculinity in Astrid Lindgren’s work* shows that teachers rarely reflect on how boys can be victims of gender structures. The curriculum for preschools require, however, that educators who are active in these types of school counteract traditional gender patterns and gender structures and promote gender equality. One of the most prominent writers in fiction aimed at children was Astrid Lindgren. Her stories are interesting in a gender perspective, as she is known to have very strong girl characters in her books. Dannelöv has done a discourse analysis of Astrid Lindgren’s books, in which he examines the roles boys and men have, and the attributes they are ascribed. His results show that here are few good role models for boys in these books, and the adjectives and properties shown are the ones historically associated with men. Although
there are exceptions, some men and boys are described with attributes and behave in ways that break traditional gender patterns.

In his chapter *Urbanism, workplace hazards and social positioning efforts of male adolescent labourers in suburb sawmills, Lagos State Nigeria*, Ojo Melvin Agunbiade contextualises the variations that exist within a given context for the boy child and how such variations shape their becoming into adult men. Based on sixteen face-to-face interviews with adolescent boys working as labourers in suburb sawmills, this chapter situates the notion of boyhood within a social space. His findings reveal conscious absorption with the notion of boyhood through certain rules of engagement and survival measures. These strategies include self-care practices geared towards achieving a healthy body for contextualised performance in the factory settings. However, this comes with series of consequences — both intended and unintended as the boys lived out the social notions of boyhood and rules of engagement in activities for survival and social recognition. Hence, understanding and targeting the positive survival strategies of this social category of adolescents could be useful to empower boys and minimise the hazards of working and growing as adolescents in the physical and social spaces of sawmills.

In the chapter *Resilience and surviving post-conflict reconstruction challenges: Views and experiences of adolescent boys in a community in Nigeria*, Mary Obiyan examines the challenges and notions of boyhood within the context of post-conflict reconstruction challenges at the household level. Post-conflict reconstruction is a period that requires enormous resources especially in the area of labour force participation. Ironically, how communal crises affect the notions of boyhood and labour force participation in the post-conflict period has received marginal research attention. From an Interpretative Phenomenological stance, this chapter presents eleven face-to-face in-depth interviews conducted with male adolescent 15 to 18 years old, who lost one or both parents during the 1997 or 2000 Ife-Modakeke communal conflicts. Her findings reveal how the loss of a parent, or both, cut short the education of many adolescents as they were forced to learn trades that could develop them to contribute productively to their households and community.

**Gender and contemporary media**

Tess Jewell explores the limited representations of blind male youths in a selection of international fiction and documentary films and television programs, in her chapter *Blind boys don’t cry: The (in)visibility of blind masculinities in fiction and documentary film*. She considers their absence from the literature on both disability and masculinity in film. Employing a disability studies approach, her analysis suggests that documentary programs are just as likely to engage with the same stereotypes of blindness that appear in fiction programs, most frequently that of the ‘supercrip’. In these cases, recourse to such stock narratives continues to place undue emphasis on characters overcoming the barriers of their visual impairment instead of rendering visible other elements of their lives not directly related to their disability. However, her research also reveals that both genres are equally able to subvert these stereotypes in some ways. Her chapter concludes by suggesting three possible risks in representing the blind male youth as extraordinary: first, ordinary blind boys can remain a mystery for non-disabled viewers that may serve to isolate them; second, accomplishment is shown to be dependent on personal aptitude and perseverance rather than changing social attitudes; and third, blind children who have only gifted or accomplished children to look up to may feel inadequate or simply disconnected from their on-screen counterparts. As such, programs such as “Blind Young Things” representing blind youth just like sighted youth may be more helpful in breaking down social barriers and dispelling myths.

In his chapter *The Hebdige’s paradigm revisited: a visual methodology for subcultural groups*, Uliano Conti proposes a photographic field research (offline and online) on some youth micro-groups, namely traiteurs, emopunks and a crew of street artists. The chapter considers whether the term «subcultural» can still be used. In particular, this issue emerges when scholars consider the online dimension of youth groups. He proposes visual sociology as a research technique to study the identitary expressions of youth groups.

Patrik Hernwall discusses in his chapter *Reflecting the male stereotype – a young boy challenging gendered identity online* how tween (app. 10 to 14
years old) boys construct gendered identity in online environments, where the publication of digital images are of core importance. The case being the Swedish social network site Bilddagboken (BDB). At BDB up to 500,000 images were posted each day, totalling more than 250 million images. In the chapter, based on a single illustrative example from a 10 year old Swedish boy, he discusses how a tween boy constructs an online gendered identity. This discussion is framed by previous articles on tween girls’ construction of gendered identity in online environment in the 2012 publication Invisible Girl, "Resisting the subordinate woman - a young girl constructing gendered identity online”.

Before you read the rest of this publication’s chapters, we would like to point out that, as with the Invisible Girl project, we made an extremely wide call for participation. In fact we used the word anything in our call to make it clear that we did not want form to limit the contributions: “We invite researchers and artists to contribute with research papers, works of art or anything else providing critical perspectives to studies of boys and boyhood.”

This kind of call takes courage. It takes courage from us as editors and it takes courage from the contributors. And now, as we are finalising our work with this project, we feel very proud. We took the plunge and the contributors jumped in at the deep end together with us. We hope that this publication will mean a step forward, for us all as researchers and for the research area. Hopefully, the invisible boy will come into view a little more for every reader of this volume. And hopefully, many more projects of this kind will follow.
Chapter 2

Empathy

Grim Dunkels
Sweden

Sound file: https://soundcloud.com/hjartatpop/empati-1

Empathy

Stories never begin well, but
My frustration makes me want to go home
I would like to bring you home with me, but
Instead I get comforted by a fairly good friend

I'm following him to her backyard,
I'm lighting a cigarette,
letting its smoke twirl round
I'm staring steadily towards the place
where she's standing
I'm closing this chapter with a word that's echoing

Empathy

Now it's three o'clock in the morning
and you're gone
I'm losing check on how many beers I've drunk
Down in a couch with some girl in my arms
Who's coming home with me,
hope she's got your name

I hope she can pretend to love me
for thirty minutes
Tell me her dreams, let me get dangerously close
And as always she'll get hurt when she wakes up
And sees I'm gone like an ordinary
thing I'm missing

Empathy

We have known each other for fourteen days
It feels like fourteen years with vague memories
We can barely speak, barely answer
But that doesn't really matter when our hearts
are fragile

Empathy

I count the steps from my bus-stop and home
To pick you up, and to undress you,
feel like vengeance to me
Best served cold,
but the worst thing is that if a survive
Until next spring I'll have to open up
Empati

Ingen saga börjar någonsin bra, men
Frustrationen får mig vilja dra hem
Skulle vilja ha dig med mig då, men
Istället får jag tröst av en ganska bra vän

Jag följer med han ut på hennes bakgård
Tänder ciggen, låter röken leka
Står och stirrar stadigt mot där hon står
Och avslutar kapitel med ett ord som ekar

Empati

Nu är klockan tre och du har stickit
Tappar koll hur många öl jag druckit
Ner i soffan med en tjej i min famn
Som vandrar hem med mig,
hoppas hon har ditt namn

Hoppas hon kan låtsas älska mig i trettio minuter
Berätta sina drömmar låta mig få komma farligt in
Och som vanligt kommer hon bli sårad
när hon vaknar upp
Och ser att jag är borta som en vanlig sak
jag saknar

Empati

Vi har känt varann i fjorton dagar
Känns som fjorton år med minnen vaga
Vi kan knappt ens prata, knappt ens svara
Men vad gör det när våra hjärtan är svaga?

Jag räknar stegen från min busshållsplats
och hem till mig
Att hämta dig, och att få klä av dig är
som hämnd för mig
Bäst kall, men det sämsta är att om jag överlever
Tills i vår kommer jag vara tvungen att öppna upp
Chapter 3

– Be a man! Art blended research to explore boys’ gender making

Camilla Hällgren
Sweden

Introduction
Can boys become boys in their own right? What can art blended research tells us about boys’ gender making? How can the role of adults in this making be understood? In this chapter I will bring together my professional practices as researcher and artist by blending research about gender with my photographs of model train figures and everyday items. Looking through a norm critical window and using gender research together with artistic expressions, the overall aim is to explore, visualize, and challenge stereotyped ideas that affect contemporary masculinities and boys’ gender making. As such, this chapter will not only cover issues about childhood, identity and gender, it will also serve as an example of the blending of art and research.

The combination of art and research is indeed paradigmatically different from other, more traditional ways of conducting studies and generate knowledge (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Not surprisingly, issues of a possible relationship between art and knowledge have a long history with wide varieties of answers, laden with philosophical dilemmas. If fact, the art and knowledge issue is dating back to Plato and Aristotle, (i.e. Livingston 2013; Thomasson, 2005; and Gaut, 2003). Nevertheless, I believe that the blending of art and research has extraordinary potentials. Drawing on my own experiences, but also on the thoughts of researchers and philosophers such as Eisner (2008), Gadamer (2013/1977), Knowles and Cole (2008), and Weber (2008) I find reasons for taking the possibilities of the blending of art and research seriously. And so, I have decided to call the approach Art Blended Research.

If we aim to explore and learn about basic complexities of the human condition, (Arendt 1948) such as the multi layered processes of identity making and gendered dimensions of that making, I suggest that we need multiple layers of knowledge. The blending of art and research may thus be understood as a multimodal form of exploration. The core idea of multimodality, as explained by e.g. van Leeuwen (2011) Jewitt (2009) and Kress & van Leeuwen (2001) is that communication is multimodal and can include several different communicative resources and, furthermore, that we have the ability to gain knowledge through different senses.

Other reasons for blending art into my explorations about identity and boy’s gender making, is that art has the potential to instantly make us see our world differently. It can be used to illustrate or comment on wider generalities and simultaneously present multiple viewpoints and as such, art can be part of a norm-critical dialogue. Philosophers such as Gadamer (2013/1977) also explain art as having the potential to disrupt and challenge common social expectations. It can work as a means to reveal social stereotypes, and present alternative views of the world. Similarly, as Diffey (1995) suggests, art can have the potential to confirm our experiences and, conversely, art challenges us and shows us new possibilities of experience: A dialogue with art might strengthen our skills to see the world in other ways, and help us to notice what is not there; make the strange familiar, and teach us other ways to look upon the world (Gadamer, 2013/1977). Similarly, Weber (2008) is explaining that art can generate multiple interpretations and “call attention to the everyday by making it strange or casting it to a new light” (Weber, 2008, p. 50). She tells us that there is a wide range of research topics that call for visual components, and points to the fact that researchers in the social sciences have begun to pay serious attention to the possibilities of images to enhance

Images are read instantly but also individually and they are understood from different, individual horizons. Therefore their meanings become fluid and unpredictable rather than fixed and pre-set. The art experience mediates a particular kind of knowledge that is separated from traditional academic science and is much closer to insightful, intuitive dialogue than to faultless conclusions and straight answers (Gadamer, 2013/1977). What could be learnt about the meaning of becoming a boy in contemporary societies from the blending of art and research depends on each individual experience of that blending. Thus Art Blended Research may be understood as rendering understandings that are not necessarily identical. It is up to you to decide what the content in this chapter means to you and how it may extend your individual knowledge and maybe become part of your understanding of the world and what could be perceived as reality. Or not.

Life puzzles
Are children allowed to be themselves? Can children become what they want? Do boys become boys in their own right? We have been born into this world with the ability to grow, interact and learn. From birth we are beings with no need to be remade or adjusted, neither into something else, nor someone else. That is also true for our children. They are born competent to grow, interact and learn. To put it poetically, children are as perfect as the sunrise or as spring buds blooming into leaves and flowers. We do not have to reshape them. Children are also
born into this world with human rights that entitle them to dignity, worth, freedom and equality but also to the rights to freely make their own ideas of who they are and may become (United Nations, 1948). And this is also what children frequently are told. We tell them that they are unique. We tell them that they should be themselves and that they can become what they want. Sometimes we also tell children that everything is possible: – All you have to do is work hard enough. But life puzzles. Too many children will find that becoming what they want, following their own ideals, is not possible. No matter how hard they work.

**Be a man**

While children grow, interact and learn, they will find that dimensions of their identities, aspects of who they are, such as; race, nationality, age and gender or class, sexuality, language, bodily and mental ability, will matter. They will also learn that these identity dimensions are wired to fields of social power that may put them at multiple intersections of advantages and disadvantages in society (Hällgren 2006; De los Reyes & Mulinar, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Crenschaw, 1991). Among these identity dimensions, gender is one of the toughest. Connell (2005) explains that the expectations of becoming a boy or a girl are one of the most commanding forces that children ever will meet. It starts early, before birth, while the child is still expected. The persistence of the gendered expectations is shown e.g. in questions about the sex of the expected child. It is also present in the ideas about being able to tell if the expected child is a boy or a girl, by looking at the mother’s body-shape or...
what kind of food cravings she has. As soon as the biological sex is identified, no matter how, societal conventions of a proper boy and a good girl start to operate in children’s lives. As children continue to grow they will learn that performing (Butler, 1990) as a boy or girl, according to the gendered expectations, is essential to be seen as normal and become accepted (Connell, 2005; Davies, 2003; Butler, 1995; West & Zimmerman 1987). As such, making of their gender identities could be understood as mandatory. The expectation on boys to be a man is an unconditional social command.

Each one teach one
Children’s gender making, their becoming of a girl or a boy, can be understood as an active learning rather than a passive socialization. Their learning about gender and knowledge is achieved through practice, by doing, as a learning-by-doing (Dewey, 2004).

Their gender making can be understood as a learning project where boys and girls identify, gain, modify or reinforce behaviours, skill, norms, images, and ideas and transform it into practiced knowledge about gender. Considering the power of the gendered expectations children meet when they are occupied with in their gender making, this very making can be further understood, not only as an active learning through practice, but as mandatory learning project. Further, children’s learning about gender, can be understood as taking place in a particular learning space: a learning space that is interactive and filled with learning resources such as language, material resources, bodily experiences, social structures and power. To put it in another way, children’s
gender projects could be understood as a mandatory learning-by-doing activity where each one teach one, continuously.

**To play or not to play**

When children are occupied by making their gender they will also be aware that there are certain rules or ideal-types for being a boy or girl. These socially constructed rules are identified by Hirdman (1988) as the Gender Contract. The concept is primarily associated with relations between men and women, husbands and wives, but considering the power of social constructions (Searle 2011, Hacking 1999), the gender-contract could be claimed as valid for children’s gender-rationalities as well. As boys and girls grow up they will learn their rights and obligations and learn about their expected competences. Children will learn about the stereotyped ideas of which sphere, space and position that belongs to them as boys or girls. They will learn their worth, responsibilities, qualities and capacities. And they will learn what happens if they violate any of the paragraphs in the gender-contract. As with learning the meaning of traffic signs, the value of money or how to behave in school and play with their peers, children will learn to follow the gender contract.

Children’s learning about the rules in the gender contract could be understood as similar to the process of learning a new game. We know that games such as board games, card games or online games, have their own sets of conventional rules. There are rules about what to do or not to do, about how to win or how to loose. For example, the game of Ludo could be played in any way, but if the game shall make any sense to
us, we have made common rules, agreed on a kind of ludo-contract, about what the red, blue, yellow and green areas on the board means. We have also agreed about what the dice are for, how each player shall use their tokens and when it is allowed to push other players or not. Children make their gender, engage with the rules and find ways of playing the gender game. To play or not to play becomes a matter of being included, or not.

**Like peas in a pod**

While children are occupied with making their gender they learn to perform as boys and girls. They will also be aware that each gender has its own currency, governed by a particular order. The order is about social power and it is identified by Connell (1987) as the gender order. By its making children will learn the differences between masculinity and femininity and the different values of boys and girls, men and women. The logic of the gender order puts qualities of femininity and masculinity in a hierarchal relation to each other where masculinity has a dominant position over femininity. Connell (1987) explains that the gender order is a "historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity." (Connell 1987 p. 98).

However, the social order does not end in the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity. Masculinities are multiple. In other words, there are many ways to be a boy or a man and these different ways of being a boy is seen as more or less acceptable, or of high or low status. Masculinities are valued in relation to each other, in relation to both...
men and women. Masculinities are also ordered in relation to a hetero normative standard and what is seen as feminine. Another name for this is hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). From the hegemonic masculinity children will learn, what is seen as high or low status masculinity; what is counted as acceptable boyhood – or not. Men and women, as well as boys and girl, are also parts of constructing and reproducing these masculinity norms. (Connell, 2005).

What counts as a high status desirable male identity in the inlands of Sweden may be very different from what is seen a desirable masculinity in Italy or Nigeria. What the stereotype implies depends on time, geographical and cultural context. Norms about masculinity also interplays with intersecting identity dimensions as well as with gender hierarchies at local, national and global levels (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). It is a dynamic norm, but at the same time it is a stereotype that conform boys, like peas in a pod, into one, super-man-masculinity.

**Child is the father of man**

Connell (2005) explains, that the socially constructed standards and norms about gender appear to children as ready-made and unquestionable facts from the adult world. As adults we can be seen as the primary learning resources, the key references, and the handbooks for children’s learning about gender. In boys’ gender makings, they meet their fathers, their brothers, their mothers and their sisters. They move beyond the family spheres into the rest of society. They will learn to become a proper boy from gender patterns that are articulated by both men and women.
We are the ones that give little boys gendered toys to play with. Girls’ princess dresses and make up sets are equivalent to boys’ padded super-hero clothes and the plastic swords we allow in their hands. We lead boys into gendered expectations and tell them that they are the saviours of the world. We expect them to become family providers and guardians of children and women. We allow boys into real wars. What we tell children and the ways in which we practice our live, will matter for how they lead their lives. Children see and children do. Most likely, what children learn about gender in their childhood, children will bring with them as adults. The strophe “...child is the father of man” by Wordsworth, can be used as a poetical illustration of the construction, reproduction and transaction of children’s and adults’ norms about gender.

It was clearly dangerous but for real men quitting is never an option
When boys meet the gender order, deal with the gender contract and learn about hegemonic masculinities they engage with the same social phenomena as girls do, but with other contents and from different perspectives. Boys get involved in other, less protecting dialogues then girls do and because of gender stereotypes boys’ learning become different. From media images of men, boys are told that the ideal male body is large, strong and muscular. When boys buy their clothes they are expected to buy them from the dark side of the clothing store. The bright and colourful apparel is strictly for the girls. To perform their gender, boys are also expected to show toughness, deny pain, weaknesses and illness. Boys are expected to be successful,
adventurous and competitive towards other boys. Do not care about education, do not care about others, and do not care about yourself. Do not be soft, and what ever you do: Do not be a girl! The masculinity stereotype is about aggressiveness, physical violence and being emotionally restraining. Boys also learn that masculine prestige is about taking risks, driving fast, risk your life, be cool, live fast and die young: Be a man! Save the world! These stereotyping ideals about being a proper boy are no children’s game. Performing a masculine identity according to these stereotyped ideals could come with a high price, not only for boys, but for society. As explained by Connell (2005) the consequences of these ideals is clearly dangerous. They could even be deadly.

Protecting the innocent
Our children are not our possessions, but they are our responsibility. We have no exclusive rights to their lives, but children have exclusive rights to our unconditional love, protection and care. Children are born free with human rights to live their lives and create their own identities without having to risk their lives. But, as we know, for many reasons these rights do not always come easy. Gender is only one of the identity dimensions that affects children’s lives and whose command we cannot escape. The standards about femininity and masculinity are collectively shaped and individually lived and experienced. Being adults, we do have a certain responsibility to critically question these commands and how they affect the lives of our children. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves what part we are playing in the collective shaping of
gender norms. And what part do we play in children’s individual experiences about becoming boys and girls? What are we really telling children when we assure them that they can be what they want?

Art blended research
What has been explored in a wider, existential sense in this chapter is the human condition (Arendt, 1958), and in a more specific sense, what it may mean to become a boy in contemporary societies (Connell, 2005). As has been said in the outset of this chapter, I have brought together my professional practices as researcher and artist by blending theories about gender with my photographs of model train figures and everyday items. The overall aim was to explore, visualize and challenge stereotyped ideas that affect contemporary masculinities and boys’ gender making. As such, this chapter has not only covered issues about boys, identity and gender, it has also been an example of what I call Art Blended Research.

What can we learn about boys’ identity making from the blending of art and research?
To be able to engage in learning through art and art blended research, I think we have to move beyond normative ideas about methods and about knowing in right and wrong manners. We need to approach this alternative, creative path to knowledge and its associated issues of validity, with open minds. We have to put trust in the fact that the outcome from this particular kind of research is unpredictable and diverse.

My passion for exploring the potential of blending art and research emanates from my experience as artist and researcher in dialogue with students and
audiences, online and in art exhibitions. The blending of art and research creates alternative ways to learning and knowledge. It deserves to be explored because, as Eisner (2008) puts it: “knowledge and understandings are not always reducible to language” (Eisner, 2008 p. 5). Similarly, Polyani would say that: “we can know more than we can tell” (Polyani 1983/1966, p. 4; italics in original).

If we dare to explore research objects, such as boys’ identity making, not only through traditional, academic work, mediated through words and numbers, but also through art, I believe we may strengthen our chances to deepen our understandings. Of course, if we need to know something about logical relationships or kinds of knowledge that claim to be asserted through generalization, evidence and represented with words, we might not turn to art. However, if we are looking for emotional dimensions, vicarious experiences and experiential knowledge or aim for disrupting stereotypes, art can be a powerful way to go. But neither art, nor research can change the world. People can. Our various understandings of the world are a great resource for learning. If we bring our different understandings together, with open minds, we may extend our possibilities to understand the world.

Boys’ gender makings intersect with many identity dimensions that are linked to fields of social power. To become a boy as a war refugee in Sweden, in a ghetto in South Africa or in the wealthier parts of Hong Kong, can be very different even if boys are making the same gender identity. Masculinity is a dynamic, multi-layered norm. There are many ways to become and be a boy or a man. At the same time masculinity norms function as a conforming
stereotype that command boys into one super-man-masculinity. This is what I explore in my picture “Like Peas in a Pod”. The expectation to become a boy or a girl is one of the toughest commands that children ever will meet: following the gendered expectations is conditional for being included and seen as normal.

The mandatory of boys’ gender making aspects, but also adults’ part in constructing and reproducing boys’ identities, is further expressed in the picture “Be a Man”. Here, little boys are climbing on huge, blue stairs made of Lego. They are trying to reach a giant plastic Spiderman. While the boys are climbing towards Spiderman, adult’s are there to watch their steps and steer them in the right direction. As such, their adult governed climbing towards the superhero becomes an expression for social adjustments to hegemonic masculinities.

Becoming and being a boy in contemporary societies could be understood as a particular form of learning-by-doing. It is an active learning rather than a passive socialization. While children are making their gender identities they will learn in practice which position they belong to as a boy or a girl. They will learn about their rights and obligations and about expected competences and they will learn about their worth. Similar to learning the value of money, the meaning of traffic signs or the rules of a Ludo game, children engage with the rules of gender. This is exemplified in my picture “To Play or not to Play”.

The particular learning of gender does not happen in ordinary school classes from 08.00 a.m. to 03.00 p.m. It happens all the time. The space for this learning is universal and interactive, as I exemplify in the picture “Each one Teach one”. The learning space for children’s identity making is filled with learning resources such as language, bodily experiences, social structures, power and material resources. Children’s identity makings could be understood as a mandatory learning-by doing project where each one teach one, continuously. The key handbooks in this learning space are adults and our way of living, as I also demonstrate in my picture called “Child is the Father of Man”.

Boys have to learn how to manage a whole range of social constructions of boyhood and as we know, social constructions, such as gender, are very powerful. Acting according to them and following the command of “– Be a man!” can come with a high prize. I can even be deadly. The picture of the divers who are on the edge of the coffee cup, on their way to rescue the wasp that is drowning, can be perceived in many ways. It could be seen as an entertaining illustration of an unrealistic situation. It could also be understood as illustrating the risks that are involved when boys make their identities. Indeed, social constructions are powerful – but they also have a weak spot; they are constructed. They only have power and meanings because we acknowledge their power and give them their meanings.
References

Chapter 4

Artistic materializations of personal gender making

Josip Horvat
Croatia

When I look at my research conducted from 2008 until 2013 through art that was focused on exploring the boundaries of the gender identity of a gay man living in a transitional country like Croatia, it is hard to see it objectively, because most of my work is very personal.

I thought that it will be an easy task to problematize the gender identity and the gender roles in the society because I used to define myself as gay and I was always involved in work of NGOs that were associated with women and LGBTQI rights, but it turned out to be more complex and with more layers than I thought. I never dreamed that everything would evolve in a such complex and hermetic structure, that my experimenting and exploring of my own boundaries, would change me – not just as an artist, but as a person, in so many different ways.

Researching identities is like drowning in an ocean – when you first start to drown, it seems small and you can see the sunlight above you, but when you start to fall deeper, you start to see things that you thought they do not exist. When your research includes yourself as an active subject of the research, at some point you have to make phases where you just “glide” in your thoughts and artist expression and phases where you stop and analyse the findings and art that you have produced. This is a very long and time consuming process.

I am using my art to process the insecurity in my identity and myself that I have discovered and made aware to myself. I do not want to evoke just an imaginary spectacle in my audience, but to create emotional reactions and feelings of confusion, discomfort and insecurity – the same feelings that I had most of the time.

Introduction

When I started doing art I decided that I am going to have two ways of presenting and explaining my work in words. One is the theoretical approach and the other one is aesthetic, which is connected with my artistic expression. In the first part of my contribution you can read my theoretical explanation of my work, and in the second (Appendix) you can find my approach of explaining, sort of manifesting my artistic work. The artistic statement is strongly connected with my artwork, so you should consider it as a part of my art.

Background

I think that I can not explain my artwork without saying something about the social and political structure of the society where I live.

Croatia is a country that after 60 years of communism and almost 900 years of foreign rule, in 1991 gained independence. The bad thing that happened afterwards was the 5 year war and the rule, actually a dictatorship, of president Franjo Tuđman and it’s right wing party. These two events had made the Catholic Church stronger in it’s influence at the society and gave birth to an extensive network of corruption on all levels.

In the 90’ there was an unofficial policy against the LBTIQ rights and women rights. In 2000, after the fall of the dictatorship the policies towards gay people where changed in a positive way – we got our
Artistic materializations of personal gender making

first antidiscrimination laws and laws that protect people that were subjects to domestic violence and hate crimes. Unfortunately, around 2006, a new conservative political and social movement emerged. It started with the famous speech in the Croatian Parliament of the politician Lucija Cikes: “The whole universe is heterosexual, from the atom to the tiniest particle, from the fly to the elephant. According to the laws of physics, same charges always reject each other, and different are attracting each other. When the same ones would start to attract each other, everything would collapse and dissolve. The Moon would not spin around Earth anymore and it would fall down, the Earth would not spin around the Sun anymore, it would fall in the Sun and burn or it would float away and freeze.”

In 2013, besides the statements from our parliamentary representatives, like this mentioned above, a conservative initiative, with the support of the Catholic Church, managed to collect almost 750,000 signatures (Croatia has around 4 million inhabitants) to hold a referendum where it would be decided, if the Constitution would be changed in the way that it would state that marriage is a unity only between a man and a woman. They succeeded to organize the referendum legally, and the referendum passed. In this short info I just wanted to give you perspective, where I come from and how for me there is an inherit emphasis on importance in dealing with gender issues.

Research

I started with a simple question: What could make me a woman/effeminate according to the society: female clothes, movements, doing “woman-ly things” or something else? Where is the line between the two genders? Why can a man not wear high heels, and a power suit and be taken seriously, do we still have problems equating effeminate with strength, among other things? I thought if I want to explore my gender identity that I have to figure out how the society shapes women in their identity.

I convinced my friends and family that I would like to change my sex and I started to record the search for a perfect woman that I could be. For a year I explored the underground world of Croatian transgender and transvestite scene and as I was trying to find a woman deep in me. It was hard and very emotional. As a man I had many revelations that struck me during my research – I figured out how the identity of transvestites is also constructed according to stereotypical and judgmental view of men towards women. The documentary Paris is Burning from Jennie Livingston and many books helped me to focus more on this issue and to detect it.

My conclusion was: if you want to be a woman – you have to follow strict rules that include certain physical changes – like shaving of body hair, wearing make-up, having trendy hairstyle (preferably long hair), wearing skirts, high heels, having very gentle movements and being constantly ready to subordinate towards your partner (maybe not honestly, but at least just to let him know that he is in charge). Besides my on-field research, I started to tape my everyday preparing and dressing up as a woman – I was choosing different wigs, clothes, actually searching for the ones that I would feel most comfortable. Sometimes I was brave enough to go out in the streets dressed like that. And it was liberating. Of course just until somebody noticed that I am not a woman.

In the work Portraits I try to trace the roots of modern conception of female beauty in the West. I singled out several portraits and paintings like the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci, Birth of Venus by Botticelli, Girl with a Pearl Earring by Vermeer, Maya by Goya and the Rokeby Venus by Diego Velázquez, that probably together with the caveman view of a fertile and healthy breeding mate, and centuries of male domination, helped to create the construct of the image of an idealized woman, something that is actually impossible to reach for any modern woman today (or a biological man that feels like a woman). I wanted to prove that these images are influential even today. I recreated these images, narrowing them down to crude signs. Whether I was standing on an umbrella pretending to be Venus or having a piece of cloth on my head simulating hairstyle, these powerful images are strongly imprinted in our collective mind (pop culture, and Western culture in general), so they were still recognizable to most of the audience that saw them.

In my further research I realized that I should focus more on performativity, because everything that our brain and identity are, is actually a relation between us and the society - a constant acting towards other and ourselves. I wanted to explore the sexual
lust and drives that are taking a very significant part in forming of our gender identities. They can cause that we tend to adjust our performance, depending in what kind of company we are and sometimes to create completely parallel lives – one for the society and one of our own.

For the work When I Grow... I tried to get as closer as possible to the part of the LGBTQTIQ population that is having double lives – one life that is socially acceptable, and one secret life where you can be whatever you want and you do not have to worry that you will be judged, because you are in a close circle of men that find sexual pleasure in other men.

I was also dealing with the moment of uncertainty in performing, a fear to be interrupted in the middle of the act, in which you do not want to be seen or exposed. I executed around 30 performances.

In my performances I connect minimalist movement with the costumes inspired by sea monsters. For my sounds and songs I was using madrigal renaissance melodies that were speaking about forbidden or rejected love. I re-wrote texts for the songs so they had hidden sexual meanings. These two things reminded me on ancient myths about mermaids and their deathly calls to the sailors.

I place this “forest” mermaids (giving them clear sexual body extensions) in public parks in Zagreb (Croatia) – which are by day, islands of relaxation and nature in the city, but by night, they turn into a cruising place for middle aged gays who hide their sexuality and come here to find a partner for sex and fun.

There is a completely underground world happening in these spaces – very similar to the deep sea monster world, where in the absence of light and other creatures, new social structures appear and even new life forms.

In my acts I was using female tights, female underwear and wigs, reusing them as body extensions. The extra body parts combined with the repetitive movements, produced scenes similar to the state of anxiety when facing an religious state, vision, orgasm, fear, danger. To the bypassing observers they seemed mostly very disturbing.

Creating these mythical mermaids I am also exploring the possibility of performance as a medium. Even if you document, or write a structure, or report of the performance, you can not recreate the atmosphere of the moment when the performance was executed – the faces of the accidental audience and the feeling of danger and the space where it has been held, in short, the whole interaction between a performing person, the audience and space. You can not document the feeling and moment when you realize that everything what you do outside this art act is a performance too – and you experience that with every performance again and again.

In the third section of my research, that includes videos Life of a Couple on Saturday Afternoon During Summer 2012, Let Him Out, and the performance Let Him Out – Scream with no Sound, I opened a question about violence in gay relationships. I experienced myself this horrible moment when you realize that you are trapped in a never ending circle where you convince yourself that love can be the ultimate excuse for violent behaviour towards you in a relationship. I did not yet extended this part because it is very hard for me to talk about it and to deal with it, and the other reason is that there are no legal ways of processing domestic violence in gay partnerships in Croatia – so it something more that I have to resolve with help of my art. For this part I would like to quote Georges Bataille: “Suffering alone reveals the total significance of the beloved object. Possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but the idea of death is linked with the urge to possess.” My last work in the research is performance Trip to Unoccupied Land. In 2013 there was a referendum in Croatia where our Constitution is changed in a way that marriage is defined as a unity only between a man and a woman and family as a community between a man, woman and children. This is the first time in the last 68 years that a discriminatory sentence is written in our Constitution. During the campaign there was a lot of debates and discussions which were mostly based on the “unhealthy” and “unnatural” behaviour of the members of the LGBTQTIQ population and contained very clear hate speech.

I reacted in a way that I put on my left arm the pink triangle – a label – fascist sign, that was forced to wear by persons considered to have homosexual affiliations.

The day after the voting on the referendum I have worn the triangle the whole day and in the evening travelled from Zagreb to the one of the few cities where the majority of the votes were against this definition – Rijeka (around 300 km). I arrived there in the evening...
and I have torn apart the sign – I was free – I was in the city where people think that everybody is equal.

**Conclusion**

After some years that I have been dealing with gender identity and all the things connected to it, I have only one definite answer in which I am very certain. This is only the beginning. Gender is something important to every person as an individual, and as a part of the wider community in which we live, because it is defining us on so many levels, that are sometimes even hard to comprehend. It is strongly connected with our media culture, politics, economy and our whole social system. I think that I will probably deal with it for some time.

**Appendix**

I came out in Cabbage in Rehbockland (also known as Stagland) in the year 1987. It was 3 days before the St Nicholas Day, and although he was preparing to give away some money to poor girls who wanted to marry – so he was heating up the village with his goldsmithing workshop, that day the temperature was -37°C and all the water was frozen. The river stopped to flow, buses stopped to drive, the birds have been falling down from trees – frozen and electricity cables had broke under the weight of ice, only the stag roared with his deep throat over a rotten rabbit covered with snow.

When I came out I was all yellow and without air.

When I was a child my best friend was a glittery black hen, blind on her left eye. I loved her, she was speaking with me. She explained me what my mother was thinking, when she said that God was dead and that she only believes in her 10 fingers on her hands.

Once I put my finger in the meat hasher and I almost lost my finger. I was scared, I was holding my piece of the finger in my left arm, on the back of the car on the way to the hospital, crying and thinking that if I have 9 fingers on my hands now, that I should believe in God. When I was in hospital I heard a wise man telling that an artist who doesn't speak English, is no artist. My finger was reattached.

So I decided to be an artist.

By the age of 10 I already spoke English, so I became an ARTIST.

My hen has died and I was starting my high school. One day I was raking hay on the meadow, in the backyard of our house. I was dreaming to become a mermaid, to swim deep in the ocean and to have soft and tender hair like the softest hay.

Two coalminers approached me from the woods and they showed me how holes and tunnels in the mine could be used in many different ways.

I decided to leave the surface and to spend some years in the mine with all the coalminers. Three months after I came in the mine tunnels, there was an earthquake and I was stuck between five walls.

I had no choices, I started to eat stones, to squeeze the milky juices from root plants, imagining that the Sun never existed. When I was attacked by the army of underground rabbits, a fairy came to me. She had a leopard-patterned hairstyle and a yellow dress. I was so exhausted, I saw yellow and I thought that this was it – she is my saviour, that she has been sent by St Nicholas, and that she is covered all in gold, unfortunately she just hit me with the scissors on my head and knocked me down.

Finally I woke up in my forest where I grew up, somewhere by a wonderful cold spring that was disappearing under an old oak in the ground, and was forming a huge underground lake. And there he was!

I thought that it was a satyr, so smelly, hairy, strong, and quiet, but no, it was Pan himself – he was touching my fin. He turned me into a mermaid and gave me the lake.

I was singing for him often. And I enjoyed it.

After some time Pan turned into a satyr and he had the strong urge to possess me. I stopped to go out of the lake on the surface.

Sometimes I stopped to breath.

I felt pain.

I felt pain in my fins, in my eyes, in my hair, in my arms, in my brain, in my heart, in my soul.

I was dreaming that the pain was just an imaginary metaphor of death and that actually I was dead a long time ago.

Even my tears were hurting and were painful.

I started to cry a lot. Every passing day the lake was growing bigger and bigger, because of my tears. The walls of the cave started to have little cracks.

The pressure of the water was stronger and stronger. One day the cracks started to produce
weird sounds and the walls of the cave collapsed, the
water poured out and I was left in the dark.

It was cold and I could not find my way. I did not
know where is left, where is right, where to go, what
to do, and I could not swim or walk. The satyr was
gone, my lake was gone.

Weeks have passed and nothing was happening. It was still everything in black, but then I saw
a beautiful stag – so strong and moving slowly to
me. He was made from blue light and had dark eyes.
He approached me, touched my face with his horns
gently and said:” Now, I will lead you.”

I suddenly felt a beautiful sensation in me, my
body was shaking and trembling – I looked at my
hands, and every inch of my body was turning into
pure light. It was so warm and soft.

Now I was dead and alive in the same time. I
was free.

Now I can go wherever I want – there are no
walls, there are no trees, no rivers, no lakes, no
oceans for me, only the smell of mountain wind with
northern snow, and the sound of the Stag – me.

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Artistic materializations of personal gender making

Picture 1 Choosing shoes

Picture 2 Fixing hair

Picture 3 Portraits – Mona Lisa
Picture 4 Portraits – Birth of Venus
Artistic materializations of personal gender making

Picture 5 Portraits – Rokeby Venus
Picture 6 When I grow... (Part 1 out of 30)
Artistic materializations of personal gender making

Picture 7 When I grow... (Part 2 out of 30)
Picture 8 When I grow... (Part 3 out of 30)
Artistic materializations of personal gender making

Picture 9 Let him out
Picture 10 Let him out – Scream with no sound
Chapter 5

Negotiating masculine identities as dependents of high-achieving female migrants

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Abstract
Studies on masculinities often tend to focus on the negative connotations of the term associating men with problem behaviors. It is especially true in case of immigrant men who are more often than not seen as perpetrators of violence and harbingers of conservative gender attitudes. This not only shows them in a constant negative light but also fails to scrutinize the complex invisibilities and vulnerabilities that these men face. This study moves away from the trap of viewing men as perpetrators and instead problematizes the social approval and internalization of masculine role identities. It does so by presenting cases of migrant married couples who are in an unconventional situation with regards to gender roles and expectations within marriage. The paper shows that an ambivalence over gender roles creates anxieties not only in men who are expected to adhere to certain standards set by their societies, but also their partners who struggle with their conscious or unconscious desires to see them fulfil these standards. The paper argues that it is important to recognize that masculinities and femininities do not exist in a vacuum but rather exist within socio-cultural realities. It is pertinent to address the correlation between the two if men and women are to complement each other’s lives while fulfilling their aspirations. Such conceptualizations are already under development whether through cognizant or incognizant processes as men and women negotiate lives in an alien land like in the case of couples discussed this study.

"There is, in the lives of men, a strange combination of power and privilege, pain and powerlessness. Men enjoy social power, many forms of privilege, and a sense of often-unconscious entitlement by virtue of being male. But the way we have set up that world of power causes immense pain, isolation and alienation not only for women, but also for men. This is not to equate men’s pain with the systemic and systematic forms of women’s oppression. Rather, it is to say that men’s power... comes with a price... This combination of power and pain is the hidden story in the lives of men. It is men’s contradictory experiences of power.”

– Kaufman (1999: 59)

Introduction
Dependent male partners of highly skilled female migrants have often been overlooked in studies on men and masculinities. Despite the increase in numbers of highly skilled female migrants, research on feminization of migration has so far been disproportionately concentrated on low-skilled workers in feminized labour1. However, international migration studies are gradually moving beyond “casting women as ‘trailing spouses’ to their male ‘breadwinners’” (Boyle, 2002). And yet, when considering male dependents of these workers, there is still an inordinate focus on women in blue-collar jobs, and on immigrant men as mainly associated with problem behaviours like violence against women and conservative beliefs around gender (Macey, 1999). Studies that integrate (especially immigrant) masculinity with gender often adopt a negative connotation which not only promotes an essentially harmful image of (immigrant) men but also homogenizes an otherwise complex understanding and embodiment of masculinities, while overlooking their correlations to femininities.

This study focuses on selected cases of male partners who have accompanied highly skilled female migrants to the United Kingdom (UK) – in this case,
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either women pursuing a PhD or those employed in the health sector. It explores experiences of these men in relation to their partners in the context of a legally and often financially dependent status; an imbalance in power relations when the wife is in a professionally advanced position relative to the husband; as well as increasing over-education penalties (Lindley, 2009; Lindley and Lenton, 2006) and subsequent unemployment or underemployment for migrants educated in home countries. The objective of this study is to analyze how these men are negotiating visibilities and invisibilities in their personal, social and professional lives in a situation where they have migrated to the UK as dependents of their partners.

Studying the complex invisibilities of male migrant masculinities is even more pertinent within the context of increasing immigration to the UK of more than 100,000 immigrants per year since the 1970s and particularly since the 1990s. Among them, those arriving for study or work purposes form a significant proportion. In the year ending September 2013, 176,000 people immigrated for formal study while 218,000 immigrated for work related reasons with 63% having entered with a definite job (Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, 2014). Only 20% of those immigrating for work were non-EU citizens but they still account for 72% of those immigrating for formal study. Non-EU citizens make up a significant proportion of total immigrants (46%) and constitute a substantial share of long-term migrants². Among these are a significant proportion of qualified nurses recruited by the UK National Health Service (NHS) (Hardill and MacDonald, 2000). Iredale (2005) and Kaufman (2004) report that women from developing countries constitute a growing proportion of highly skilled migrants who – together with men – are increasingly employed in the IT sector, nursing or teaching.

Since there are comparatively fewer men entering the UK as spouses or fiancés of women in both white- and blue-collar jobs (Immigration Statistics, 2011 as cited in Blinder, 2013), there has been limited focus on these men when it comes to masculinity studies except in relation to problem behaviors of men who are dependents of women in blue collar jobs. Gallo (2006), in a study on the construction of masculine identities among Malayali men who have immigrated as a result of marriage to Malayali female domestic workers in Rome, explores how men’s masculine identity is represented through marital relationship with the female migrant and how “masculinity is constructed and contested within different settings”. Migrant men come from differently gendered cultures, which lead to very different personal, social and professional experiences for men and women. The men in Gallo’s study were located in their wives’ work and social spaces that oriented their own work opportunities. The limitations in terms of work opportunities – as shown in Gallo’s study and my own – could often result in social isolation and professional penalties, particularly in areas with a predominantly white population such as Wales (the site of my study) where the latest census shows an overall white population of around 93%, along with a higher unemployment rate (7.1%) than the UK average (6.8%) as per the year ending 30 June 2014 (StatsWales, n.d.). Lindley (2009) offers an example of the challenge non-White men face when they migrate to the UK as over-qualified immigrants. She states that Black African, other non-White and Indian men are more likely to be over-educated and thus bear larger over-education penalties.

Within this context, this study on masculinities aims to explore how dependent male migrant spouses navigate between contesting identities in their personal and professional lives. The paper begins with a brief account of the methodology adopted and the ethical considerations taken into account during the study. It then introduces the participants in order to form a background from which to begin analysis. The analysis starts with an introduction to the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and masculinity ideology, eventually focusing on two masculine role-identities of the ‘provider’ and the ‘achiever’. These two categories are used to demonstrate the contestations and challenges faced by men and their partners in negotiating changing gender roles. In doing so, the paper emphasizes the correlation between masculinity and femininity and their embeddedness within competing socio-cultural contexts.

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² The Office of National Statistics in the UK used the United Nations definition of long-term international migrant – ‘A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence’ (United Nations, 1998: 18).
Methodology and ethical considerations

This study is an exploration of men’s negotiations between various identities within the context of migration to ‘the West’ which brought about shifts in traditional gender roles that led to contestations between status and power within individuals and their marriage. Non-EU migrants were deliberately chosen for the study since they were more likely to come from gendered realities that are very different from their host country. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both husbands and wives to understand how both partners perceive their new roles and what strategies they adopt to adjust to changes in their personal, social and professional lives. This study concentrates on men who have joined their female partners who are either pursuing a PhD or working in a highly skilled job (like at the NHS) in Wales, UK. An international university was chosen as the main site of enquiry because it is one of the focal spaces of engagement of highly skilled immigrant women other than the NHS. Existing contacts within the university were used to identify potential respondents. The process of identification was difficult given that I was new to the place but also because of the sensitivity of the issue. The social stigma attached to a ‘dependent husband’ is likely to have deterred potential participants from responding to emails circulated throughout the university and personal as well as third party approaches. One respondent, however, volunteered to take part in the study after having received an email about it; his wife agreed to join the study later. The study is limited to partners of PhD candidates at the university, except one who moved after his wife secured a job in the UK. It was important to ensure that they intended to stay in the UK for longer than 12 months so as to include a richer variety of experiences and aspirations brought about by the reality of long-term stay.

In-depth interviews were conducted in January, February and March 2014, with a total of ten respondents or five couples. Whenever required, participants were asked for a second interview or were sent emails for clarification and/or substantiation. One of the female respondents had to be contacted via email because she had recently left the country following a successful PhD defence. At the time of the interview, the men were of an average age of 33 while women were 30 years in average. Two women were in the second year of their PhD and one in her third year while one had recently defended her PhD. Only one woman moved to the UK after she was offered a job. The men moved to the UK at various dates between 2003 and 2013, four of them having arrived along with their wives and one joining his partner more than a year later. Prior to living with their partners in the UK, two men were pursuing studies within and outside their home country while the other three were in long-term jobs. All except one couple were in the initial stages of their married lives, i.e. between one to five years, and this was to be the first time they would live together as couples since they had previously been studying or working in different places.

Since the study deals with highly sensitive and personal issues, ethical considerations were taken into account as much as possible. The participants were briefed about the study and were asked for their verbal consent to be quoted in the report. Permission was sought for audio recording. Alongside, participants were also told that while the statements would be quoted verbatim whenever required, the interpretation and analysis would be mine. However, they had the choice to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. They were sent a copy of the draft report in order to verify statements made during interviews and to express any concerns they might have. Since one of the respondents did not agree with the analysis, the associated section has been removed from the study while keeping intact the relevant partner’s section who decided to go ahead with the study. While it was difficult to maintain anonymity regarding participation in the study because local contacts had to be deployed to identify suitable cases, utmost care was taken to maintain confidentiality during and after the interviews. Interviews were conducted individually and statements were kept private between partners. However, due to the nature of the study, confidentiality between partners would be difficult to avoid once they read the report. The chance to comment on the report, therefore, provided the respondents the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the study. The respondents’ names have been changed to maintain their anonymity, while markers like home countries,
current place of residence and affiliated institutes have been removed so as to maintain privacy within the wider community the couples are now a part of.

**Moving to the UK**

I will begin with brief introductions to the respondents. This is important not only in establishing the background from which they come but in also contextualising their relationship in order to understand how that affected their lives and experiences in the new place. However, excessive details have been excluded from the paper in order to maintain anonymity. The respondents come from countries within Asia and Africa. They arrived in the UK at various times between 2003 and 2012.

**Tamir & Tiara:** Tamir is the eldest son in a relatively well-off family. Tiara is from a large family of modest means. Higher education and an established career means a lot to her since her family cannot afford to give her any property or financial help. She met Tamir through a common friend and they have maintained a long-distance relationship until they moved to the UK. During this time, Tiara and Tamir got married but worked in different regions within their country. Tamir enjoyed his work in remote areas and visited Tiara whenever he could. Tiara decided to move to the UK to pursue a PhD. Tamir – despite some resistance from his family - decided to quit his job and join his wife and child in the UK. He has taken up various part-time jobs in order to meet living expenses.

**Ehsan:** Ehsan is the eldest in a small family of a single-wage earner. He and his partner were classmates in their undergraduate years when they started dating. It was Ehsan who encouraged and helped his reluctant partner to apply for a Master’s program abroad. When his wife was offered a PhD in the UK, he decided to join her with the hope that he would be also able to pursue a PhD or find a suitable job. At the time of the study, Ehsan had moved back to his country and was waiting to start a fully-funded PhD in a country far away from where his wife is currently based.

**Andrew and Amy:** Andrew comes from ‘an average family’ with a father who earned enough to modestly feed and clothe a large family. He met Amy when they were studying at the same institute. He says he was attracted to her because she was ‘very smart’ with a potential to ‘go higher’ and complete a PhD. He was also drawn to her because of her ‘very strong family values’ – elaborating that she wanted to have a home, kids and stay together as a family. But when Amy’s PhD had them and their children living in different countries, Andrew moved to the UK taking multiple part-time jobs to support his family.

**Mario & Mireille:** Mario and Mireille were classmates since their undergraduate years and had been dating since then. Mireille continued with studies while Mario moved to a remote place to work for a private company. He liked his job because it was challenging and fulfilling. But when Mireille moved to the UK to pursue a PhD, Mario said he joined her at the insistence of his parents and relatives. At the time of the study, he had taken up various part-time jobs to support himself.

**Gilbert & Grace:** Gilbert and Grace met around two decades ago when both of them were under government service. Gilbert said they decided to move out of their home country for better and more fulfilling careers. They moved when his wife was offered a job in the UK. While he was over-qualified for the work he undertook for the next few years, he nevertheless enjoyed it and – together with his wife – was able to save enough to start undergraduate studies. However, his income was minimal and it was mostly his wife’s income that got them through. Later, he took a one-year break to earn enough to begin a Master’s degree. At the time of the study, he was pursuing a fully-funded PhD.

An account into the lives of the couples provides a background to the next section on the dominant forms of masculinities the men embody, internalized through their socio-cultural and religious background, and played out in their current status as dependent husbands in a foreign land. The relationship of masculinities with accompanying femininities are highlighted to show how they are inclusive of and reinforce each other. These were mainly drawn from the statements made during the interviews by both men and women which reflected their beliefs and influences from spaces they left back home. The analysis is informed by feminist theories of gender roles, its socialization as well as its pronounced manifestation in the public/private divide with the advent of industrialization (Pateman, 1988).
However, central to this study are theories around masculinity and femininity and their performance within the heterosexual institution of marriage. These performances are sometimes in accordance to social norms regarding gender roles in marriage but are also often contrary to these norms. These contradictions are likely the result of change in circumstances brought about by migration as well as a more general change in values regarding gender which could be attributed to education, modernization and globalization. The following section elaborates on the performance of dominant masculine roles and situates them within masculinity studies. It then identifies the two prominent role identities that repeatedly came up in the study.

**Masculinity ideology and hegemonic masculinity**

Since the 1950s, sex- and later gender-role identity approaches were dominant in research around men and masculinities (Pleck, 1981). These approaches focused on fixed sex-/gender-roles historically adopted by men and women. ‘Masculine gender related personality traits (masculine personality traits or trait masculinity) refer to the way of ‘being masculine’ and argue that a traditional male already has culturally defined masculine attributes (Pleck et al, 1993). This interpretation has received more attention in masculinity research (Lenney, 1991). However, Pleck et al (1993) suggest a conceptually different term ‘masculinity ideology’ to define social-psychological and sociological conception of norms which ideologically endorse masculinity or traditional expectations or standards for males. Instead of measuring traits, this model proposes attitudinal measures. A traditional male is then the one who believes that men should have these attributes. From a social constructionist perspective, the authors argue that ‘masculinity ideology’ is the “endorsement and internalization of cultural belief systems about masculinity and men, rooted in structural relations between the two sexes... [and that]... males act in the ways they do, not because of their biological characteristics but because of the conceptions of masculinity held by their culture” (ibid: 88, 89). Hence they insist on the existence of plural masculinities instead of a single standard that has so far been white, heterosexual, middle class male role in the US.

Further theorizations on masculinity have come from Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ was first proposed in 1982 by research groups in Australia but systematized in an article by Carrigan, Connell & Lee (1985) where they critiqued “male sex role” literature and proposed a model of multiple masculinities and power relations. The ‘hierarchy of masculinities’ was first drawn out from the concept of homophobia or the experiences of homosexual men on violence and prejudice from straight men since the 1970s. Hegemonic masculinity was also influenced by Freud’s psychoanalysis, as well as by Stoller (1968) who popularized the term “gender identity”. It was later in the 1980s that Pleck (1981) and Kimmel (1987) criticized the sex role model. By the mid-1980s, hegemonic masculinity was understood as “the pattern of practise that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). Hence, hegemonic masculinity also stands in contrast to and dominates over other subordinated masculinities. It insists on a single normative that requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it.

The masculinity ideologies found to be most dominant among men in this study, or the hegemonic masculinity that they represented, is that of a responsible provider, a head of the household and a high achiever. There are exceptions to this, as will be shown later. Through this paper, I argue that ideologies displayed by men who have internalized a culturally specific form of hegemonic masculinity – while according them a sense of entitlement by virtue of being male – also render them powerless when they fail to achieve high personal and societal standards (Kaufman, 1999). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) go further in their criticism of the notion of global dominance of men over women as too simplistic a view on the relationship between masculinity and femininity.

The following sections illustrate the embodiment of a hegemonic masculine ideology as well as how such ideologies emerge and are firmly located in socio-cultural and religious structures. Also illustrated is how the same ideologies are contested and reinvented with changing roles of women and men; re-established due to tensions created by these
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contestations as well as the contradictions provided by embodied feminine ideologies in relation to their masculine counterparts. I will, however, also show that exceptions exist which, along with the flexibilities shown by each through shifting gender ideologies, point to the fact that ideologies of masculinity and femininity are fluid and changing.

I will begin by using the concept of role-identity as a social construct that is situated in particular social context. Role-identity is defined as “the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position...[it is] his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position” (McCall and Simmons, 1996: 67). This is illustrated by the most prominent role-identities adopted by men in this study – the roles of the provider (and hence, the head of the household as well as the primary decision maker) and the achiever. I will first discuss the expected role of the provider and illustrate the tensions it creates when the man is not able to fulfil this role. But I will also show how couples are negotiating such expectations with changing gender roles. I will then move on to the expected role of an achiever that men are supposed to embody and show how this results in tensions within the self as well as in relation to the position of respective partners.

The role-identity of a provider and the head of the household

The role-identity of a provider and the head of the household (expressed by the term “leader” of the household by the respondents) is closely linked to men’s historical association with paid employment. O’Brien (2012) illustrates a close link between masculine identity and paid employment in her study on Irish stay-at-home dads. These men, while acknowledging and appreciating the close bond they have developed with their children as their primary caregiver, also express a strong desire to return back to paid employment because that is the masculine thing to do. In my study, this masculine identity was most prominently adopted by Andrew. He played an important part in meeting his family’s financial needs during a crucial time in Amy’s professional life. But this meant that the family has had to live apart for much of the time during her PhD, with Amy accommodating her full-time work around the care of their children during the considerable time Andrew was away. Though Andrew said he was more actively involved in his children’s upbringing since he moved to the UK around the last year of Amy’s PhD, he often had to commute a long distance for work leaving barely three or four days (including weekends) for Amy to fully concentrate on her work. This does not seem to have changed much even when the whole family moved to the city where his work was based because he had a full-time day job. While this prevented Amy from a normal day-time schedule, having to look after his family’s needs as the main provider also meant giving up on social life for Andrew. It also brought the added stress of extra work to keep his family afloat in an expensive city. The family did not have much of a choice at this point.

Mario, on the other hand, remembered how he was afraid to come to the UK as a dependent of his wife, and how his not being the primary earner would threaten his authority in the household.

Mario: “…because I’m the husband, I’m supposed to be the leader of the household. This is really important... I don’t bring any money, I’m not doing a PhD. The situation threatens my authority in the household.”

Me: “Can you give me an example of how your authority has been threatened in the household?”

Mario: “You know, normally I’m the only one who should make decisions...you know, about the budget ... and if we want to go out, I normally should say where to go and provide a set of choice.”

Me: “Why? Why should you normally decide?”

Mario: “Because we are raised in a Christian family and that’s what the Bible says, that husband is the head of the household and he should make the decisions. But that doesn’t mean that he doesn’t care about what others think. He listens to them, analyses and then makes decisions. That’s it.”

Here, household headship is expressed in terms of being able to exercise authority within the family. Though Mario was quick to acknowledge that the head should take into account the desires of other family members, he nevertheless said that the final

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4 For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to the term “leader” wherever the respondents have used it either to refer to the head of the household or to refer to actual leadership in terms of providing (practical and spiritual) guidance and making final decisions for the household.
decision rests on the head. This was firmly supported by his partner Mireille who believed that it was the way God wanted them to live. Reflecting a similar notion, Racko and Burchell (2013) – in their study of 33 countries – found high occupational segregation of sexes in countries where Catholicism and Protestantism is a dominant religion. Traditionally prescribed roles of men and women in the public and private spheres is often based on the premise of men as rational beings capable of making important decisions, while the ‘marriage contract’ – or ‘sexual contract’ as Pateman (1988) argues – allows men the patriarchal right to domination. However, in case of Mario and Mireille, the roles prescribed to them in lieu of marriage had reversed in their current situation. Mireille felt an extreme guilt about how supportive Mario had been by forgoing his role as a provider. While she said she was not such a fanatic anymore about prescribed gender roles, she was also very clear about defining the provider as someone who has a ‘professional, full time job’. Hence she would say her husband was now playing the role of the supporter. The duality of provider/supporter and leader/follower that she used to define the roles of men and women in marriage would then mean that she is currently playing the role of the provider – and yet she was hesitant about labelling herself so. Instead, she simply reasserted that she should be the one playing the supportive role.

Bringing money into the household was equated not only with being the provider but also the head of the household. Mario placed much emphasis on the role of a husband as the leader and decision maker. As is evident in the extract above, it was his religious inclinations that instilled a very strong masculine ideology of the provider and the household head. Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003) relate the breadwinner/homemaker dichotomy to early industrialization and the making of middle-class ideologies on masculinity and femininity, which resonates with this Christian doctrine. Ellison and Bartkowski (2002) complement this with a discussion on conservative Protestantism and the division of household labour among married couples. However, upon further probing in a third meeting, it became apparent that his personal experience of belonging to a once broken family played a big role in instilling these beliefs. He saw his parent’s separation as a failure on both their parts in fulfilling their respective roles – the father as the leader who provides guidance and the mother as the carer. However, after his parents underwent counselling at the local church, he observed a gradual improvement in their relationship. This was what convinced him to ‘convert to Christianity’, emulate the teachings of the Bible in his own life and help spread its words through community engagement when he was still in his country. Echoing similar transformative possibilities through a case study in Botswana, Togarasei (2013) argues for the use of certain biblical traditions like the Jesus of Luke’s Gospel to promote Jesus’ revolutionary attitude towards women and provide an alternative model to dangerous masculinities that are – according to the author – products of culture, colonial attitudes and Christianity in Botswana.

Religion also played a profound role in Gilbert’s individual and married life though in a different way that did not display these dominant role-identities. Though he often felt guilty about not contributing much in terms of finances, this guilt did not manifest as a sense of failure to fulfil his role as a husband. He often said his financial situation did not always allow him to fulfil his wife’s material desires but instead of being aggrieved by it, he hoped he compensated for it by paying her more attention and showing her love and respect. He saw his situation as temporary and refused to dwell over a circumstance he could not immediately change. He was well aware that his wife’s qualifications might mean that she would always have a higher salary than him. This knowledge and its acceptance made him less apprehensive about bringing in an ‘equal share’. However, his acceptance can also be seen a manifestation of an evolving modern, capitalist society that requires a dual-income household in order to be able to lead what is considered comfortable lives. He explained, “...society has changed over the years so that you can’t have just one person working.” However, the concept of ‘work’ as only that which has monetary value remains unchallenged, which further reinforces the masculine ideology of ‘work’ itself. This is a topic that requires further research that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Religious mores of how to behave like a (family) man is also an underlying theme in Andrew’s
allegiance to ‘family values’. It is, however, more explicit in Tamir and Tiara’s lives. Both of them explained how, according to Islamic beliefs, it is the duty of the man to provide for the family. But they also adopted a lenient attitude in special cases like their own – i.e. as long as the man bought the food, even if it is his wife who gives him the money for it, he has done his duty as a husband. It is likely aided by Tiara’s fiercely independent attitude of having a career and income that she managed on her own. However, she had handed over her current bank account to her husband and was satisfied that this helped him fulfil the role of a provider. Despite this flexibility between them, she noted how he expressed impatience whenever she tried to give him any advice. “It’s not really because of ego,” she said, but because it makes him feel inferior or ‘not as good as’ her. This aversion to wives giving advice was repeated in Mario and Ehsan’s accounts. Mario explained this in the context of Mireille’s persistent suggestions regarding work or further studies, “I think I don’t want myself to be a servant just doing things she told me. [So] when she said something, I do the contrary…just the opposite…when people are close to you and they say things – even if it makes sense, you can always reject their views, their suggestions…[but] perhaps it’s [because of] the way she’s saying it…it’s like imposing”. This has to be understood within the context of the tensions Mario experienced between his current reality and the role-identity he was expected to assume – that of the primary provider and an achiever.

A repercussion of this is more pronounced in Ehsan’s case when his failure to land a paid job put severe mental stress on both him and his wife. However, what was of more significance to Ehsan in contributing to this stress was the pressure – whether self-imposed or societal – to be an achiever. This role is discussed in the next section. It is important to note here that the need to assume the role-identity of a provider is less pronounced in Ehsan and Tamir who come from a financially secure background where, due to the cultural values of the Asian countries they come from, there is a degree of certainty that they – as (the eldest or only) sons – will inherit a significant portion of the family property and headship. This does not mean that they felt the same about their role as an achiever.

The role-identity of an achiever

Mac an Ghaill’s (1994) typification of ‘academic achievers’ as effeminate men is contested by Chattopadhyay (2011) who explained how 19th century discourses on Bengali masculinity challenged the colonial construct of effeminate Bengali men “through the articulation of buddhibal [strength of the intellect] in contrast with bahubal [physical strength] …[to throw]…light on the emerging prominence of the bhadralok concept of a sophisticated Bengali gentleman” (265). National discourses post-independence, hence, led to the rejection of aggressive maleness and to the construction of a hegemonic masculinity that rested on urban middle-class, educated achievers. Lu and Wong (2013) also described one of the role-identities of Asian Americans as that of an achiever, which gave them the legitimacy to embody a masculine identity.

Andrew represented this quintessential image of a high-achieving man. He had two international degrees and aspired for an international career. He moved between three jobs in the span of a year, not only because he wanted to be with his family but also because he believed each successive job to be a good platform to further his career. Amy acknowledged his contributions but refused to elaborate when asked if it made a difference when he came to live with them in the UK. She instead said that she worked during the weekends and whenever he was on leave or working from home. Andrew, on his part, acknowledged the difficulty Amy went through and did all he could under his capacity to support her. Despite this, the familiar dichotomy of man as breadwinner and wife as homemaker repeats in what they said was their plan for the next few years. Amy has decided to stay home and be a mom to her children and a wife to Andrew for some years. Though she rightly pointed out that this should not be problematic as long as it is her choice – and that there are other important things besides a career – it is of wonder why she chose to do a PhD under stressful circumstances of having to leave her little children back home in the first place. Since interactions with her were limited to emails, an answer to this had not been given at the time of writing this paper. However, statements made by Andrew during his interview point to a likelihood that she felt guilty about not having had
the time for their children during the course of her PhD. This guilt might have drawn her away from the ‘achiever’ part of her personality (more in the sense of wanting or being capable of professional success) that Andrew noted when he first met her. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2005) might offer an explanation when they say “highly educated women, in particular, face numerous contradictions and pressures in marital decision making” (as cited in Nemoto, 2008: 219). However, this is only indicative in this particular case.

Ehsan had a different story to tell about his role-identity as an achiever. After being rejected for a PhD and not being able to find paid employment despite his efforts, he went into deep depression and often had anxiety attacks. This reaction was probably because of a previously established confidence in his abilities (since he was the recipient of a prestigious scholarship), a very clear goal in life, but also a highly competitive nature. When these did not prove enough to land him a desirable position, he explained his frustrations as such:

**Ehsan:** I was feeling what is lacking...when I talk with [my wife’s colleagues]...even when I saw their profile...I was totally lost why I’m not here.

**Me:** What do you mean?

**Ehsan:** I mean their educational achievement...even with less achievement they got good position...even with all the educational achievement I don’t have that position. That time I also applied for the [same project my wife is in] but I was rejected...and I became that time very upset...I don’t understand why I’m not here.

**Me:** Did you think you were more qualified than them?

**Ehsan:** I’m not saying I’m more qualified but I’m not so bad compared to them, I believe.

Ehsan’s frustrations should be viewed in the context of higher opportunity costs for immigrant men as evidenced by Lindley (2009) above. However, his apprehensions about his career are also in conjunction with his parents’ concerns over the same. At first, his parents were reluctant of his marriage right after graduation because they worried he might not be able to concentrate on a career. During the initial months of his wife’s PhD when he delved in despair, his parents often asked him to come back home. He recounted,

“I was also facing problems from my family’s side...Your wife is doing job, you’re doing nothing. It doesn’t look good. You should come back and stay with us and look for a job (here). And I said, she’s my wife, we’re married and we need to spend time together. So it was like fighting with my family...sometimes my family didn’t speak to her friendly because she was doing job and I wasn’t. They’re feeling inferiority for me. I understood that because our culture, you know...male dominating.”

This is clearly indicative of the linkages and – sometimes – influences of ‘native’ socio-cultural institutions and organizations in which present contexts are embedded (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Ehsan did not hesitate to take a stand against his parents when he thought they were not being reasonable – for e.g. when they suggested that it was time for the couple to have a baby. However, he could not avoid the constant reminder they implicitly or explicitly provided on his abilities – and at that moment, his inability – to perform as a high achiever. Ehsan’s wife also had to bear the repercussions of his challenges since she often had to put her work on hold owing to his growing depression.

Societal and familial pressure were also evident in Tamir’s life when his parents coerced him – also through Tiara’s assistance – to take up a graduate degree that they are financing. Tiara explained, “Tamir’s father was a bit worried because when I finish my study, I have my own job but his son...no job, not really secure. And then he a bit...what is the word...embarrassed? Yea, embarrassed [in front of] me because now I’m the one who (is) being a breadwinner at the moment.” Though both Tamir and Ehsan dismissed these parental concerns as outdated norms, the significance of internalization and socialization of such norms in self-perception as well as societal perception of men cannot be trivialized. Tiara expressed a concern that Tamir looked up to her for direction in life. But she also found it inconvenient that there was no one to look after her son now that he had taken up studies. Mario, on the other hand, felt more pressure than Tamir to perform and to be in equal standing to his wife. He remembered how Mireille’s family received her when she returned home after completing her Masters in the UK. “Her family was very proud of her...wow, this is our girl! ... I was proud as well but just that
people start asking you, 'So when will be your turn? That makes me feel frustrated because I have to apply for scholarship but I don’t want to apply for scholarship.'

Despite this, Mario had high ambitions of working as a policy maker for his country someday. Upon further probing, it was evident that it was the disappointment of a previous rejection that put him off the idea of studying or working abroad. He said he was scared of living abroad mainly because his English was not good, he did not understand the lives of people outside his country, and as a result he was not confident that he would be able to compete with the others. He associated this to a colonial past where he was used to thinking of ‘them’ as more intelligent, “When we saw a foreigner, we always think he’s the brightest person in the world, he’s the richest... you’re thinking ‘wow’.” While he was struggling to regain his confidence during the initial months and wanted to take things slow, his parents and Mireille kept urging him to pursue further studies. He explained, “The thing is if I go back home with nothing, there will be many questions. People will ask me, ‘So what did you do there?’ I don’t really know what to answer. Nothing is not really an answer.” While he has not really been back home yet and was talking of a hypothetical situation, the pressure he felt from his family, Mireille’s family and Mireille herself was quite real.

He further explained his apprehension over his wife’s higher academic status when he tried to discern why his parents and her father often advised him that he ‘should at least be at the same level as Mireille’, “…when she gets her PhD she’ll definitely be at a higher level. So one day it may occur, when we’re arguing, this may happen... ‘You’re just a Master, I’m a PhD so I make the decisions’. So that’s why the parents say [so]...” This conscious or unconscious need to embody the role of the family head was also evident in Ehsan and Tamir when they showed their impatience over their wives’ ‘nagging’, and yet they also felt helpless because of an assumed ‘lower status’. However, this perceived threat to their role as the leader was not something they merely imbibed through socialization in their distant homelands but it was also something that was very present in their current lives in the messages their wives and families were giving them overtly or covertly.

Femininity reinforcing masculinity

Tiara, the one who exhibited the most independent attitude among the women, disclosed how she often tried to maintain a balance in her marriage by taking a backseat and asking for her husband’s opinions. Mireille related a similar juxtaposition when she said Mario was not happy with the situation now, “He wish he was in my place and I wish he was me as well”. Both of these women said they felt hesitant in talking about their work and achievements because of the way their husbands often reacted to such conversations. They were not able to freely share their triumphs and enthusiasms because they did not want to offend their partners.

On the other hand, keeping a careful check on her ambitions led Mireille to an internal conflict. While Mario noted that she was not as ambitious now as she used to be, she mused over whether this was true because she still liked her work and did not know if she would have been happy if she had not accepted her PhD position. Yet she constantly expressed her concern about not fulfilling her wifely duties.

“...when she gets her PhD she'll definitely be at a higher level. So one day it may occur, when we're arguing, this may happen... 'You're just a Master, I'm a PhD so I make the decisions'. So that's why the parents say [so]...”

This resulted in a deep sense of guilt since she did not know how to reconcile her high ambitions and still adhere to her Christian values, especially being a ‘helper’ to her husband. While it was Mario who was at first afraid to stop her from pursuing a PhD because she might regret it later, it was Mireille who was troubled in this context.

Horner (1972) explains how stereotypes around competence, independence, competition and intellectual achievements as being inconsistent with femininity leads to a fear among women of negative consequences and hence a fear of success. Men and women as couples also struggle between what Gallo calls “the impossibility of living up to ‘traditional’ standards (Gamburd 2000; George 2005)...[and]... balance an ideal of the ‘modern husband’ [or wife],...
Theme I: Negotiating identity

Chapter 5

derived from engagement with a renewed middle-class model of the working woman, and men’s self-determination as independent earners and providers, the latter being itself a symbol of modernity.” This is why “it is useful to locate transnational conjugality within the wider ongoing processes of redefining the ‘modern family’ and the emergence of different and often conflicting models of femininity and masculinity...” (Gallo, 2006: 368).

It was apparent that the younger couples had more difficulty reconciling with their situation of reversed gender roles and either dealt with extreme guilt and frustration or reverted to conciliatory measures like avoiding conversations about work or handing over one’s bank account to the dependent partner. Interestingly, though, Gilbert and Grace who had been together for almost two decades seemed to have the least problem with regards to the two masculine role identities discussed above. Gilbert neither felt excessive guilt over not being the primary earner nor did he compare his achievements with that of his wife. Grace did not exhibit any apprehensions over this at any point during the interview either, though she – after going through a draft of this chapter – explained over an email that they faced their own share of challenges earlier in the marriage. She elaborated that they learnt to reconcile by accepting the fact that each person has strengths and weaknesses and it is up to the couples to recognize this and organize their roles – even within as simple a task as planning a holiday – to make the best use of each other’s strengths. While both Gilbert and Grace admitted that such relaxed attitude towards gender roles might not have existed in their parents’ generation, they were also the only couple who did not face any parental or family pressures regarding financial and professional performance. More research would be required before conclusions can be made about long-term couples in a situation of comparatively more emotional and financial security than younger couples.

Conclusions

Studies on masculinities often tend to focus on the negative connotations of the term associating men with problem behaviors. It is especially true in case of immigrant men who are more often than not seen as perpetrators of violence and harbingers of conservative gender attitudes. This not only shows them in a constant negative light but also fails to scrutinize the complex invisibilities and vulnerabilities that these men face. Studies that do address their vulnerabilities also tend to focus disproportionately on immigrant men in low-income jobs or those dependent on women in low-income jobs. This study moves away from the trap of viewing men as perpetrators and instead problematizes the social approval and internalization of masculine role identities. It also redirects the focus of masculinity studies on the correlation between masculinity and femininity where one cannot exist in isolation from the other.

It does so by presenting cases of married couples who are in an unconventional situation with regards to gender roles and expectations within marriage. It explores how migration as dependent men and the subsequent struggles have created conflicts between perceived and actual roles of men (as well as women), aided by changing mores and practices of what a man and a woman can or cannot do in the modern world, and the unchanging norms and expectations within home spaces that they are still part of. The study highlights men’s vulnerabilities at a time when they had limited means to realize their own as well as their family’s and partner’s expectations. The lives of the couples were marked by a change in the spaces and places they used to occupy – as professionals and as members of a society whose expectations they were clear about. Having moved to the UK under the circumstances described, they had to adjust not only to new customs and expectations of the host society, but also a shift in roles and ideologies as they adapted to their new lives. These young couples were between traditional norms they had come to respect and their own modern beliefs based on a ‘secular culture’ (Bartkowski, 2007) regarding the importance of giving women space to grow and develop as individuals. While there are gender-role expectations that evolve and change between generations and within the course of people’s lives, there are those that linger like the strongly ingrained role identities of the provider, the leader and the achiever. This ambivalence creates anxieties not only in men who are expected to adhere to certain standards set by their societies, but also their partners who struggle with their conscious or unconscious desires to see them fulfil these standards. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) say, “hegemonic masculinity
exists in relation to hegemonic femininity or what is now called ‘emphasized femininity’ which stresses on the compliance to patriarchy.... [Hence] women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities” (848). And it is in this sense that men, women and the larger society they belong to redefine but at the same time reinforce hegemonic masculinities.

The authors however, argue that gender hierarchies are more than ever affected by “new configurations of women’s identity and practise, especially among young women – which are increasingly acknowledged by younger men”. This takes us back to the relaxed stance adopted by Gilbert towards his situation and the support the other men provided their wives despite their own challenges. Ehsan, Tamir, Andrew and Mario were always supportive of their wives' careers even though external circumstances sometimes took a toll on them in various ways. Tamir and Andrew appreciate the fact that they have played more active roles in their children’s lives than they would have if they had stayed home. This has undoubtedly assisted their wives in pursuing their career. Connell and Messerschmidt suggest building on these changing dynamics of masculinities to offer the possibility of a ‘positive’ hegemonic masculinity (Collier, 1998) that aims at democratizing gender relations and abolishing power differentials, possibly through educational interventions or contestations among models of masculinity. I argue that while ‘a single positive hegemonic masculinity’ might be limiting in the sense that it might marginalize the diversity of masculinities, it is important to recognize that masculinities (and femininities) do not exist in a vacuum but rather exist within socio-cultural realities of the past and the present. It is also pertinent to address the need to analyse the correlation between femininities and masculinities if men and women are to complement each other’s lives while fulfilling their aspirations. Such conceptualizations are already under development whether through conscious efforts or involuntary manifestations as men and women negotiate lives in an alien land like in the case of couples that were discussed in this study.

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The importance of fathers for boys’ development – a comparison between the perspectives of male adolescents and adult men

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Abstract
The development of boys and male adolescents has been a prominent topic in professional and public debates. This article recapitulates arguments brought forward in scholarly debates, showing the importance of fathers and father figures for the gender development of boys and male adolescents. On the basis of interviews with male adolescents and adult men, experiences of living with fathers and other adult men and the extent to which indications of deprivation or problems appear in this context are examined empirically, therefore a comparison regarding the perspectives of the various age groups is possible. As a result this comparison shows similarities between the perspectives of the adult men looking back on their youth and the adolescents talking about their current experiences. The statements from both groups are dominated by experiences of fathers who are or were perceived as absent and inaccessible. Relationships with these fathers are or were perceived as limited and in some cases conflicted. But a closer look also shows that the process of achieving distance from a father figure seems to have greater relevance for the adolescents. When reflecting on the experiences and needs of male adolescents concerning their fathers of father figures, this strive for distance needs to be considered more carefully.

In recent years the development of boys and male adolescents has been a prominent topic in professional and public debates. Difficult developments and problematic behaviour among male adolescents are often explained with reference to absent or emotionally inaccessible fathers, and a preponderance of female carers and teachers (Diefenbach/Klein 2002). It is assumed that not only adolescents with social behavioural issues are affected by such limitations, but that boys in general, in our society, grow up largely without male role models and attachment figures. The empirical foundation for these assumptions is questionable and anything but clear, and yet they continue to be evoked on a regular basis.

The present article will first trace key lines of argument in the scholarly debate, showing how the importance of fathers and the paternal for the gender development of boys and male adolescents is thematized. Here ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions become apparent. We then focus on how male adolescents perceive the experience of living with fathers and other adult men, and the extent to which indications of deprivation or problems appear here. This will involve strategically comparing the perspectives of male adolescents with those of adult men thinking retrospectively about their youth. The empirical basis is interviews with male adolescents and adult men participating in a support programme for male adolescents. It is anticipated that this will give preliminary insights into the importance ascribed to fathers from various points of view. We feel that a comparison of this kind, incorporating the perspectives of different generations, is an important way to empirically resolve some of the unanswered questions in the debate about the significance of fathers, and thus enable us to continue these discussions on a factual basis.

The importance of fathers in the scholarly debate
The importance of fathers for their sons’ childhood and adolescence has been the object of diverse theoretical reflections and empirical studies. Scholars
largely agree that fathers should be seen as particularly important with regard to the gender development and identity of their sons (Baader 2006, p. 121; Böhnisch 2004, p. 142; Matzner 2008: 317). The explanation given for this developmental importance of fathers is that children can experience different things with their fathers than with their mothers, with whom they traditionally have an especially close relationship (Baader 2006: 120f). In terms of psychoanalytical concepts, it is stressed in this context that the father is particularly important for the boy’s process of separation from the mother, allowing a parents-child triad to be established instead of the mother-child dyad (Böhnisch 2004, p. 142; Radebold 2004, p. 124f.). In the context of masculinity studies, the main reference point is the transmission of gender concepts to adolescents, and the observation has been made that fathers can transmit traditional or alternative, e.g. feminist positions to their sons (Pringle 2006, p. 240; Rank 2006, p. 184). In light of the above, boys’ studies work on the assumption that fathers are important role models and objects of identification for boys (Schultheis 2008, p. 373).

Despite the consensus about the relevance theoretically attributed to fathers, there are a number of diagnoses and empirical studies which make this importance seem ambiguous, contradictory or ambivalent. One widespread assumption is that, in the conditions of social modernity, many fathers cannot provide their sons with role models or focuses of gender identification because of their work-related absence (Böhnisch 2004, p. 138ff.). And yet it can also be observed that fathers, in the more recent past, have been or have wanted to be increasingly present and available for their sons. Particularly among the university-educated middle classes, this is something many aspire too, though it is often unachievable (Bereswill et al. 2006, p. 9). This then raises the question of whether – given the greater presence of the fathers, and the associated tendency to take over “maternal” functions – “the paternal” is still significant as something distinct from “the maternal” (Maiwald 2010, p. 259). When the adolescent sons are asked, it becomes clear that they often still perceive their fathers as both physically and emotionally absent (Pringle 2006, p. 238; Rank 2006, p. 172). The boys’ statements show that they identify with their fathers, but also that they wish for closer and more firmly established contact with them (Frosh/Phoenix/Pattman 2002, p. 255).

In light of the above, the conclusion has been drawn that ideas of the father as a role model and confidant are often based on an idealized father image (Koch-Priewe et al. 2009, p. 76).

Paternal involvement in parenting is regarded as important for the personality development of boys and male adolescents; what is seen as relevant here is not so much the duration of the contact between father and son, but more the father’s attitude towards the father-son relationship (Koch-Priewe et al. 2009, p. 74f.). In cases where fathers maintain close relationships with their sons, e.g. where they are single parents and thus the primary caregivers, it has also been shown that the demands made on the sons are more balanced, and that the sons develop less stereotypical gender concepts, than in those cases where fathers are less present and demand a traditional form of masculinity from their sons (Coltrane 2006, p. 303).

A subject of particular and recurring interest is the lack or absence of fathers, which has been thematized in scholarly discourses on education (cf. Drinck 2005) and in analyses of contemporary society. The generalized diagnosis of the “fatherless society” became popular after World War II (Reulecke 2010, p. 143). If boys grow up without fathers, severe adverse effects are feared and/or observed. Fatherlessness has been linked with a lack of triangulation, i.e. with the dominance of the mother-child dyad, with a lack of emotional security, and with a limited capacity for empathy (Reulecke 2010, p. 148). Elsewhere, a low level of moral maturity and a tendency towards aggressive behaviour and rule-breaking are associated with growing up without a father (Matzner 2008, p. 222). In some cases, the consequences of fatherlessness do not become evident until adulthood. Thus children who had lost their fathers in the war showed symptoms such as psychogenic impairments, mental exhaustion, low self-confidence and intense attachment (classed as neurotic) to their mothers (Radebold 2004, p. 184ff.). It is unclear, however, to what extent these findings on boys who grew up without fathers because of the war are transferable to the cases of boys who do not suffer any of the other constraints of the war period. In any case, what is critical for the development of personality is not just the absence of the father, but the way the mother deals with this
absence (Radebold 2004, p. 172f.), and the quality of the boy’s attachment to the mother (Bowlby & Ainsworth 2005). Furthermore, research on boys growing up with lesbian couples is interpreted as evidence that fathers’ importance for their sons’ childhood and adolescence has been overestimated (Pringle 2006, p. 239).

Again and again, existing studies have shown that not only the relationship between father and son and the absence of the father appear to be important, but also the way these biographical conditions are processed. A frequently encountered phenomenon is the idealization of the father, which cannot be used to draw direct conclusions about the actual quality of the relationship. The processing and representation of the father-son-relationship is connected with this relationship, however, as is evident in the way conflicts over autonomy and dependence are dealt with (Bereswill 2006, p. 155).

Clearly, in light of the above discussion, fathers are regarded as very important for the gender development of their sons, although the conditions necessary for this do not seem to be given. It appears that not only the frequently observed absence of fathers contributes to their inability to fulfil the role attributed to them, but also the contradictory nature of the expectations about this which are formulated on various levels. Greater clarity could be achieved by differentiating between the various relevant levels. For this it could be helpful to distinguish between the objective development of the father-son-relationship and its subjective importance, and to consider in detail the points of view of the different parties involved. The present article seeks to contribute to this by concentrating on boys’ subjective experience of their relationships with their fathers, and comparing the perspectives of adolescents with those of adults looking back at their youth.

**The present study**

The empirical basis for the following discussion consists of interviews conducted with participants of a recreational programme for male adolescents, intended to support them in their gender development. This is the “BoysToMen” project, developed in the USA, which has also been established in Switzerland since 2012 (cf. http://www.boystomen.ch/). The project was evaluated between 2012 and 2013 at the Institute of Education at Zurich University,1 and the interviews were a component of this evaluation. There were two sets of interviewees: on the one hand five mentors (i.e. adult men aged between 31 and 54, involved in the project on a voluntary basis to support young men in their development), and on the other hand five male adolescents aged between 14 and 19, who participated in activities offered within the project. The selection of interviewees took place after a presentation of our research project, following which several prospective participants had expressed interest. We wanted to choose a sample which seemed likely to cover as wide a spectrum of experiences and positions as possible.

The present study was carried out in Switzerland, and is based on interviews with adolescent and adult Swiss males. It is not easy to outline the specific characteristics of the study’s social background. In Switzerland, traditional ideas about gender relations and the gendered division of labour still predominate: while it is considered normal for men to work full-time, women often only work part-time, and have the primary responsibility for childcare. This division of labour is consolidated by the lack of welfare-state compensation, and by the high cost of public childcare services. At the same time, there is a growing awareness of the limitations which this model imposes on all those involved, and a number of models and initiatives are developing which take alternative paths with regard to gender relations.

The interviews which form the basis for this article came about in the context of a project that can be seen as a special part of this alternative culture. Through their involvement in the project, the interviewees not only share a common realm of experience, but – as a result of this – experience similar stimuli and viewpoints with regard to the development of masculinity, father-son relationships, and relationships between men in general. The boys and men are also similar in terms of their social origin: all the respondents come from structurally complete middle-class families, i.e. they have grown up with their biological fathers, and they show no conspicuous problem behaviours. This article, then, does not focus on growing up in difficult social conditions,

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1 The project was directed by Peter Rieker and carried out primarily by Melanie Wegel and Jakob Humm, with financial support from the Schweizerisches Bundesamt für Migration, between April 2012 and March 2013.
The importance of fathers for boys’ development

nor is it concerned with problem behaviour among men. Instead it is an inter-generational comparison of certain conditions of gender development among “normal” middle-class adolescents. These cannot be straightforwardly generalized or transferred to other groups of male adolescents.

The respondents were questioned in detailed, structured interviews, allowing them to talk about the aspects that seemed important to them in their own words, with as much detail as seemed appropriate to them (cf. Witzel 1985). The interviews focused on the development of masculinity and the discussion of social relationships and activities that were considered to be relevant in this context: parents, siblings, friendships and partnerships, and the “BoysToMen” project. The interviews were evaluated in the framework of a systematic, exploratory analysis, beginning with single-case analyses (Schmidt 2010). Following the grounded theory method, we used case comparisons and contrasts to develop categories for analysis, then elaborated, refined and revised these as further cases were added, in order to systematically analyse all the material (cf. Strauss 1994, p. 28ff.).

The interviewees stated their willingness to talk about their experiences in social relationships and in the “BoysToMen” project on a voluntary and unpaid basis. They were informed that a project report and further scholarly publications would be produced using their statements. In connection with this, they were assured that their narratives and opinions would be treated as confidential, and would only be made available to other parties in anonymous form. In accordance with this, all the names mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

The importance of fathers for male adolescents: empirical findings

In the following section we will first discuss the importance of fathers from the perspective of the men who are now adults, and then describe how adolescents talk about their fathers.

The perspective of adult men

The adult men often describe their fathers, retrospectively, as “absent”, and associate this with the fact that they had to work a great deal. In the context of this experience of work-related absence, Bernd describes a male family tradition: not only his father, but also his grandfather, worked a lot, while another grandfather had already died, so he had no male relatives to turn to in his childhood. From the point of view of the now-adult men, this “absence” meant that the fathers had no time for their sons. This is expressed, for example, in Jens’s statements.

Jens: “He was there, but he was wrapped up in his job and actually really didn’t have any time for me. I was unhappy that he always had time for other people, and not for me. I really noticed that.”

In this passage it becomes clear that it is not so much the lack of presence as the lack of time for the son which is felt to be a problem. This causes anger and reproaches. In other interviews, similarly, the main memories evoked are of the father’s psychological or emotional absence or unavailability, and the impossibility of talking to him. Uwe states: “[…] I did also miss having someone who was present and showed an interest in me, I would have liked more of that as a child”. Besides the father’s involvement in paid employment, another factor sometimes blamed for the difficulty of communicating with him is the age difference, e.g. in the case of Hans.

Hans: “My father was 50 when I was born […] So there was a huge generational difference […] I think there just, it wasn’t possible to build a bridge […] He could have built the bridge, of course. He did try, again and again, but he did it awkwardly, and it just didn’t… no, I was on my own.”

Unlike Jens’s statement, this is not dominated by anger and reproaches; instead it demonstrates a sympathetic view of the father, who is described elsewhere as a “pretty good guy”. The interviews with the other mentors also show that financial support, offers for talks, and the father’s willingness to give something to the son are seen and appreciated. These statements also make it clear, however, that the fathers were obviously unable to satisfy specific needs of their sons. Rudi, for example, describes his spiritual questions and needs, with which his father was unable to help him.

In the case of Rudi, by far the youngest of the adult respondents (31), it becomes clear that he associates the limited contact between himself and his father not just with the father’s lack of resources, but also with his own efforts to achieve distance.
Rudi: “(Question: And your father, was he ever the person you talked to about boy, boy problems?) Not really no. He was there, and he was open, but somehow that wasn’t, those weren’t things I wanted to discuss with my father.”

In the opinion of these now-adult men, the limitations experienced in their relationships with their fathers could only partly be compensated for in the context of other relationships. In later adolescence Rudi was able to talk to his friends about many things, but he could not discuss spiritual questions with them either. For Bernd it was equally impossible to talk to his mother about important or difficult topics, e.g. when his love-life was going badly. Nor does he remember having such conversations with others of the same age, although they did a great deal together.

As a positive counter-model to fathers, these adult men talk of mentors, i.e. the kind of person they themselves now wish to be in relation to adolescents. Jens talks about a godfather who was like a mentor to him:

Jens: “Another important person in my life was my godfather. [...] he was someone I really appreciated. Because I really felt that he accepted me as I am, and listened to me when I talked about my adolescent stuff, and was always interested in my opinion, and he didn’t then say, now \( I'll \) tell you what’s what. [...] Even if someone has a father figure who is there, it can still be important to have a mentor. It’s about achieving separation, too.”

This positive experience with his uncle is contrasted with the memory of his father, who “did always listen, in a way, but then he always said, now \( I'll \) tell you what’s what”. The importance of the uncle is associated with the fact that he – unlike the father – was not pursuing any obvious educational ambitions. Bernd does not recount any corresponding experiences, but, in retrospect, comes to the conclusion that he could have used a mentor in his youth, e.g. “when my first true love left me”.

Within the framework of the project in which the mentors are involved, they value the contact with the other adult men who also work as mentors. They talk about helping, encouraging and supporting each other, without competing. On the one hand, it is clearly important to them to work on their own issues with other men and – as Hans puts it – “we then become better mentors, more integrated men, more balanced men”. On the other hand, according to Bernd, they feel as though this is the setting where they experience the “deepest friendships”, “real friendships between men”, or “male communities”.

The mentors blame various negative developments on the limited contacts they had in their youth with their fathers and other adult men. In Bernd’s view, the emotional absence of his father meant that his mother was his sole caregiver, and “simply pulled away” his childish anger; as a consequence of this reaction he never had the opportunity, as a child, “to experience the existence of feelings”. And Jens describes the impression that he, as an adult relating to children, is not able to refer back to experiences with his own father. Hans states that he felt lonely for a long time, and suffered from not knowing what was right and wrong – he could have used guidance for this. A further implication for the adult men is that they reflect on their experiences with their fathers in relation to their own role as fathers. This is apparent, for example, in the case of Uwe.

Uwe: “And since I’ve supported three boys myself too, and have realized that things could be different, I first have to look at my life and see what didn’t go well for me, so that I, as a father, can give the boys the best possible support, and fulfil this paternal role.”

This impression is implicitly reflected in all the adult men who were interviewed in the context of the project. These are men who are mostly fathers themselves, but who are constantly trying to find their own masculinity, and their own position in life, partly by endeavouring to offer better support to their sons.

In summary, we can observe that the adult men, looking back at their youth, perceived their fathers as absent and unapproachable, especially from an emotional point of view, and that they mainly blame this on their fathers’ concepts of life. As a positive counter-model, they mention relationships with adult mentors, or describe these as necessary. However, they mainly talk about this kind of experience in the context of current relationships with other adults who also act as mentors for adolescents, i.e. relationships within their own peer group, so to speak. The adult men perceive these experiences in their youth as having had negative consequences for their gender development – but also
see opportunities to compensate for this by fatherhood, or by working with adolescent males.

**The perspective of the adolescents**

At first glance, the adolescents characterize their relationships with their fathers in very different ways: Fred talks of a “very good relationship”, while Nick describes “below average interaction” with his father, characterized by unresolved conflicts and stress. As soon as the relationship with the father is described in more concrete terms, however, limitations and stresses become apparent in nearly every case. These limitations and stresses in the boys’ relationships with their fathers are mainly evident in the fact that they can “hardly” talk to their fathers, or “not about everything”, or that they “don’t like” talking to them. Fred, for example, states that he has never talked to his father about his feelings.

Joint activities with the fathers are mentioned several times. These are described without great enthusiasm, e.g. by Nick.

Nick: “(Question: Did you talk to each other, could you talk to him? Was he there?) Yes, he was there. We went camping as a family too. Sometimes he took me on weekend skiing trips with his students.”

In some cases joint activities are described in a way that suggests they are mainly important to the father, or are carried out for the father’s sake. This is how Fred, for example, talks about it.

Fred: “We also go for a hike together every autumn. He likes doing that kind of thing. [...] Because it’s very important to him, because he didn’t have that, that kind of father-son relationship.”

In these sequences the sons make it clear that they do take part in the activities initiated by their fathers, albeit without great enthusiasm. Elsewhere, however, it becomes apparent that things can become difficult in the relationship with the father if the son’s lack of enthusiasm is no longer concealed. Joachim’s father often repairs his son’s bicycle, and obviously hopes this will enable him to find common ground with his son.

Joachim, however, explains: “I don’t really like working with tools, fixing bikes and so on. (Question: Does your father do that, then?) Yes, but sometimes he does get annoyed that I don’t show that much interest.”

In contrast to the experiences which the adult men had with their fathers in their youth, the accounts given by the adolescents are more likely to mention joint activities with their fathers. Regardless of these activities, however, there are clearly also constraints in these father-son relationships. In their descriptions, the adolescents do not give the impression that the limitations in their relationships with their fathers stem from the fathers; on the contrary, it is they who distance themselves more or less explicitly from their fathers, the things they offer, and their needs. This becomes evident not just with regard to the fathers’ activities, but also in the context of father-son communication. Several adolescents report that they do not want to tell their fathers anything about themselves, especially not about experiences they regard as important or special. Stefan states that he thinks it is normal to lie to his parents sometimes, while it is important to tell the truth among friends. From the point of view of the adolescents, they are the ones who distance themselves from their parents, especially their fathers. In general, however, this is expressed indirectly and not very openly, whether it be by a demonstrative lack of enthusiasm for joint activities with the father, by remarks implying that these activities do not mean much to him (the adolescent), or by a lowering of expectations in comparison to other relationships (lying, not telling the father anything), or by making it clear that they are able to carry out more joint activities in other relationships.

The adolescents also demonstrate what they see as the limited quality of the father-son relationship by contrasting it with other relationships. On the one hand, they refer to the relationship with the mother, with whom they are able to talk “better” or “at least to some extent”; Joachim states that he is generally better able to talk to women, and that he can most easily talk to girls in his class about problems. On the other hand, peers are cited as positive counter-examples: several adolescents claim that they do a great deal with their friends, and enjoy spending time with them, and that they have many friends or at least one friend with whom they can talk about anything. Several adolescents also make it clear that their friends know
more about their lives than their parents, and are, for example, more likely to notice changes.

While the adolescents clearly show efforts to distance themselves from their own fathers, they do make it plain, on the other hand, that contacts with other adult men can be relevant for them. Joachim and Nick say that they have confided in other men when they were having personal difficulties; in both cases, however, it was a one-off occurrence, as the adolescents have not taken up further invitations to talk. Several adolescents also state that they have very much appreciated listening to adult men telling about their own experiences and difficulties in the context of a group programme. The counsellor of a youth group also describes his impression that adolescents find these reports from men very interesting. In comparison to the views which the adult men express with regard to mentors, however, the statements of the adolescents indicate a rather limited need for this type of contact. One probable reason for this is that mentors are currently not associated with the context of the adolescents’ own peer group, as they are for the adults.

**Paul – a particular case**

Among the adolescent respondents, Paul is a special case. He does not make negative distinctions between the relationship with his father and that with his mother or his peers. Instead he stresses that these social relationships have comparable relevance for him.

Question: “Are your peers your most important reference group?”

Paul: “No, not necessarily. Well, they are important. But my girlfriend and my parents are also important people in my life. [...] I don’t talk about the same things with everyone. But I can talk to everyone about specific things. Sometimes I think: I’d really be happiest discussing this there – but it’s not subject-specific.”

Paul’s response to the recreational programme organized by adult mentors is also distinctive. Like the others, he initially feels a certain fascination during a weekend seminar:

Paul: “Then the different men come into the circle and say something about themselves: a truth or a secret. To start off with you thought: why are they telling us that. And then you realized that it was really true. It really happened to them. That was pretty intense. After that there was no mistrust any more. [...] Well I was quite shocked, but in a good way. I don’t think any adult has ever told me anything like that. You just don’t talk about that kind of thing. You tend to keep it to yourself.”

The boys are all impressed by the openness with which the mentors talk about personal problems. The topics range from professional failures to marital problems. Here the boys learn that adults are not perfect, and that they are vulnerable. Perhaps this aspect, which is missing in family communication, is crucial. For example, couples usually do not deal with relationship conflicts in front of the children, yet there is no doubt that such latent conflicts can be sensed. This may make the boys’ own fathers seem less authentic. Unlike the other adolescents, who only appreciate certain aspects of the opportunities to talk offered by the adult mentors, and who only take up these offers to a limited extent, Paul makes it clear in his statements that these opportunities mean a great deal to him and that he accepts them without reservation.

Paul: “But the commitment just isn’t there [in the case of the other adolescents, author’s note]. Every time you go, you don’t know whether any of the other boys will be there. That’s, well, I think it’s a real shame. On the other hand, of course, I’m happy to be on my own with the men. That’s good too.”

It is not easy to interpret this difference in attitude, partly because Paul does not otherwise express himself in great detail. On the one hand, his statements show a comparatively relaxed relationship with his parents: he sees them as making an effort to develop themselves and to separate from him as their son, and as giving him sufficient freedom. Here he makes it clear that “everything [is] much simpler” with his father than with his mother, where he has to fight much more. He connects this with the fact that his father already has two sons from a previous relationship, while it is always “the first time” for his mother. Their family situation is also distinctive in that Paul’s girlfriend has been living with him for the last two years in his parents’ household. This contributes to an unusual form of coexistence, as Paul explains in the following passage:
Paul: “We have a room of our own downstairs where we can eat together too. Well we have both really. When we’re with the family we’re normal and not so focused on each other. But we can also spend time as a couple. Then we can be apart a bit too, and that’s a good thing.”

It is evident here that the young couple is given its own space and opportunities to withdraw. Elsewhere it becomes clear, however, that living together in the same household also entails the need for joint agreements. In this case we are no longer faced with the classic model of adolescents and parents living together in the parents’ household, but with a model where a balance constantly has to be found between parent-child coexistence and a young couple’s cohabitation. While Paul, in this situation, is obviously not focused on achieving distance from his parents, he does describe his need to distance himself from his girlfriend. The fact that they live so close together means that this is not always easy to achieve.

Paul: “But that for example I can say to my girlfriend, I’m going out tonight. So that I sometimes do something with my friends and she can sort something out for herself (inaudible). (Question: Has that been an issue, that you had to explain to your girlfriend that you’d prefer to go out without her this time?) Yes, a few times. It’s just difficult because my girlfriend lives so close. Sometimes I just want to go out with friends. And she can sort something out for herself. (Laughter).”

In light of this description, it can be assumed that Paul is less concerned than the other adolescents with distancing himself from his father, his parents and adult mentors, since he lives in a situation where this process is further advanced than it is for the other adolescents.

**Discussion and conclusions**

The data from the present study offers various insights into the experiences which adolescent males have (or had) with their fathers, and their way of dealing with these experiences. The first things to emerge are similarities between the perspectives of the adult men looking back on their youth, and the adolescents talking about their current experiences. The statements from both groups are dominated by experiences with fathers who are perceived as absent and inaccessible. Relationships with these fathers are or were perceived as limited and in some cases conflicted. This largely confirms the findings of existing studies (e.g. Frosh/Phoenix/Pattman 2002; Koch-Priewe et al. 2009; Pringle 2006; Rank 2006).

The statements of the adult men show that, in retrospect, they mainly associate the limitations which they experienced (and which they regret) with the living conditions, the priority-setting and the (limited) resources of the fathers – in line with the focus of the scholarly debate on father-son relationships. In contrast, the adolescents’ accounts dwell more on their own efforts to distance themselves. In other words, according to the adolescents, it is not so much the fathers as they themselves who seek distance in the father-son relationship. This tendency is even apparent when fathers make a conscious effort to establish an open, trusting contact with their sons, and when – as in one of our cases, in which we are familiar with both the father’s and the son’s perspective – the relationship is described as good from the point of view of both father and son. This brings us to the subject of separation processes initiated by the sons, described elsewhere as the developmental task of adolescence (King 2010, p. 14f.). The scholarly debate on father-son relationships does contain occasional references to the need to achieve distance from the father (cf. especially Bereswill 2006, but also Böhnisch 2004), but so far this need has not been systematically related to experiences in father-son relationships and the way these are subjectively processed. In our view, the efforts at achieving distance which the adolescents describe should be taken seriously, and should be taken into account in the debate on father-son relationships. At the same time, these efforts to achieve distance seem to be relevant mainly from the adolescents’ point of view, while they have evidently lost their importance for the adult men. It can be assumed, however, that in their youth the now-adult men showed similar efforts to distance themselves from their fathers.

According to their retrospective observations on their youth, the adults appear to have especially valued contact with other adult men, who supported or could have supported them as mentors. Judging by their descriptions, they are currently experiencing this kind of support – which was not always available back then – within the framework of their mentoring project. Here they offer each other this support,
and in some cases even express the idea that they are playing a “fathering” role towards one another. The adolescents also perceive such contacts with other adult men as interesting and helpful to some extent, but only make use of them selectively, if at all. Instead they emphasize the relevance of relationships with others of the same age, which nearly all the adolescents differentiate positively from their relationships with their parents (cf. Frosh/Phoenix/Pattmann 2002; Koch-Priewe et al. 2009). This effectively means that for nearly all the participants, the relationships formed with “peers” from their own generation provide a positive horizon of comparison for their relationships with their own fathers.

But how are we to explain the differing relevance which the adults and adolescents ascribe to their own efforts to distance themselves from their fathers? On the one hand, these differences could be explained by the different experiences which members of different generations have, and could therefore be understood as a reflection of changing father-son relationships (cf. Bereswill et al. 2006). This explanation would imply, for example, that the sons’ efforts to distance themselves are now more relevant because of the greater presence of the fathers. On the other hand, these differences could be a reflection of development-related processes, with the process of achieving distance from the father being more important in youth than in adulthood, where this aspect no longer has to play such a significant role. We cannot clearly resolve this question on the basis of our study. Two of our individual cases, however, may inspire further reflection on this question:

- In the interview with Paul, unlike those with the other adolescents, there are no markers of distance in relation to his father. This could be explained by the fact that – in the context of his two years of cohabitation with his girlfriend – he has already completed important steps in the process of separation.

- Among the adults, only Rudi gives any indication that he himself, as an adolescent, tried to distance himself from his father. This could be connected not just to the fact that Rudi, at 31, is much younger than the other adult respondents, but also to the fact that he considers himself to be more or less at the beginning of the process of developing into a man, and states, for example, that the other men play “more of a father role” towards him.

In the light of our study, then, the process of achieving distance from the father seems to have greater relevance for the adolescents because they are still, due to their stage of development, less independent than the adults. There seems to be less evidence here for interpretations focusing on the relevance of changes in the experiences that adolescents and adults have (or had) in their respective father-son relationships. It does, however, seem both reasonable and necessary to test this hypothesis in more broadly conceived studies, systematically relating the way the father-son relationship is processed to experiences within these relationships. Furthermore, these findings, which are related to a limited Swiss context, need to be compared with findings related to other social contexts. It would be interesting to compare them, on the one hand, with findings from more traditional milieus, and, on the other hand, with perspectives from national contexts which favour a modernization of gender-related developments.
The importance of fathers for boys’ development

**Literature**


Chapter 7

Recognizing boys from a relational and emotional perspective

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Abstract
This chapter discusses the recognition of boys from a relationship perspective. The aim is to introduce how the theory of social bonds can be implemented in understanding how boys are recognized in schools as well as in the studies of masculinities in school. The chapter presents three analytical categories of boys in classrooms that can further be linked to a broader analysis on why and how some boys are misrecognized in society as well as in gender studies. Boys that are not taken seriously is a group of boys with typical boy tendencies of bad behaviour and lack of engagement with school work but whose problems are not recognized as “real” problems. Boys who evoke negative emotions is a category of boys whose problems are often obvious but who are interpreted negatively. The main focus is often on how these boys are a problem for the learning environment. Boys who don’t evoke emotions is the group of average boys who blend in the crowd of other average boys. Despite the intensive debate on boys’ schooling, I argue that the average boy often falls outside the gaze of gender research.

Introduction
Marcus Weaver-Hightower (2003) has claimed that the concern for boys failing in school has shifted the focus from girls to boys in educational research. Weaver-Hightower states that until the mid-1990s the main focus in gender research was on girls, but since then there has been a shift towards examining boys’ challenges in education. The challenge with boys schooling can be approached, roughly speaking, from two directions. On the one hand, one question is how boys’ low achievements and reluctant attitudes towards school could or should be targeted (example Mills, 2000; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996; Whitmire, 2010). Weaver-Hightower defines this type of literature as practice-orientated literature that covers two overlapping categories: learning and outcomes as well as social and psychological consequences. On the other hand there is also a widely spread ‘poor boys’ discourse’ (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, and Maw, 1998, p. 6–8) that positions boys as victims of failing female-dominated schools and fatherless families (Foster, Kimmel and Skelton, 2001, p. 4). From a poor-boys approach it is not boys who fail. It is more a question of how institutions and key persons in society, such as teachers, welfare professionals and parents fail to encounter boys.

When acknowledging the ongoing boy-debate and its various directions, it is safe to say that boys are recognized in society. This chapter aims however to discuss in more detail the question of, how boys are recognized. The analysis draws upon an ethnographic study where I explored how boys’ need of support is manifested in the everyday life in classrooms and how encounters between adults and boys are conditioned by adult-boy social relations. The study was conducted in two upper-level compulsory schools in Helsinki, Finland during the school year 2008–2009. The research questions focused on how boys’ need of support is manifested in the everyday life in classrooms and how encounters between adults and boys are conditioned by adult-boy social relations. The data consisted of field notes of everyday life encounters between adults and boys in schools in five different classes. The observation data was complemented with ethnographic interviews. During the field work 34 boys, 11 girls aged 13–16 years, and 18 adults working in school, were interviewed.

Departing from a critical realist approach (Bhaskar, 1986; Archer, 1995) my aim is to distinguish boys’ relational position(s) that condition how they are encountered in classrooms and constructed in the current debate on boys’ schooling and wellbeing. A further
starting point for the analysis is that a classroom in a compulsory school is like a micro-society. Classrooms consist of various individuals and groups with various competences, resources and relationships – like society in general. An analysis of the relational structures in a classroom, and how various groups in class are recognized, can be linked to a broader societal analysis on what kind of boys are recognized in the ongoing debate on boys’ schooling, how boys are recognized in contemporary gender studies and what boys are – despite the ongoing boy turn – left unrecognized in the studies on masculinities and school.

The art of identifying social bonds
I use the concept ‘social bond’ (Scheff, 1997) to define the interpersonal reality that exists between two or more persons in a social encounter. Social bond is a related concept to that of Erving Goffman’s (1983) interaction order or John Bowlby’s (1969) attachment. Whereas Goffman and Bowlby are focused on interpersonal relations in micro-settings, Thomas J. Scheff (1994, 1997) has shown how social bonds can be identified also in relations between individuals and institutions as well as between different social groups. Scheff (1997, p. 65) defines a secure social bond between two participants as a bond that is characterized by mutual and accurate understanding of each other’s interior life. When adapting this to an analysis of recognition, it is solely those whose interior life is accurately understood that are truly recognized.

A social bond can be illustrated as an invisible membrane that exists between two or more participants in a relationship. In a secure relationship, the bond has elastic and vibrating characteristics; the bond is neither too tight nor too loose (Scheff, 1997, p. 77). In an insecure relationship, the bond loses its vibrating, elastic characteristic. In a relationship in which the participants are isolated from one another, the bond is so loose that it lacks the ability to vibrate or resonate between the participants; these persons have no knowledge of the bonds between them, or of the other’s existence. By contrast, a bond that is too tight also lacks the ability to vibrate, and leads to what Sheff defines as an engulfed relationship. An engulfed relationship is unequal where a subordinate’s beliefs, values and feelings are ignored as the subordinated participant lacks the ability to respond (send vibrations). A too tight relationship can also be engulfed by strong negative emotions that dominate and tie up all interaction between the participants. Such engulfing, negative emotional energies can develop into an interpersonal conflict.

Following Derek Layder’s (1997, 2006) work I have deconstructed the concept of social bond into three elements (Lunabba, 2013). Insight refers to the level of understanding two parts have on one another’s interior life. A subjects’ interior life is in my judgement closely linked to Layder’s understanding of the psychobiographic domain. This domain highlights both of each individuals’ unique life career, but also how every person experiences and responds differently to social experiences (Layder, 2006, p. 274). The level of insight varies in various relationships. In a transient relationship between two strangers the level of insight is obviously lower than in a regularized relationship between two close friends. People that share personal history have insight into previous life events that often enable a deeper or more accurate understanding of emerging activities. As an example, a teacher can more accurately interpret students’ current achievements if he/she can relate to the students’ previous school achievements. Insight can conversely also be viewed in terms of insight to projective elements that, according to a definition by Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998, p. 971), refers to “the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action”. They claim that structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future. Insight of a person’s future dreams demands some sort of personal and conversational engagement and is not revealed solely through shared history. Emirbayer and Mische (ibid.) describe an additional element in interpreting social actions that they call the practical-evaluative element. The practical-evaluative element refers to situational interpretation of actions. In a close relationship, people can more accurately identify subtle situational signs, such as moods or other emerging psychological aspects that influence social activities in a practical emerging moment.

The second element influence refers to the personal power dynamics that are involved in all interactive situations and condition all social bonds between people. All interaction requires minimal
levels of recognition, acceptance and approval of one another's initiatives (Layder, 2006, p. 279). But to what extent people are recognized and accepted, or how different people's initiatives are internalized, varies. The meanings in a conversation do not depend solely on the aspect of what is being said. A crucial aspect is the social positions of the participants, in other words, who says what. Erving Goffman (1983, p. 3) distinguishes between two fundamental forms of positioning persons. The categorical kind involves placing the other in one or more social categories such as male, female, young, old, teacher, social worker or police. The individual kind places the subject as a particular person with particular personal characteristics. It happens in schools that badly behaving students are sent for a talk to the school principal. This practice is based on the notion that the principle has a particular categorical position as the formal school authority. However, in a classroom it is obvious how different teachers with the same categorical positions are unequally successful when delivering their messages to students. Some teachers have greater influence over their students whereas other's messages or initiatives are ignored. In my doctoral thesis (Lunabba 2013, p. 144–152) I give examples of how different teachers' authority has an influence on how boys behave in class.

The third and perhaps most crucial aspect when defining relationships, is the element of emotional energies and how emotions define different kinds of social bonds between people. Scheff & Starrin (2003, p. 172) contend that if emotions are reflectively considered it is possible to visualise what is invisible: the condition of a relationship. Secure bonds and trustful relationships have a positive vibe and a mutual and positive emotional energy that encourages individuals to converge with one another. If the emotion is negative, it usually forces people apart. Scheff (1994, 1997) distinguishes two types of social emotions: pride and shame. A sensation of pride indicates a secure bond, whereas shame indicates an insecure social bond. I have come to prefer Layders (1997, p. 38) and Randall Collins (2004, p. 102) concepts of positive and negative emotional energies as a good supplement for the concepts of pride and shame. Fear, hate or insecurity is internalized as a negative emotional energy, while love, joy, trust or comfort is experienced as a positive energy or as a positive vibe.

In the following I will adapt the theory of social bonds and the concepts insight, influence and emotional energy to illustrate three types of insecure bonds between boys and adults in the context of school and schooling.

**Boys who are not taken seriously**

Various studies and writers have reflected on the globally widespread social phenomenon ‘the boys will be boys discourse’ (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, and Maw, 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Pollack 1999; Foster, Kimmel and Skelton, 2001; Young & Bronzo, 2001). The discourse can be defined as the cultural construction of boys’ universal, biological and social features. Within the ‘boys will be boys discourse’ boys’ underachievement, boys’ bad behaviour or boys’ lack of interest in literacy is regarded as something typical, natural and unavoidable. Some feminist writers have argued how these types of social constructions of masculinities in schools are particularly harmful for girls as their use of voice and space is more regulated in schools, in comparison to boys (Gordon, 2006). I made the same observation during fieldwork and found it to be apparent how boys tend to dominate the use of voice and space in class. Teachers also turn their gaze (Gordon, Holland, Lahelma and Tolonen, 2005) more frequently to extrovert and active boys than to silent girls. From a relational point of view, boys tend to have a higher level of influence in class, making themselves visible to others. However, I question that the lack of regulation of boys’ noises and voices works in boys’ favour and I also question whether teachers frequent gaze towards boys leads to insightful recognition of boys’ internal life.

During fieldwork I made an observation of how Joel, aged 15, showed various competences in behaving in different classrooms. In many classes Joel was involved in disturbing behaviour with some of his friends. Joel could be described as a boy, who often had the role of the class clown, making his friends and teachers laugh. During some classes, like in mathematics, he was however not allowed to fool around. It was obvious how Joel changed his behaviour according to who taught in class and how students’ behaviour was regulated by the teacher. During an interview I confronted Joel with my observation on how he changed behaviour in different class settings.
Harry: I have been sitting in various classrooms, and can you point out a class where you do well?

Joel: Well, I think I do well in mathematics, but not so well in biology and geography. There I kind of behave...

Harry: You don’t do well in biology and geography?

Joel: You could definitely say that I don’t.

Harry: Could you explain why?

Joel: Well, because I sit in the back with the boys and talk all the time.

Harry: In biology you sit in back of the class, and in math you sit up front?

Joel: Yeah.

Harry: You sit in front of Karin (mathematics teacher). Well what hinders you from moving up front during biology? Why don’t you just change seats?

Joel: I don’t know. Guess I just don’t felt like doing that.

Harry: Well, what if Satu (biology teacher) would ask you to sit up front.

Joel: I’d probably sit up front.

Harry: Always?

Joel: Yeah.

In Joel’s case it was apparent that the lack of regulation of his use of space and voice effected his achievements and behaviour in class. When Karin made him sit up front, he managed well; an arrangement that did not seem to bother Joel. In Satu’s class his behaviour was to some extent un-regulated, but unlikely unrecognized, as Joel along with his friends was a disturbing element in Satu’s class, taking a lot of space and time from both the teacher and other students.

From a class-management perspective the varieties of Joel’s behaviour could be viewed as a question of didactic methods, where Karin’s method of placing Joel in front of class proved to be more successful than Satu’s transient admonitions. In a relationship perspective, the question is nonetheless not solely about what methods teachers used to encounter Joel.

First of all, it is a question of the extent to which various teachers had insight into the need for regulating Joel’s behaviour in class. It is also a question of the extent to which various teachers’ actions had influence on Joel’s behaviour. Above all it is a question of the quality of emotions that are interwoven in the interplay between the teachers and Joel.

I argue that there is a group of boys with a too loose bond to both school and many adults in school that I define as ‘boys who are not taken seriously’. It’s a group of boys with typical boy tendencies of bad behaviour and lack of engagement with school work. These boys are obvious underachievers but their underachievement is often not encountered through meaningful enough or influential enough intervention. These unregulated boys are often allowed to misbehave and underachieve for the reason that they are boys! From an emotional viewpoint, boys with clownish manners in class do not, in many cases, evoke emotions of concern that would indicate the existence of a problem or a boy in need. This lack of concern is probably often linked to boys like Joel, whose behaviour is easily interpreted as being typical school boy humour (see Nayak & Kehily, 2001; Huuki, Manninen and Sunnari, 2009). Adults in class turn their gaze toward them, but do not necessarily have insight into how bad behaviour is linked to boys’ future school trajectory, or how behaviour is interlinked with the situational context of how a class is regulated. Boys with ‘a sense of school-boy humour’, boys who are socially competent and boys with high status among their peers are easily interpreted as heroes with a hegemonic position (Lahelma, 2004 p. 58). But it is fair to ask: do they actually turn out to be the winners, if adults let them fool around through school? I question to what extent adults in school or parents in society have insight into the outcomes of unregulated schoolboy behaviour. Are adults themselves responsible for losing their influence over boys, when adapting a ‘boys will be boys’ attitude to misbehaviour in class? In a broader societal perspective: do boys underachieve in school simply because of the fact that adults let them? After all, it took a century of failing boys in school (Delamont, 2000) before educational research has come to recognize the need of the “boy turn” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

1 Paul Wills (1977) gives the same explanation to the way working-class boys develop working class identities.
Boys who evoke negative emotions

Many authors of ethnographic studies on masculinity and school have described how some boys develop and maintain masculine identities that are based on anti-school behaviour and other anti-social activities that are supported within masculine cultures (Willis, 1977; Nayak & Kehily, 2001; Renold, 2001; Swain, 2005; Manninen, 2013). Not everybody laughs when boys fool around in class, and some boys are not just fooling around. Some boys harass or bully their fellow students, some boys are aggressive and violent and some boys are a real threat to other boys, girls and adults. The wide range of books and debates on masculinity and school violence indicates that some aspects of ‘boys failing in school’ are taken seriously (Garbarino 2000; Mills 2001; Oksanen, Räsänen, Nurmi & Lindström, 2010). By addressing boys who evoke negative emotions my aim is however not to cover the boys’ crisis of violence (Kimmel 2010, p. 45) or anti-social tendencies among boys. My aim is to discuss the tendency how boys’ visible and extrovert behaviour is interpreted through a pre-assumptive negative frame.

In my view boys who are not taken seriously and boys who evoke negative emotions might often be the same group of boys. As Sari Manninen (2013) describes, toughness and humour (see also Huuki, Manninen & Sunnari, 2009) are two ways of gaining masculine status among peers and it is common that boys internalize both aspects in their masculine identity. Humour (that involves positive emotions of joy and laughter) and toughness (that generates negative emotions such as fear and insecurity) function as resources of obtaining respect among masculinities in school. Ethnographic studies show that the aspect of what is what is constantly negotiated in the everyday life of students and teachers. Schoolboy humour involves harmless game-playing as well as brutal insults (Nayak & Kehily, 2001, p. 112). Among students, something that might have been intended as a joke could be experienced as bullying (Herkama, 2012; Paju 2011, p. 179). Disturbing behaviour is also tolerated and interpreted differently by different teachers. Some teacher might overlook bad behaviour in class as harmless ‘boys will be boys’ tendencies. Others might see it as a manifestation of unjust masculine dominance (Gordon, 2006). Meanings of actions in situated activities are constantly constructed and re-constructed within the context of various interpersonal relations (Layder, 2006, pp. 277–280; Goffman, 1983).

Even though there is no obvious distinction in the characteristics of boys who are not taken seriously and boys, who evoke negative emotions, the relational conditions between these two categories call for different approaches. Whereas boys who are not taken seriously have a need to develop tighter bonds, boys who evoke negative emotions call for the opposite. During an interview, a teacher of mathematics Bodil, reflected on Sauli – a badly behaving boy in class. We talked about the possible effects of the interventions that had been made by the school’s welfare team to intervene in Sauli’s behavioural problems. Bodil’s reflection showed the existence of a too tight bond and how Bodil’s interpretation of possible positive outcomes was engulfed by negative emotions.

Bodil: I don’t think he will. I must say that I would be very surprised if he would. Perhaps when some time has passed. But I honestly feel that he is one of those who always gets caught, and denies at first, and then apologizes. But then he will go back to his bad behaviour. He is not a boy who would admit to himself that things are going towards the wrong direction.

Harry: But efforts have been made to reach him ...

Bodil: I don’t think ... I don’t think he has ... I guess we listen to each other to some extent, I presume. But I don’t have his trust. I don’t think he really trusts anybody.

The question here is not whether Bodil made the right or wrong interpretation of the effects of the interventions that had been made to encounter Sauli. My aim is to show how Bodil honestly felt and how her emotional state is linked to her interpretation of what kind of a boy Sauli is and what her expectations are of Sauli’s future life career. Bodil makes a generalized argument about Sauli’s personality ‘He is not a boy who would admit to himself...’. She also has a deterministic and negative view on Saulis future trajectory ‘he is one of those who always gets caught’. True my long term ethnographic participation in the school I had knowledge about the efforts teachers had made to encounter Sauli. By knowing
Recognizing boys from a relational and emotional perspective

the history I can relate to Bodil’s emotional state and the frustration she must have felt. At the same time I argue that the emotional atmosphere between Bodil and Sauli formed a pre-assumptive and engulfing, negative frame that did not enable other more constructive or positive interpretations.

When I interviewed Mikaela, a supervising teacher of a class in seventh grade, she reflected on how she had made progress with one of her misbehaving boys Karim. She described how a long and frustrating process, which involved numerous complaints from her colleagues on Karim’s bad behaviour, finally resulted in a positive outcome. Mikaela describes how a successful collaboration with the special education teacher had led to a positive change that Mikaela mainly describes in terms of relational and emotional aspects.

Harry: So you made a breakthrough, that things started to work out?

Mikaela: Things started to work. I think it was Martina (special education teacher) and others who realized ... They came to me and said that the boy really tries. But he said himself that he can’t cope without support. He started to show that things matter. And he became very polite. He started to treat me nicely. He started to show a softer side.

That Karim “started to show that things matter” can be interpreted as progress in the school’s influence on Karim. School that had previously appeared to be meaningless had become something meaningful. Mikaela also gained insight into how Karim himself understood his own need of support: “he said himself that he can’t cope without support.” Further the mention of “a softer side” can be interpreted as a change from a too tight bond, towards a loosened-up bond and a politer and nicer relationship. The breakthrough that Mikaela described had begun from a successful encounter between the special education teacher Martina and Karim. Whereas Karim previously had too tight bonds to most of his teachers, Martina had managed to reach out to Karim and gain his trust. The looser bond that developed between Martina and Karim had further enabled Karim to loosen up his too tight bonds to other adults in school. Such positive relational conditions that develop through the successful encounter between Karim and the special education teacher were not developed in the interpersonal reality between the mathematics teacher Bodil and Sauli. Acknowledging boys as social agents, the development of negatively charged social bonds is linked to how boys choose to act and how they respond in their social relations to adults. But a relationship perspective highlights how negatively charged emotional bonds create interpersonal micro-structural conditions that can be transformed when or if someone succeeds in loosening up the too tight bond.

I argue further that there are some theoretical perspectives on gender equality that emphasize general masculine dominance and often fail to recognize the internal dimension of boys who evoke negative emotions. In a gender hierarchy perspective men and women in society as well as boys and girls in class are competing groups with different chances on the societal market (Holter 2005, p. 17). A gender hierarchy perspective generates a frame where boys’ hegemony needs to be controlled for the sake of protecting and empowering girls (or silent boys). Within this kind of frame loud boys’ needs are easily engulfed by other kinds of concerns, such as the concern for girl’s lack of space in class (Gordon, 2006). When boys’ are viewed as problems for others, they call for control and discipline – in some cases exclusion. It is however crucial – for the sake of boys who evoke negative emotions – to distinguish the difference between ‘the problem with the boy’ and ‘the boy with the problem’. In my view the obvious problem of boys’ misbehaviour in class is by all means recognized, but I claim that the main focus is often on how these boys are a problem for the learning environment and for adults who lack influence on them. It takes a great deal of reflexive capacity to recognize the boy with the problem – that is, gain insight into the boys’ inner life – especially in circumstances where a negatively charged, too tight social bond exists.

Boys who do not evoke emotions

A further agenda in the modern studies on school-boy masculinities is to explore how masculinities in school are played out in diverse ways (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, p. 25). Ethnographic studies have shown how there is a considerably large group of boys in school who do not fit in to popular constructions of masculinity or resemble the two extrovert and
dominant boys presented above (Frosh, Pattman & Phoenix, 2002; Swain 2005). Sarah Delamont (2000, p. 100) points out how many educational sociologists have on the one hand, highlighted and glamourized a particular group of boys – the anti-school boys – at the same time as boys who have conformed to the idea of schooling, are labelled with derogatory names such as swots and wimps (Connell, 1989), earols and conformists (Willis, 1977), freaks and geeks (Milner, 2004) or nerds (Askew, 1988). Studies indicate that what are regarded as typical boy or popular masculine tendencies are not about widespread quantitative features among boys. Dominant construction of masculinities is more about idealized and expected masculine characteristics, or what Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002, p. 200) define as popular masculinities. Emma Renold (2004) who investigated the life of ‘other boys’ in school, showed how a significant number of boys identified themselves as something different than a boy with hegemonic characteristics. In fact Renold (ibid. p. 241) found that as much as two thirds of boys she encountered in school during an ethnographic study “openly expressed their feelings of powerlessness and anxiety as they struggled to negotiate the impossible fiction of hegemonic masculinity and over one third of boys were subject to routinized forms of gender-based bullying (including verbal and physical abuse, exclusion, ridicule and ritual humiliation) if they did not desire and/or ‘fit’ the hegemonic ideal.” It is likely that the most visible and debated group of boys has little in common with the majority of boys.

In this final subchapter my aim is to reflect upon boys who are left unnoticed in the everyday life activities in class and in the ongoing debate on boys’ schooling. I have described above how boys project different kinds of emotional energies. In this last part my aim is to show how the emotional element varies also in terms of emotional intensity. The extrovert class clowns as well as the visibly reluctant or bad behaving boys evoke emotions. They have their advocates and opponents that indicate the existence of emotional intensity and awareness. Even though the pro-school boys have been (unrightfully) ridiculed in classic studies of masculinities (Whyte, 1981 /1943; Willis, 1977), these ‘other boys’ also have their backers in the field of educational research (Delamont, 2000; Renold, 2004). The question I am posing is: who does not evoke emotions and is therefore left unrecognized in class and in the debate on boys’ schooling?

During fieldwork I had an eye-opening experience that showed how I have had a biased gaze and how I had failed to recognize the absence of a particular boy in class.

Observation note from a Religion education class 9.12.2008

We had just started the class when Ville makes a remark that Pasi is once again absent. Students start to talk about Pasi, and how he has a tendency to skip classes. While I make a note on the ongoing discussion I realized that during the three-month field observation I had not taken notice of Pasi’s absences. I also realized how I had been completely unaware of whether Pasi should have attended the religion classes, or whether he was participating in some other class instead. (Religious education is compulsory only for students who are members of the Lutheran church).

After class I discuss with the teacher Sari about how students were concerned about the absence of other students. Sari nodded at my observation, but said that she had overheard during the last break how Ville had skipped class and how his absence had been reported to the supervising teacher. Sari adds that it is not solely due to compassion that Ville was concerned about Pasis absence. But that is just the thing! If Ville skips class, he is reported! But Pasi has obviously skipped several classes without anyone taking a real notice of his absence. I know I had not, and I guess I can say the same thing for Sari.

Ville with his dominant and loud position had a big impact on the class environment and his presence and absence could not go unrecognized. The unpretentious Pasi had a small impact on the class dynamic and he had not developed a striking position within my awareness – even though my aim had been to observe various boys in class. My perception of him was that he was an average boy who blended in with the crowd of other average boys. I knew of his existence. I had talked to him occasionally. But, I had no insight into his school history or to other aspects of his internal life. Gordon, Holland, Lahelma and Tolonen (2005) have suggested that researchers as well as teachers’ attention are attracted by visible and audible action that often leads to the fact that silent students are left unnoticed. It has been shown how rebellion boys gain greater attention of their teachers, compared to girls.
Boys are expected to be noisy while girls are expected to silently conform. What I found however is that while the silent girls are easily left unnoticed; the silent boy makes a striking exception in the everyday life activities in the classroom. When I asked students and teachers about what boys they were mostly concerned about, both students and teachers tended to sympathise with the silent lonely boy in class. It was a rule that the same boys were defined as the silent ones by both students and teachers. The silent loner makes a striking exception among boys and stands out due to his extraordinary silent bearing (Paju, 2011, p. 95). Karim, with an identity of being one of the loud boys in class, pointed out how he had particularly wondered about the wellbeing of his classmate Teemu, due to his silent manner.

Harry: Do you know, is there a student that you worry about, someone you know that is not OK.

Karim: Don’t know. Well we have Teemu. He is always silent. I don’t know how he really is.

Harry: You’ve thought about him, that he is not OK or that there are things to worry about?

Karim: Don’t really know. I have had that kind of a feeling, like how is he really. He is always alone and doesn’t say anything.

And as Sara, aged 15, in a class in the ninth grade explains, a silent boy is someone whom everybody takes notice of.

Sara: He might think that no one sees him, but I think everybody has taken notice of him, and would like to be his friend

Even if silence does not generate visible reactions from teachers or students, silent boys appeared to evoke intensive inner emotions of concern among students as well as teachers. Mikaela, the supervising teacher for a class in the seventh grade described how Teemu, due to his strikingly lonely character, evoked emotions that she describes as almost unbearable.

Mikaela: His appearance is so striking. He personifies the lonely drifter. It is almost unbearable. You really feel sorry for him.

A silent representation is not a typical or a popular way for boys to present themselves, but silent boys appeared to be well known among their classmates. Silence in my view also generates a certain kind of emotional concern or empathy, and it strikes a clear contrast to “despicable” hegemonic masculinities. It is also far easier to evoke nurturing emotions towards a silent loner than it is towards a reluctant and badly behaving boy or the class clown.

Tarja Tolonen (2001, p. 171) has pointed out that the only way to hide in school is to be like everybody else. Whereas a silent girl can be regarded as a typical girl, a silent boy is something rather atypical. My aim is not to diminish the need to notice and support silent students nor silent boys. I simply argue that the invisible boys do not hide silently (or loudly). On the contrary I suggest that the boys who are left unnoticed are to be found among the average or median boys who are not particularly silent, overly engaged with school and do not resemble any obvious school opposition (Lunabba, 2013, p. 117). They are boys in the middle; with average Pisa results (Sulkunen et al., 2009) and good enough grades (SOU64, 2009), dressed in a hoodie and jeans. Pasi did not stand out as someone overly silent or lonely and he did not evoke same kind of emotional concern as the silent loner Teemu. Pasi, as well as Samuel, Kimmo, Fredrik, Danne and Mikki were most likely present in the classes that I observed for several months. Nonetheless, they are rarely mentioned in my field notes and they were seldom talked about during interviews with teachers and students. They are a group of boys that I define as boys who do not evoke emotions. Nobody is really concerned about them as most of us assume that they are doing just fine. But are they fine for all we know?

Conclusion

My aim in this chapter was to show how recognition of boys can be analysed from a relationship perspective. Adapting the theory of social bonds, it is possible to distinguish various kinds of interpersonal realities in classrooms that condition how various boys are encountered in the everyday life practices in school. My further aim has been to link the relational and emotional realities of classrooms to the ongoing boy-debate within the field of gender and educational research. The debate on boys’ schooling is intensive.
and boys are broadly discussed and acknowledged. But the debate shows also various emotional qualities. Boys are often laughed at and they are sometimes ridiculed. Boys evoke emotions of frustration and anger for various reasons. But despite of the intensive debate and broad concern on boys’ schooling and wellbeing, further work needs to be done. There still are boys who fall outside the gaze of gender research.

References


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In Mia Fernaus drawing project *Men in pink* she has used male models who got to adopt traditionally feminine poses and wear traditionally feminine clothing. Through the drawings she wants to discuss what is normally associated with femininity. With the drawings she has found the more subtle nuances and played with the limits of what is read as a heterosexual man in traditionally visual language. The pictures are drawn with felt-tip pens and markers.
Chapter 9

“Beard boys”: Standing in the way of a transformation of the self

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Abstract
In this chapter the thought-construct of skäggbarn ["beard children"] or, sometimes also skägppojkar ["beard boys"], is explored. It constitutes a distinct form of hate speech, targeted against unaccompanied refugee minors in Sweden, and finds its outlet particularly on far-right internet sites (Hirvonen, 2013). By taking a cue from psychoanalysis and its two-way perspective on both inner world and society (Clarke, 2003), the meaning of facial hair in relation to the “racial” Other is interrogated as an example of how racist fantasies and caricatures can emerge. The analysis herein presented describes in what ways the Others, the “beard boys/children”, are degraded, as they come to represent an obstruction that frustrates one’s possible self belonging to a unified society.

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The aim of this chapter is to explore the thought-construct of skäggbarn ["beard children"] or, sometimes also, skägppojkar ["beard boys"]. Its salience within Swedish discourse about unaccompanied refugee minors, and its relation to masculinity, racism, and nationalism, this chapter will argue, ought to be underlined, as an example of how racist thought-constructs and caricatures can emerge. The analysis developed here takes as its point of departure the observations of Hirvonen (2013), who, in a netnographic study, has identified the thought-construct of skäggbarn [beard children] as a distinct type of hate speech against unaccompanied refugee minors that finds its outlet on far-right extremist internet sites. This particular form of hate constitutes part of a blend of Islamophobia and other racist expressions, which could also be explained as conspiracy-driven Eurabian beliefs (Hirvonen, 2013). In this case, the practical use of the word beard is, as Wernesjö offers: “suggesting that facial hair is incommensurable with being a minor/child” (Wernesjö, 2014, paper 3, p. 3) and employed to create distrust against refugee minors. In Canada, Bryan and Denov (2011) have proposed that unaccompanied refugee children run the risk of being constructed as potential delinquents and threats. They argue that it is the synergy of the relationship between anti-refugee and anti-youth discourses that position refugee minors at the intersection of racialised and gendered discourses. Furthermore, newly arrived migrants, including child migrants, are commonly associated with social problems (cf. Bhabha, 2014). This formation takes place in an environment that is shaped by neoliberal ideological practices concerning competition, border control and “national security” (cf. Bauman, 2004; Dauvergne, 2008; Shamir, 2005; Sharma, 2002; Van Houtum & Boedeltje, 2009).

Wernesjö (2014) has suggested that there are two parallel processes happening worldwide, and particularly in Europe:

On the one hand, migration and transnational flows cross and challenge national borders. On the other hand, nationalism is on the rise, with debates about what constitutes a national identity, and borders are set up to hinder certain forms of migration (p. 35).

In Sweden, where arguably a post-political climate (cf. Mouffe 1998, 2005a, b) has distorted the traditional notions of left- and right politics in favour of consensus politics, the racist Sweden Democrats have prospered, entering parliament in 2010 with 5.7 per cent of the vote. It is a political party that has its
origins in the Swedish neo-Nazi movement. Despite the fact that the Sweden Democrats have received widespread critique from all the established political parties for their racist political agenda, as well as been the target of several public manifestations and marches against racism, the party’s support from the wider electorate rose from the initial 5.7 per cent in 2010 to 12.86 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary election in September 2014 (Election Authority, 2014). Ever since the party entered the Swedish parliament in 2010, this development has caused disturbance in the prevailing Swedish self-image as an enlightened “conscience of the world”, a country where the welfare state is said to be progressive and where both antiracism and gender equality (supposedly) reign (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011).

The chapter takes its primary cue from psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis may help us to explore the societal effects of racism, specifically in the encounter between our own self-perception and the Other, whereupon the “I” or the “we” of the Swedish nation stands counterposed to the “they” of the Other. Psychoanalysis attends to the intersection, tension and interplay between the inner world of psychical processes and “external” societal forces. Racism is a social phenomenon; it is, for this reason, to be understood as part of the structure of society. However, the structure is itself upheld and reproduced by individuals. The corollary being that the personal affective emotional apparatus—containing both conscious and unconscious processes—becomes a relevant site for analysis. Hence, racism is to be understood as a psychological phenomenon as well (Clarke, 2003).

Clarke (2003) has argued that psychoanalysis may provide useful conceptual tools in the study of racism, and the expressions of racism, at both the societal as well as the psychological level, where both conventional psychological and sociological explanations fall short. This two-way view might illuminate the endurance of myths and caricatures about refugee children—in this case the male minors, who, on far-right internet sites, are frequently described as lying about their age, being misogynous or bearers of other non-desirable values or religious beliefs (Hirvonen, 2013). The point of departure when addressing racism is that the concept of “race” is a social construct and that this concept becomes a vessel into which the inner world is contained (Clarke, 2003). The arrival of certain bodies, specifically the arrival of non-white bodies, is noticed and commented upon more than others (cf. Ahmed, 2004, 2007). Importantly, whiteness is not to be understood as an essentialist concept but, rather, as something that is received as well as a category that continuously undergoes change. It is a social and cultural orientation affecting both the positioning and alignment of bodies (Ahmed, 2007).

Sons of the global south arriving alone

In recent years, the numbers of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum entering Sweden has increased substantially from 388 in 2004 to 3852 in 2013 (SMB, 2013a, 2014). In fact, between 2010 and 2012, Sweden received the highest number of unaccompanied minors in Europe (SMB, 2012a). The great majority of these minors are male, with the largest number originating from Afghanistan and Somalia (SMB, 2013b). As much as one third of the asylum reception centres for unaccompanied minors have been exposed to threats, vandalism and other aggressive actions in recent times (Hirvonen, 2013). Most of these minors, as with refugees more generally, have little or no way of confirming their identities to the Swedish Migration Board (SMB), either by presenting a valid passport or through any other means of identification. If doubt arises with regards to age, the SMB can conduct “age-oriented interviews” with the minor. There is also the option of “offering” a medical age assessment. This constitutes a dilemma for the SMB, as chronological age is considered to be a significant part of a person’s identity at the official and legal level (cf. SMB, 2012b), while research has shown that existing skeletal and dental age assessments are highly uncertain to assess chronological age (Hjern, Brendler-Lindqvist & Norredam, 2012; cf. Serinelli, Panetta, Pasqualetti & Marchetti, 2011). However, even with this considerable uncertainty, this practice is still pursued in many European countries (Hjern et al., 2012). This could partly be due to a lingering suspicion that this category of young refugees tend to lie about their age, as research has shown that unaccompanied refugee minors risk being reduced to stereotypes in discourse and policy despite their heterogeneous and complex backgrounds (cf. Bhabha, 2014; Stretmo, 2010; Wernesjö 2012, 2014).
Practices of exclusion and psychoanalysis

We are afraid of change and difference (Böhm, 1994), but at the same time we search for the transformational object that will release and improve us, in order that we can feel part of a larger context (Bollas, 1978). The term object here is used in the literary sense, namely “the object of my desire/hate”. Such an object can “be a person or a part-object [...]” (e.g. a real or fantasied body-part, or its corresponding symbol that is ascribed fantasy traits, similar to personality traits), “[...] a real object or a phantazied one” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 273). Today, it is not uncommon for psychoanalysis to claim that the subject is comprised of many components of the self, quite like a “parliamentary order” (Bollas, 1992, p. 81). This internal world can however be destabilised, due to, for example, intense anxiety or melancholia. Instead, contradictory components of the self are projected onto other objects, which become receptacles for the self’s own unwanted traits, while, on the other hand, components of the self, which sustain the ability to identify with others, may be expelled (Bollas, 1992; Clarke, 2003; Igra, 2003). To a certain degree this development can be a conscious preference. All the same, the social order remains central in setting the limits of this “choice”. A society in disintegration, for example, one which is overflowing with insecurity, anxiety and disappointment, can exacerbate primitive ideals and thought-constructs (Igra, 2003). In such situations a figure of scapegoat is adopted, upon which everything perceived as both depraved and threatening gets projected. This projection becomes one-dimensional, often because there is “no genuine interest in the Other”2 (Igra, 2003, p. 27; cf. Böhm, 1994).

Hübinette and Lundström (2011) have argued that Swedish whiteness is experiencing a state of melancholia, a melancholia that even extends its reach to capture mainstream Swedish antiracism. While the Sweden Democrats—along with the rest of the far-right—mourn the “downfall” of what they imagine is a lost, white homogenous past, the anti-racist mainstream grieve for a progressive, gender equal, post racial utopia (without strings to colonial pasts), which they see presently as somewhat adrift: the “good Sweden” (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011, p. 43). Both images require the core image of a homogeneous and white society, someplace in time. In these contrasting cases, the functional content of the narratives remains the same: somebody fills the role of not being Swedish, non-white and non-gender equal, and is thereby constructed as the Other (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011). The production of such mythological images, which heighten the fear of being invaded by “otherness” (the stranger), might of course affect both the official and unofficial understanding of unaccompanied minors’ motives to seek asylum, via the interplay between society and the individual. The image of the strategic Other trying to persuade the Swedish authorities of being younger than one actually is, might overshadow the refugee experience and political agency of the adolescent as a person seeking asylum. Hence, as a human being, he is rendered invisible.

All individuals are carriers of stereotypes and preconceptions to some degree. Indeed, Bollas (1992) has even explained that there is a latent fascist in everyone. Prejudice can become cemented and converted into “truth” if new information and knowledge ceases to be acknowledged, and when, concomitantly, only those patterns and information confirming the prejudice are recognised (Bollas, 1992; Böhm, 1994; Igra, 2003).

According to Böhm (1994), the psychological conditions fostering prejudicial tendencies may be established during early childhood, as a segment in the psychological defence apparatus, when the child is attempting to handle situations that appear for him or her as distressing. Later in life, such prejudicial inclinations can be the breeding ground for varying degrees and shades of fanaticism, such as racism. Racist individuals and groups “demand illusions”3 (Böhm, 1994, p. 49) and fantasies, not new information. Such a development can transform into racist belief systems, predicated on hate (Böhm, 1994). However, racism is not to be overly simplified into mental insanity, since the mechanism for the narrowing of an otherwise open mind exists in everyone (Bollas, 1992).

Racism feeds on the anxiety for the unmentionable components within us. It becomes thereby a...

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2 Translation mine.
3 Translation mine.
“Beard boys”: Standing in the way of a transformation of the self

channel for hate. Representatives of fascism often acknowledge this role when they recurrently state that they “say plainly, what everyone is thinking” (Miller, 1994, p. 42). They position themselves as truth tellers talking about the reality (as contrast to the “politically correct” outlook) of the “threat” of immigration. This is one of the main sources of the allure of racism, even beyond its small, openly fascist, support base (Miller, 1994).

Crude language about “beard children” could be interpreted as simply a form of racist slur used by a negligible minority of disgruntled commentators, without any higher significance. It could also be looked upon as a nonsense-utterance. However, from a psychoanalytic perspective, every statement is meaningful. Using “nonsense” metaphors and jokes that are in themselves ambiguous or oxymoronic, such as the “beard boy”, is not just nonsense, it has meaning. The use of a “nonsense” metaphor is therefore to be understood as a refusal “to accept the boundaries of language” (Wright, 1999, p. 15), because “every statement is the redirection of someone’s desire” (Wright, 1999, p. 17).

What is in a beard?

Facial hair has had many symbolic values. A key aspect why this is the case is its relation to masculinity and sexuality. A boy’s development of facial hair is connected to his entry into male puberty and consequently a change in his sexual nature (Platen, 1995). Facial hair can also represent the wild, filthy and primitive, such as fairy-tale villains living in the woods, tribal Vandals or Vikings, or in depicting contemporary homeless men, the mentally unwell and “dirty [perverted] old men”. In English society, up until the thirteenth century, beards were associated with foreigners and otherwise, mainly Jews and Muslims. At the same time, Jews and Muslims were prevented from shaving, so that their beard would distinguish them from “Europeans” (Horowitz, 1997; Peterkin, 2002; Warmington, 2008). Views on Muslims and Jews remained derisory. Following, however, the “discovery” of the New World in 1492, the beards of the Iberian conquistadores became one of the primary symbols of the European man, both among the indigenous peoples of the Americas and in Europe. The “beardless” indigenous American became a new racial Other in the Old World (Horowitz, 1997). As presented by Kristeva (1991), the “good savage” (p. 133) of the Renaissance was perceived as a naïve “childlike” double of the self of the national man; a naturalistic subject that could highlight imperfections in European civilisation.

During the Renaissance, men and boys were separated by facial hair, which became unmistakable in theatre performances. Beards were essential in the plays of Shakespeare (Warmington, 2008). In Giordano Bruno’s II Candelao, beards hold a central role in highlighting social and gender features of the characters of which many were bearded. The playful use of both real and fake beards tells of social norms during this period. A young man that could develop facial hair, but had not yet established a sufficiently autonomous social position, was prevented from growing a beard (Biow, 2010). Moreover, as proposed by Fisher (2001), boys may even have been considered to form another gender category—distinguishing them from men during this period—which meant that boys could be perceived as “in drag” both when playing male and female roles (Fisher, 2001). In nuce, then, the social meaning of facial hair has changed over the centuries; not only because of fashion, but also because of the religious connotations and political values it has carried (Peterkin, 2001; Reynolds, 1976). Consequently, the significance of the beard can be understood as a social construction, which becomes accessible to us as “reality” via discourse in a dialogical process (Wright, 1999). Indeed, previous research in behavioural science has shown that beards are perceived as making men look older, more masculine and give the impression that such men possess higher social status (Addison, 1989; Dixson & Vasey, 2012). Children, on the other hand, have, until quite recently in the Global North, commonly been constructed as naïve, innocent and vulnerable, and therefore as imperfect, incompetent adults (Wyness, Harrison & Buchanan, 2004).

What can be seen here are possibly two different beings, the childlike man and the manlike child, united in a fantasy (cf. Wright, 1999) about the boy with a beard. The denial of difference between generations and the confusion of categories between the “childlike man” and the “manlike child” may be comparable to wishing for a castration of the Other.

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4 Translation mine.
The asylum-seeking minor is first “diminished” to a childlike form, and then only awarded a single part of a full-grown man, namely the beard. It is a refusal to submit to generational differences, contrary to when the child accepts that the primary caretaker has a separate and private life (sometimes) with someone else, which the child is excluded from. This echo of the unconscious calls for an exploration of the very unconscious processes involved in such representations.

### The power of the unconscious

In traditional psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious is partly devoted to drives and desires, some of which can be acknowledged at the conscious level, while others are repressed as taboo or, in other ways, are set off-limits for the conscious self. But in, for example, dreams and fantasies, the unconscious communicates repressed desires via signs and picture language; representations generated by the unconscious work contrary to the logic of the conscious self. The unconscious takes note of neither time nor binary opposites; it can mix features from different eras, people and objects (items) (Freud 1901/2005, 1915/2005). When analysing the latent content of dreams, focus can be placed on the bewildering and ambiguous aspects of the “beard children”; besides dividing the two components up into beard OR child, the analytical level of uniting child AND beard can also be employed (cf. Freud, 1901/2005). Inspired further by dream analysis, the point of departure is that the material of fantasy in focus (e.g. facial hair) does not originate only from one particular source, but rather several sources. Objects and part-objects can symbolise persons, body parts or sexual activities. In the Kleinian perspective, ambivalence becomes key, as objects can be “good” and “bad” simultaneously; the inherent quality of objects is that they are ambivalent (to the subject) (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 27). How, therefore, the ambivalence is translated depends on the position, or the perspective. For Klein, then, a position can be understood as the subject’s outlook to a pattern of object relations, anxieties, fantasies and defences, which together comprise its subjective reality (Clarke, 2003; Igra, 2003). Splitting is an initial defence mechanism used to separate “good” and “bad”. “The good is introjected and idealised, the bad denigrated, anxiety is projected out into something or someone else - the bad object” (Clarke, 2003, p. 130). Fantasy interplays with anxiety and contributes thereby to the splitting off from the self. The item that is separated from the ego is, in effect, “romanticised”, but into a perfect threat. Consequently, both the self and objects can be split, such that there is little or no integration of good and bad (Clarke, 2003; Igra, 2003). For example, the mother’s breast can be both benevolent (providing satisfaction) and malevolent (causing frustration). The breast is split into two part-objects; one that is good and one that is bad. Consequently, the mother is also split into two: the adored mother, and the hated mother. This fantasy stays with the self during its future development but is transferred to other contexts. Klein called this perspective the paranoid-schizoid position (Igra, 2003).

Splitting is a way for the self to handle anxiety. It is important to establish a stable and healthy ego by protecting memories and experiences that are pleasant, to be able to process and integrate more complex components of the self later on (Clarke, 2003; Igra, 2003). When this is achieved a person can relate to the second foundational position, that Klein named the depressive position5 (Böhm 1994). These two positions, paranoid-schizoid and the depressive, are not psychopathological states of mind. They should rather be understood as two foundational and dynamic perspectives on the self and its world of object relations (Igra, 2003). An adult person alternates between the two positions. In the depressive position, the experience of good and bad are integrated, while a shift takes place from perceiving part-objects to viewing wholes. Here, the self also experiences anxiety on behalf of the object, both guilt and care are sensed. The self recognises that it consists both of good and bad elements, and has the ability of perceiving others in the same way (Clarke, 2003).

### The transformational object

For Bollas (1978) the child first experiences unity with the primary caretaker as a “process of transformation” (p. 2) of the subject rather than of a separate other. The primary caretaker constantly adapts the infant’s environment to meet its needs, hence

5 The depressive position represents the matured viewpoint (Igra, 2003), accepting, for example, that: “I cannot have everything, and this insight will always cause me some pain. Also, I have to recognise other people as independent subjects”. 
metaphors, although desire can never really reach the true object; likewise, the literal language is never enough to describe it. Every member of society needs to be able to release aggression (Böhm, 1994) and this might take a racist coloration depending on the context. “Jokes” are one example (Bollas, 1992), but also where a racialised Bad Man or a Savage is depicted in popular culture, or in repeated stories (Fanon, 1967/2000). I would argue that the “jokes” and depictions of “beard boys/children” are such expressions. Here, the concept of ambivalence becomes more important (cf. “the feared desire-fantasy”; Wright, 1999, p. 23) in relation to a phobic object; it is in this case an expression of racism. The phobic object arouses a subjective insecurity and the affect dupes rational thought (Fanon, 1967/2000). Moreover, the phobic object is attributed “evil intentions and [...] a malefic power” (Fanon, 1967/2000, p. 155). The phobic becomes anxious that the object of his phobia is after him. Just as Vannoy Adams (1996) has explained that the self fears to be annihilated by the racial Other in a zero-sum game, Ahmed (2004) has proposed that cannibalistic fantasies are “crucial to the politics of fear” (p. 64). Not only as fear to be absorbed into the body of the Other, but to lose the concept of the self as a self, that is, to cease to exist. Therefore, the Other must be fantasised as dangerous, a threatening stranger (Ahmed, 2004).

Returning to the psychoanalytic focus on ambivalence (Either/or, either/and), this phobic object must contain a form of unconscious desirability. Racists defend themselves through projection, attributing to the racial Other (the phobic object) their lowest emotions and “most immoral impulses” (Fanon, 1967/2000, p. 190). Via this maladaptting, or non-coping psychological strategy, the racist may, at least temporarily, achieve a sense of superiority. As Böhm (1994) has advanced, this development can be understood as a psychological sadomasochism that contributes to unequal relationships between people, in which the superiority of some comes at the expense of the inferiority of others. Through the sadomasochist filter the other complete person is deconstructed into fragments, so that separation and distance can be maintained. The racist viewpoint becomes fanatically divided: either one is with the group or against it as a threat (Böhm, 1994). The unknown become dehumanised, simply: the familiar is tolerated and

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sustaining its personal development. Therefore, the primary caretaker is the alpha and omega of the infant and thereby transforms its world. Later in life the memory of this initial object-relation generates a search for an object that can constitute a signifier for transformation, in the form of a “transformational object” (Bollas 1978, p. 2). Products for self-improvement and other promises of self-transformation such as religious cults, ideology or cultural events can potentially re-create an ego-state that brings out memories of early psychic development. Political ideology, such as fascism, might operate as that object, which makes the individual experience an “uncanny fusion”, that is, a sensation promising a transformational experience; it is an echo of a “pre-verbal” existential memory (Bollas, 1978, p. 3). As such, the search for the transformational object is not primarily a matter of a desire for the object; on the contrary, it is a kind of longing to escape a feeling of “void” and lack through transformation. This longing can lead to the formation of a fanatical bond to the transformational object (Bollas, 1978). Hence, it is not the racist’s wish for a homogenous white Sweden that is of primary focus; rather it is the belief that the object will transform both his internal and external life in an intensive and palpable way (cf. Bollas, 1978).

**Fantasy and projection**

The recollections of infantile complexes create the uncanny, leading to a projection of fears towards certain objects, described as the “feared desire-fantasy” (Wright, 1999 p. 23). What shows itself at the surface - such as the fixation of beards on children - might however cover over the real wishes; a fantasy does not have to be a direct representation of the desired. Rather, the unconscious presents an echo to facilitate an approach towards the object of a person’s concurrent desire and fear. The position is always ambiguous to some extent, comprised of both fear as well as desire. The uncanny can be sublimated into objects which do not apparently seem sexual, so as to protect the narcissism of the ego. Art and aesthetics, for instance, are examples of sublimation (Wright, 1999; cf. Bollas, 1978). The aesthetic acknowledges

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6 Repressed material re-surface as what Freud called the unheimlich (un-familiar). The uncanny is a heimlich (familiar) unfamiliarity (Freedman, 1991, p. 54). The familiarity can be understood as remembrance of earlier fetishes or desires during the childhood development of the libido, that later were repressed.
the unfamiliar fiercely rejected (Igra, 2003). The so-called “illegal” or “unfounded” asylum seekers, such as the “invading” beard boys, can be “sacrificed to Intolerance”7 (cf. Miller, 1994, p. 45).

Feeling threatened, and thus afraid, means that there is an object towards which the fear is directed, and Ahmed (2004) has suggested that this movement of fear is a “sideways movement” (p. 67) between objects and the signs that represent them. It is not the psychic apparatus that primarily produces the interchange of signs; rather historical accounts of association have left traces that articulate objects together. Depending on the relations of these stories, some objects are perceived as more fearful than others, since they “stick” (p. 76) more or less to certain objects. Fear can, for example, be contained in a non-white body. Indeed, even the movement or the passing by of this body can be imagined as threatening and thus can increase the fear (Ahmed, 2004). Therefore, the way in which the “beard boy/child” is created as an object of fear rests first and foremost on associations from the past that become restored. Such histories of association might initiate a movement between signs that create the “beard boy/child” in the present; for example impostor, delinquent, fanatical Muslim, animal, brute, fully-grown man, and the bearded one (cf. Ahmed, 2004; Bryan & Denov, 2011; Hirvonen, 2013).

The establishment of masculinity

When social values are invested in, for example, facial hair (e.g. male ruggedness), notions of masculinity begin to surface. A predominantly male feature, such as developing facial hair, is not an aspect of masculinity per se. For that reason it is necessary to bring ideas of gender and masculinity to the table. In dialogue with early psychoanalysts, such as Freud, despite bisexual roots, human beings are divided by the societal order into males and females, accompanied by the thought scheme of active masculinity and passive femininity, although ultimately not completely fixed as categories (Freud, 1933/2005). In traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, a boy’s first object of love is his primary caretaker, commonly the mother. The fear of castration, however, makes him abandon his plain hatred towards the second caretaker (commonly the father), who becomes the first Other in the child’s life (Igra, 2003). This development is called the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex is thereafter repressed and in the regular case destroyed, while the super-ego (internalization of cultural and moral rules) is formed in its place (Freud, 1933/2005). In the regular “healthy” case, the mother is replaced as a love object by another partner. The dialectics between the cultural feminine and the cultural masculine remains one of the primary drives of the human psyche, after the completion of the Oedipus complex. In contemporary psychoanalysis, however, the constitution of masculinity would take place in a triad between the boy, the primary caretaker and a secondary caretaker, rather than via the forceful rejection of the mother, as is the case in the traditional Freudian Oedipus complex, where after the boy starts to identify with his father. Hence, this is an intersubjective approach to child development (cf. Benjamin, 1995).

Relations between masculinity and femininity operate like registers that the sexual act can play with (Benjamin, 1988); as such, different expressions of masculinity and femininity can overlap and interchange. But as Connell (2005) has advanced, the key feature of what she calls “hegemonic masculinity”8 is the dominant social position of men over women alongside those elements perceived as “feminine”. This hierarchical structure also takes place between groups of men. The common denominator in the establishment of masculinity can be said to be the forceful rejection of the feminine (or the maternal) (cf. Connell, 2005), while establishing an intersubjective identification with the primary caretaker (commonly the mother) might actually be the healthy way to establish a “sound” masculinity (cf. Benjamin, 1988, 1995). Drawing on psychoanalysis and phenomenology, Karlsson (2014) has emphasised that the “project” of (phallic) masculinity can be understood as having its roots in the “helpless body and not with the phallic body” (p. 254). The project of masculinity thus becomes a struggle away from the human condition of defencelessness. “Masculinity as a project becomes like an unattainable dream to elude vulnerability, transience and dependence – a dream with such a compelling character that it con-

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7 Translation mine.

8 Hegemonic masculinity is however not to be understood as a “monolith” (Connell, 2005, p. 181). It can emerge and develop in various local forms.
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stantly seems to threaten men’s identity” (Karlsson, 2014, p. 256). In sum, masculinity is a powerful ideal and an unstable construction at the same time. This ambivalent double-motion creates an arena where exclusionary practices and disciplining behavioural patterns can take place.

The Other masculinity

Nagel (1998) has suggested that masculinity and nationalism are tied together. Nationalist politics, citizenship, political violence and military aggression, can be understood as masculine processes, or more specifically; the scripts that are embedded in concepts linked to the nation, such as those mentioned above, are “written primarily by men, for men, and about men” (Nagel, 1998, p. 243; cf. Connell, 2005). Sweden is considered one of the most gender equal countries in the world, and probably this idea would also constitute a part of a prevailing and semi-official national self-identity. It might even be considered a vivid component of contemporary Swedish nationalism. That gender equality ideology forms part of a dominant national identity (cf. Hübinette & Lundström, 2011) is not insignificant, the viewpoint of this chapter is that gender is constructed relationally (cf. Benjamin, 1988, 1995; Carrigan, Connell &, Lee, 1987; Connell, 1987, 2005). This means that the significant progress, at least viewed from some angles, made by Swedish women and LGBT-persons in Swedish society—in relation to the first, second and third-wave feminism(s)—could also have contributed to destabilising constructions of masculinity.

As Hübinette and Lundström (2011) observe:

[…] the goals achieved through feminist politics of gender equality seemingly constituted an important aspect of the Sweden Democrat’s success, where (the longing for) white masculinity is being reinstalled, as both the father of the nation (the law of the white Swedish Father to speak with Lacan) and the head of the family (p. 49).

Indeed, masculinised remembrance and fury of emasculation are central components of national-

ism (Enloe, 2000) and although there should be no definition of a singular masculinity model (Bhabha, 1995; Connell, 2005), fluid and multiple masculinities are conflictual and tend to cohere around a hegemonic masculinity. Today, it is entangled with neoliberalism, hence stimulating the rise and idealisation of corporate masculinities (e.g. “the entrepreneur”) and secular Western shades of moralism (cf. Connell, 2005). Every variation of masculinity is weighted and compared against this hegemonic model that helps to reproduce hierarchies of gender, sexuality, class, nationality and race. This would mean that hegemonic masculinity is intertwined with Global North and South relations (cf. Connell, 2005; Enloe, 2000), thus affecting interpretations and stereotypes of the Other in the social order. One level of rejection of the Other can be the refusal to acknowledge his existence. Another level would be that everything which is thought as undesirable about the self is projected onto the racial Other as the only “object capable of carrying the burden of original sin” (Fanon, 1967/2000, p. 192).

The combination of both negative (denial of existence) and positive (projection) fantasy creates an object relation that carries unbalanced qualities (Bollas, 2003). On the internet, these male unaccompanied children, or “beard boys/children” have criminal characteristics attributed to them; such as having affinities for assault and rape. “These are bandits and above all ‘rapists’, more explicitly ‘hungry rapists’, ‘pedophile rapists’. ‘MENA rapists’ – the ‘most rape-prone immigrant of them all’ whose presence will ensure a ‘rape’ epidemic.” (Hirvonen, 2013, p. 82).

But “negative” traits such as aggressively violent tendencies or exaggerated sexual potency are themselves ambiguous. In this fantasy of violent and sexual aggression lies disguised admiration and envy of the racial Other; “If it is not the length of the penis, then it is the sexual potency that impresses him” (Fanon, 1967/2000, p. 174). Indeed, Bracher (1994) proposes that the origins of racism lay in the fantasy about the Other’s jouissance (pleasure and/or sexual orgasm). This jouissance could be fantasised as the beard boy enjoying consumption of social welfare, i.e. taking pleasure in “fooling” the system, or conquering sexual satisfaction from (white Swedish) women. This could motivate the racist’s rejection of non-permitted “in-terracial” sex and “mixed” procreation, placing the

9 Of course, women can be nationalists or racists too. Within these ideologies, women do play important roles, but primarily as nurturers, “mothers of the nation” and supporters of men (Enloe, 2000). I would suggest that contemporary far-right extremism requires a reinforcement of “traditional” femininity that creates certain limits for female participation in violent physical acts or online hate-speech.
fantasy of the return to an imagined homogenous, white society “under siege” (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011, p. 50). The imagined gender equal Sweden, regardless of it being apparently exaggerated by “feminists” and “Cultural Marxists”, is in need of protection. Therefore, the racist remains preoccupied with the racial Other’s “bad views on women” and imagined negative attitudes towards gender equality (cf. Gottzén & Jonsson, 2012, p. 7). The self’s transformation towards security, unity, and belonging to a higher context (cf. Bollas, 1978) is fantasised as prevented by the “beard child”.

Conclusions

Swedish whiteness and (hegemonic) masculinity have arguably been destabilised (cf. Connell, 2005; Hübinette & Lundström, 2011) in the wake of a post-political situation (Mouffe 1998, 2005a, b), whereupon the outlet of anxiety and melancholia has shifted from the traditional right- and leftwing politics towards a consensual politics, in which Eurafrican and other racist perspectives are evoked as the truth-telling uprising. However at its core, there is not a wish for a return to an imaginary white Sweden, where gender roles are “stable” as such. Rather, there is the wish for an intense and palpable transformation (Bollas, 1978) towards safety, belonging and unity, in a fragmented and individualised societal climate (Bauman, 2004; Igra, 2003). During intensive emotional movements, such as anxiety or melancholia, the self can return to the paranoid-schizoid position, where the world becomes either black or white and where manic tendencies (Bollas, 2003) create a strong barrier between an “us” and a “them”. A longing for a pure (and equal) Swedish masculinity, together with the longing for a pure Swedish man, and the pure Swedish woman is set in motion. The external threat must be warded off, in order to protect the self and the people included in the "us". The Others, the “beard children”, must be rejected, since they stand in the way of the transformation (Bollas, 1978) of a potential self belonging to a unified society.

Beards symbolise change in masculinity and sexuality (Platen, 1995). There is a (white) fantasy about depriving the Other of his otherness; more specifically still, his Other masculinity. The racist channels (projects) negative feelings onto the racial Other in order to degrade him (Clarke, 2003). Therefore, the unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor becomes reduced to the “beard boy”, infested with all the concealed undesirable qualities of the racist, an image other than the “good savage” of the Renaissance (Kristeva, 1991, p. 133). Rather, he is an uncontrollable invader, a cannibal (Ahmed, 2004) trying to consume the self (Vannoy Adams, 1996) and “the Swedish way of life”. The uncanny has been awakened, where infantile feared desire-fantasies come into being (Wright, 1999). The racial Other is assembled as having an uncontrollable (masculine) drive (cf. Connell, 2005; Fanon, 1967/2000). Hence, the “beard child” is constructed as a rapist as well as a sexual deviant (cf. Hirvonen, 2013). By placing the beard on unaccompanied refugee minors, the racist’s narcissist illusion of being a whole (instead of a divided) subject remains unaltered. Indeed, by upholding the fantasy that the foreign (or “the stranger”) is actually external rather than within, the self maintains some form of equilibrium and solidity (Kristeva, 1991).

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Chapter 9


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Dazzling yet invisible? The curious cultural location of boys in cheerdance

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Abstract
This chapter explores complex and contradictory masculinities in an all boys’ cheerdance group in an inner city area in the north of England, U.K. We are interested in how boys are invisible in cheerdance, how working class boys are invisible in dance more broadly and how a ‘hyper visibility’ occurs when boys are active in feminised terrain. Thus the chapter offers an analysis of continuing hegemonic practices and gendered normativities, in addition to assessing some of the disruptions in these practices. Working class identities are salient and inextricable from the meanings of masculinity expressed and embodied by the boys here. We challenge conceptualisations of a masculinity/femininity binary and approach it as relational rather than oppositional. The chapter is a collaborative piece from an academic researcher and a dance practitioner. Qualitative data was generated through informal, conversational settings and also observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The research is ongoing and is ethnographic in nature. Both the ‘academic’ and the ‘dancer’ regard the ‘location’ of the dance groups as entirely significant to the findings that emerge. Rather than claim ‘new’, alternative and/or inclusive masculinities we need to engage with articulations whereby working class masculinity and involvement in (cheer-)dance is analysed as a complex, dynamic process and through which different configurations are often simultaneous and being visible and invisible is not always oppositional.

Introduction
This chapter explores complex and contradictory masculinities in an all boys’ cheerdance group, the DAZL Diamonds (http://www.dazl.org.uk/DAZL-Diamonds/DAZL-Boys) in an inner city area in the north of England, U.K. Accounting for the boys’ engagement with dance and their broader social and cultural location requires analysis of continuing hegemonic practices and gendered normativities; it also requires us to acknowledge and account for disruptions in these practices. These are intersectional in character and complex in practice and although masculinity is our focal point, femininity, central to the dynamic interplay of significant social, cultural and embodied gender practices also informs our discussion. From the outset we challenge conceptualisations of a masculinity/femininity binary and approach it as relational rather than oppositional. Further, working class identities are salient and inextricable from the meanings of masculinity expressed and embodied by the boys here. We are interested in how boys are invisible in cheerdance, how working class boys are invisible in dance more broadly and how a ‘hyper visibility’ occurs when boys are active in feminised terrain. The chapter assesses how different forms and configurations of masculinity are constructed and operate in cheerdance. Like all narrative and storytelling, we are selective in our coverage. The chapter is a collaborative piece from an academic researcher and a dance practitioner; we seek to give space to empirical data and our musings on the expressions of masculinity as evidenced in cheerdance and interpreted from our combined perspective of theorising gender and community based dance practice. Our broad interests in dance and the cultural production of masculinity in and through dance raise pertinent questions that are beyond the scope of this chapter in relation to processes of racialization and other socio-cultural aspects of identity.

Hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2012), feminine hegemony (Schippers, 2007) and
to some extent, inclusive masculinities (Anderson, 2009), provide the conceptual backdrop for our analysis of the boys’ location and engagement in cheerdance. We draw on Crossley’s (2007) use of ‘body techniques’ to illustrate the significance of embodiment in establishing how masculinity is played out and played with through dance. We highlight some limitations in theorising the body when the lived competing practices of gender, race and class are not given adequate attention (Villa, 2011). We draw on focus group, interview, observation and conversational data collection techniques to illustrate the commentary on boys and cheerdance that we present here. Our analysis is rooted to the notion that the context specific nature of where this qualitative data emerges is key to explaining the complex expressions of masculinity thus presented.

The British Cheerleading Association is the professional body through which DAZL Diamond Boys enter competitions. Cheerdance in the U.K (more commonly referred to as cheer leading in the U.S) is a physical activity, performed in a competitive context, that involves organised routines that are generally quite short (around 3 minutes) and that incorporate jumping, dance, gymnastic based synchronised movements in a team. Cheerdance requires choreography, (formally recognised) dance techniques and further performance skills including ‘facials’ (smiling, demonstration of emotion etc). Like cheerleading, ability is learned and practiced in order to perform difficult high energy routines. Competitive Cheerdance is a sport that is judged on how well a team can dance, stay synchronized, perform the choreography and perform the various technical dance skills which are judged by panels of experts.

Historically, women were rarely seen in cheerleading before the 1930s with change only occurring due to the second world war. The presence of women changed views of cheerleading with women stereotyped as ‘cute’ whereas men had previously been considered as ‘valiant’ (Adams and Bettis, 2003). It soon became apparent that women cheerleaders were thought of as quite trivial when previously men’s involvement was seen as an extension of their
athleticism. By the 1960s men were hardly seen at all and feminine costumes and pom-poms had become the common symbols of cheering (Wade, 2012). Despite men having ‘created’ and started cheerleading/cheerdance there are very few all-male squads (such as Premier All-Stars USA University Squad, Shockers Japanese University Squad and Alabama University Squad). The Alabama University team performs cheerdance in a similar style to the DAZL Boys in Leeds but they are a university aged, all-male openly gay squad; the DAZL Boys are teenagers (13 to 17 years) and the team is community based (not school or college based). The DAZL Boys are totally unique as an all-male independent Cheerdance team and as teenagers they are also the youngest squad performing and competing at their level.

Engaging with embodied masculinities: Conceptual opportunities and constraining features

In 1995 Connell positioned ‘multiple masculinities’ as central to a growing interest in critical masculinity studies. Sexuality was and is clearly centred by Connell (and subsequently others) in describing multiple masculinities, perhaps most obviously because of its complex interrelationship with gender, despite the problematisation of this by feminists previously (Butler, 1990). Connell has repeatedly stressed the importance of differences within ‘categories’ of masculinity and whilst this has long been acknowledged it arguably remains under researched. Connell’s emphasis on hierarchy and hegemony, despite engagement with difference, continues to inform much of the ‘canon’ of hegemonic masculinity. That is, masculinities that are ‘dishonoured’ (subordinated) such as gay masculinities, marginalized masculinities (including raced and classed) are contrasted with ‘exemplary’ masculinities, including sporting masculinities that value heterosexuality and whiteness and other ‘valued’ signifiers of success including economic wealth and status and physical prowess that normalises able-bodiedness. More recent critiques, such as Anderson (2009) in the context of sport, argue that orthodox masculinities have diminished and given way to inclusive masculinities in relation to homosexuality. Nonetheless, men and boys continue to work at ‘appropriate masculinities’ that subordinate femininities and certain masculinities in their preservation of hegemonic positions. Different configurations of masculinity result in different aspects of visibility and invisibility both in terms of representations of available masculinities and via and through embodied articulations that reflect ‘acceptable’ (or otherwise) forms.

Models of multiple masculinities have come to dominate theorising masculinity, perhaps unsurprisingly as diversity is given greater and more detailed recognition. Ironically, despite their intention to embrace and account for difference emphasis on multiplicity can result in ‘new’ typologies being proposed where simply more attributes are categorised (Pascoe, 2012). Whilst typologies can usefully aid the organisation and analysis of data on masculinity studies, conceptually they may do little more than broaden or lengthen the list of characteristics associated with hegemony and can reaffirm binaristic accounts of hegemonic and non hegemonic forms. Butler’s (1993) assertion that gender is a process and a manifestation of repeated acts and iterations (performance) highlights how articulations of masculinity are not inevitable (as neither are those of femininity). However, (dominant) discourses are not necessarily disrupted as a result; when boys dance they do not automatically shift either the perceptions or the practices of masculinities. They may but they may not and the context of where and if this occurs in relation to gender dynamics, including masculinity and femininity, is more complex than simply looking ‘within’ masculinity.

Responding to a lack of theorising on femininities as a consequence of ‘over theorising’ masculinities in the context of hegemonic masculinity at least, Schippers (2007) argues for an emphasis on ‘hegemonic femininities’, to take the ‘feminine other’, recognised as missing from theories of hegemonic masculinity, (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2012) and to centre it much more firmly in our analysis of gender hegemony. This, Schippers argues, enables deeper examination of how femininities and masculinities are relationally positioned and consequently, informs assessments of how power relations and the distribution of resources occurs across masculinities and femininities. This is pertinent for a study of boys in cheerdance where boys are participating in girls’ terrain. Oppositional terms such as orthodox and inclusive (Anderson,
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(2009), despite efforts to move debates forward in meaningful ways, often re-inscribe other binaries that limit rather than expand our understanding of complex configurations of masculinity, including invisibility and visibility (Drury, 2012). Taking a more relational approach enables possibilities for examining the interplay of different articulations of power across and within masculinity, femininity and gender and we seek to advance this, in some small way, here. A relational approach in this context is useful for detailing configurations that are gendered and classed, particularly given our emphasis on ‘working class’ boys and they are racialised and interrelated with ability and disability, age and so forth, hence our engagement with thinking intersectionally.

Embodiment is crucial in exploring the ‘messiness’ of masculinities and femininities as articulated in dance and cheerdance. It may well be that boys are socialized into certain physical practices that involve certain competences in their use and expressions of physicality; it is hard to ‘undo’ the movements the body knows and relies upon although it is not impossible to move in different ways and to acquire new body competences (Wade, 2011). An interesting comment from Pascoe (2012) highlights the way in which masculinity studies is sometimes limited by its emphasis on male physicality and males bodies; again, whilst trying to unpack and destabilise taken for granted articulations there are dangers in associating male bodies with male power whereby the complex milieu of social and cultural circuits are paid insufficient attention and analyses of their significance can be lacking as a consequence. What we seek to do therefore is to start our analysis from the body rather than do research ‘on’ it (Crossley, 2007). Processes of embodiment were highlighted as significant for theorising gender from the 1990s on and in many ways the ground has been laid for sometimene for more nuanced ‘readings’ of embodied gendered expressions. However, researchers (ourselves included), as intimated at by Pascoe (2012) above, have not availed themselves of opportunities to explore this more thoroughly in relation to masculinity (Hearn, 2011; Messerschmidt, 2012; Villa, 2011; Watson and Scraton, 2013). Bodies matter, they are the lived expression of our gendered selves and are the material context on and through which social norms are manifest (Pascoe, 2012:12).

Physicality and masculinity (and femininity) ‘exists’ for different bodies in complex ways and dance is an insightful and exciting lens through which to explore and examine this; in dance the body is at once performing controlled movement that requires strength and skill and an aesthetic element which allows and requires the body to move creatively. We draw on Crossley’s (2007) use of ‘body techniques’, drawn from Mauss (1979), to explore boys embodied articulations of gender and class through cheerdance.

A focus upon body techniques allows us to consider the purpose, normativity and embodiment of action as those various aspects cohere in a unified structure (Crossley, 2007: p.81).

What we hope to advance through our discussion and analysis is a combination of conceptual and embodied understanding of masculinity through cheerdance, furthering relational and intersectional understanding.

Masculinity and dance: The limits of gender as our dominant conceptual framework

Risner (2007) usefully problematises links between sport and dance highlighting meta-narratives (regarding hegemonic and orthodox forms) that limit boys’ involvement. Sexuality arguably (and in some ways understandably) takes centre stage here (Risner, 2007; Burt; 1995; Gard, 2001) and reflects, conceptually, gender as the dominant discursive frame for reading and analysing masculinities more generally. Risner’s use of the term ‘heterocentric’ is useful in exposing the pervasive hetero-normativities associated with masculinity and dance. A result of this possible overemphasis on sexuality is that even when complexities and differences within masculinity are highlighted as significant we remain restricted by a frame that reproduces a gender-sexuality couplet ‘above’ other crucial factors; at once class and race are peripheral and often invisible.

In Physical Education (compulsory aspect of taught curriculum in U.K schools) heterocentricity remains a key constraining feature on perceptions of masculinity and physicality. Where there has been ‘encouragement’ into dance it is as an activity akin to sport, thus making it more acceptable to boys (Flintoff, 1991;
Gard, 2001; 2008). Arguably this does little more than reinforce hegemony and hierarchy regarding ‘honourable’ and orthodox forms of masculinity, positioning athleticism and aesthetic creativity as antithetical to one another, with athleticism visible and creative endeavour often silenced. This reproduces rather than challenges what Risner (2007) refers to as the ‘boy code’. Rodosthenous (2007) usefully argues that in dance the body is at once performing controlled movement that requires strength and skill and an aesthetic element which allows and requires the body to move creatively, not just as regimentally codified as is the often taken-for-granted premise of sport. Cheerdance challenges this separation of aesthetics and athleticism and in some ways ‘sits’ more comfortably with working class masculinities. We are intrigued to explore this through our work and involvement with DAZL boys.

Rodosthenous (2007) provides a rare discussion of working class masculinities and dance, in this instance focusing on dance theatre. Here, his discussion surrounding the ‘Billy Elliot phenomena’ (Billy Elliot the film was released in 2000 and the theatre/musical adaption opened in 2005), suggests increased visibility of working class masculinity in dance and opportunities for a ‘new physicality’. That said Rodosthenous tends to reify a ‘traditional’ notion of working class masculinity that, as will be examined in relation to data below, is a somewhat stereotypical categorisation. It is also highly significant that there is very little published (academically and policy wise) on class identity, masculinity and dance.

Arguably there is limited critical published material on working class communities in contemporary contexts (Sveinsonn, 2009) and there exists, certainly within the UK, a popular cultural view of a generalised, stereotypical misrepresentation of working class identity (Skeggs, 2005). Working class boys receive attention as failing in educational contexts and for being (potentially) criminalised, resulting in problematic and limiting constructions of masculinity (Bereswill and Neuber, 2011). These (still often rare) critiques add to research that aims to unravel the complex, intersectional nature of identity formation for boys and young men in urban areas (Archer and Yamashita, 2003). This informs our identification of the DAZL Boys as working class (described in methodology below).

Rodosthenous ties his explanation firmly to the representations offered by and through Billy Elliot of expressions of the ‘angry young man’ that is offered in reaction to family, community and state. That is, Billy draws on resistant ‘tough’ working class masculinity whilst at the same time making active decisions to pursue ballet as an interest and ultimately a career. What Rodosthenous does is expose expressions of athleticism as valid rather than automatically eschewed (in dance), ‘allowing’ opportunities for the ‘athletic musical’ to gain cultural and aesthetic value.

Risner (2007) highlights the central role that instructors play in disrupting dominant discourses of masculinity and dance. That is, instructors and choreographers need to be reflexive in their practice around the formation of expression and possibility for change. The dance educator is not an isolated individual and Ian, the Director of DAZL and the co-author here is a good case in point. He is of the community in which he works, lives and ‘breathes’ dance. He embodies a working class homosexuality that it would be difficult to evade in positioning the visibility of DAZL Diamonds and this is touched upon in some aspects of data analysis that follow. The role of instructors, albeit in a different dance context, is considered in one of the author’s research pieces elsewhere (Watson et al, 2013) and Ian’s identity and role in DAZL will also be given further consideration in contrasting different masculinities embodied by instructors (forthcoming).

Methodology
Arguably, ‘analysis’ of masculinity and dance occurs every time the researcher and the dance practitioner interact. It is from this research dynamic that we present ideas here rather than claiming a more formal approach. Qualitative data was generated through observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The research is ongoing (having begun in September 2012) and is ethnographic in nature with respect to how the researcher has gained access and acceptance within the DAZL ‘community’. The academic author works full time in a major Higher Education Institution (university) in the city; she is a recreational dancer but this does not extend into cheerdance.

Both the ‘academic’ and the ‘dancer’ regard the ‘location’ of the dance groups as entirely significant.
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to the findings that emerge. DAZL is located in the south of the city close to the centre and notable for including significant numbers of areas of deprivation. DAZL is housed, in an administrative and delivery sense, in a (historically) working class area where the population was involved in industrial, heavy and manufacturing based work (including no, low, and highly skilled trades). Participants, including Ian the Director and most of the Board are predominantly but not exclusively white and the Director was born, brought up, studied and ‘learnt’ to dance in this locality. We are mindful of generalising working class communities as deprived communities but it is worthwhile incorporating a description of the area offered by Ian as Director of DAZL (he is commonly asked to describe the context in which DAZL operate by journalists/media, policy makers and so on).

The DAZL Boys are from tough working class families on a council estate in south Leeds (…) The area is in the top 10% most deprived in the UK and faces the top 3% most health inequalities which sees a young person from South Leeds having a 12 year shorter life expectancy then a child from North Leeds 13 mile away or a 15 minute car journey to put this into perspective.

DAZL was established with youth and health funding and is now recognised as excellent in the delivery and development of effective health and participation based objectives, through the medium of dance. South Leeds is a multi ethnic area and commonly used references to ‘white working class communities’ are also problematic (Sveinsonn, 2009). At the time that data incorporated here was gathered the DAZL Boys were a group of 13, 11 white and 2 mixed heritage (British African-Caribbean). A significant number of the boys live in lone mother households and some with other extended family members (with female as head of household). The boys’ everyday lives are dynamic sites of gender, class and race and can contribute to further, future analysis of changing gendered identities.

What we focus on in this piece is how ‘working class’, albeit complex, is something that remains, for the most part, invisible in discussions of dance. We have very little empirical evidence on boys, class identities and dance and that in itself is telling. Themes for discussion here start with an outline of how boys are both visible and hyper-visible in cheerdance. Data are used from different collection methods and these are indicated when it is felt to be appropriate/important. Different aspects of DAZL boys’ embodied articulations in cheerdance are considered in the section that then follows. The third data section assesses the relational interplay of masculinity and femininity as described by participants and the chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the conceptual implications when we assess complex configurations of masculinity through a lens of cheerdance.

DAZL diamond boys: From invisible to ‘in yer face’

In conversation with Ian he said it was his idea to put together an all boys team. DAZL Diamond boys were established in 2004.

I said to C (female dance coach) that I wanted to set up an all boys’ team, that I wanted to do something different because I could see that I could do something really different with that, because I had a mixed team but I wanted to see what the boys would be like on their own. Like they could come up with moves and things you know that was about boys doing it in their own way. And I decided that the boys should have a go with pom [sparkly pom-poms, iconic symbol of cheerdance and cheerleading] and so it not just be girls who get to do pom, and C said ok, go for it, try it. And what I did was put them in for a competition as an all-boy’s group and I got them to have their poms hidden inside their sweatshirts, so you literally wouldn’t have known they had them, you couldn’t see them. And the routine was mainly hip-hop to start with, you know like street, urban styles so nothing too out of the ordinary for boys, and we had put in a middle section where it just exploded into a really fast tune and the boys ripped their sweatshirts off and they had like lycra gymnastics style suits on underneath and poms and it was completely amazing. The audience went totally wild, nobody had done anything like it. And then the judges, well the judges had never seen anything like it before either! I’ve still got the score sheet (I keep all the score sheets for all the teams from all the competitions) and it just says from one of the judges, like in big letters “Boys doing pom???????” like a total line of question marks, that said it all really!

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Ian frequently references the fact that DAZL Diamonds are still unique in challenging the invisibility of boys in cheerdance. He says,
When the boys only group in DAZL started there was nothing like them, there still isn’t. They’re the only all boys team there is. People said things like “Who does he think he is and what is he trying to achieve? This gay guy from Middleton, trying to get boys to do cheerdance, like is he trying to get them to all turn gay?” But it’s not about the gay thing, I mean it’s brilliant that people have to get over the gay thing but I wasn’t doing it for that reason. I wanted, I want boys to do cheerdance to change and challenge cheerdance as much as anything else. And to push myself as a coach and a choreographer because you have to come up with different ways of doing things.

On the whole, there has been resounding support from the local community that attracts hundreds of girls and boys to its mixed provision of hip-hop, cheerdance and some contemporary dance. Ian’s family (close and extended and DAZL based family!) and the parents of all participants at DAZL (not just the boys) regard the dance provision as a vital and valuable aspect of their children’s well being. DAZL was established initially to provide physical activity and exercise opportunities for girls who were not engaging in school P.E and/or were at risk from school exclusion completely. It may be claimed that dance is normalised for girls in ways that evidently is not the case for boys but class also has a significant role in shaping girls’ participation in and perceptions of attending ‘dance lessons’. The academic researcher was struck by this in some of her observations at a DAZL Diamond Boys session when some girls (also part of DAZL dance teams) were ‘heckling’ the boys outside the dance studio.

From research diary,

I was struck this evening by the very different connotations people have about ‘dance class’ and the spaces of say dance studios and ballet class. The boys were rehearsing and their concentration was waning (which is quite commonplace and suggests to me that they don’t concentrate for long at school or on other structured activities) when some of the DAZL girls started to distract them through the glass doors out into the corridor. The boys started to mutter about how the “bitches out there” were not letting them get on with rehearsal and a couple of boys stuck two fingers up and mouthed “fuck off” with what seemed like comedic effect rather than aggression. The girls simply did the same back, i.e. by sticking two fingers up and mouthing “fuck off yourself”.

In contrast to this, at the formal competitions, that is, away from the familiarity of school/rehearsal space and their known familiar locale, the girls and boys appear nothing but supportive of each other and the swearing and heckling one another is left behind ‘at home’.

Family perceptions of boys who participate in dance, particularly in relation to boys involved in cheerdance/pom suggest other elements of working class identities around loyalty and support. One of the Dads attending the competition was there with two of his sons who are both DAZL Diamond boys and he was wearing a t-shirt that said ‘Cheerdance Dad and Proud’. The majority of DAZL Diamond boys live in lone mother households and some also live with extended family members away from home due to various challenging circumstances (the detail of some of these is beyond the scope of this chapter yet are entirely pertinent to constructions of gender and class). Not all of the boys therefore have parental or family support that is so prevalent in middle class families regarding ‘self improvement’ through participation in the arts and sport. One of the boys was late to rehearsals one week and stated quite plainly “It’s not my fault, I had to meet my social worker”. Earlier that week the researcher had been chatting to one of the high school teachers at the school where the dance group is based and he had said, “It’s amazing really, there’s 3 of our worst behaved boys in the group. Amazing”

Shine bright like a (DAZL) diamond: Working class lads can bust some moves

DAZL Diamond boys regularly dance and train in dance related movement, however, as indicated, not in the sense that their body techniques and competences are acquired through middle class patterns of consumption. Expressions of body confidence and competence are therefore highly significant in shaping how body techniques are learnt and developed (Burt, 1995; Gard, 2008; Risner, 2007; Wade, 2011). Observation notes from research diary capture the context,

The boys are in their DAZL trackies (sweat pants) and red t-shirts. All but two of them have their names on their tracky bottoms. Some have trainers on and some have pumps. The pumps are not branded and those
that have trainers (two boys) are Nike but they are evidently very well worn and are not the new or most recent designs. These are not boys who have access to ‘flash gear’ for dancing. In fact it would appear that most of what they have to wear is provided by DAZL (even down to some of the pumps which Ian says he often buys ‘on block’ for competitions but knowing full well that they will be the shoes the boys need for more general use as well).

Some boys at DAZL Diamonds also participate in other sports in addition to their involvement in cheerdance. Through this they are used to performing different body techniques that can be associated with more orthodox forms of masculinity including rugby and boxing and immediately we can note a different reading of a sport/dance binary and where and how working class boys are visible and invisible. One boy who participated in these made connections to how in boxing and dance the emphasis is on being able to “move around fast and light on your feet”. This combination of seemingly very different configurations of embodied masculinity demonstrates how we can start from and draw on body techniques to explore masculinity and its complexities in further detail. This participant commented on physical strength that he brings to the all male dance group at DAZL and he knows he can be relied upon for lifting moves. Another commented on how who is seen as the “best” at particular moves will be encouraged to do them and said that here were certain moves or tricks that he didn’t see himself good at and did not feel under pressure to accomplish them. This resonates with a more inclusive type context in which boys do not always have to ‘prove’ themselves in terms of asserting specific forms of hegemonic masculinity associated with physical prowess. Nonetheless, DAZL boys participate in cheerdance competitions, commonly referred to by them and their instructors as ‘pom’ (because of hand-held pom-poms in routines), and also hip-hop teams and some boys participate in contemporary dance. It is as the all boys pom group that they are unique and they move across invisible and hyper-visible in this respect. Incorporating sport and dance, evident in their embodied expressions, prompts a greater range of opportunities for the accumulation of different types of capital through their ongoing negotiated working class and masculine visibility (Rodosthenous, 2007).

One aspect that many of the DAZL boys comment on (in focus groups, in interviews and through general conversation) is regarding having to ‘prove themselves’ however when they performed and/or competed in cheerdance. This is because they know it is perceived of as a feminine terrain; it makes demands of boys as dancers that they embody and are eager to accomplish. They are also evidently highly reflexive about their positioning and location in this feminine hegemony (Schippers, 2007) and this is given further attention in the next section.

**Boys in cheerdance: A context for examining relational aspects of masculinities and femininities**

In engaging with calls to employ a feminist imagination to more fully explain gender relations and to examine if, where and how we can talk meaningfully about feminine hegemony this section includes references made to girls and boys being ‘girly’ in dance. It also attends to if and where power appears as situated in circumstances that posit femininity as worth ‘more’ than its previous position, as ‘emphasised femininity’ alongside subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1995; Schippers, 2007).

DAZL Diamond boys regard their participation in a boys’ only context as a celebratory context for their masculinity. Whilst this has an implicit ‘different from girls’ theme it is very much about what boys can achieve in dance on their own terms as opposed to making comparative statements. This arguably contrasts with Risner (2007) and Gard (2008) in their calls for dance to be reconstructed as an alternative space for different expressions of masculinity. It points to why a more relational approach is critical in assessing hegemonic masculinities and femininities and indeed, to disrupt simplistic notions of hegemonic and non-hegemonic (Messerschmidt, 2012).

There are some interesting comments made in interviews regarding how DAZL Diamond boys regard their location in a girls’ activity. As Participant A says,

...but with our dance we try to put a bit of comedy in it as well, because it’s not very often where you see boys dancing like girls and stuff like that. So we go from having all this big hip-hop attitude to dancing like girls or walking and stuff...
Here it might be suggested that masculinity reflects a broader context of expressions for the boys, that expressions of femininity are acceptable and not automatically devalued (Connell, 2005). We need to retain a mindfulness about the specific context of DAZL dance. The boys in the group come, in the main, from lone mother households and they are in a dance organisation where they are a distinct minority as boys. When competing, in ‘pom’ in a hegemonic feminine environment their masculinity is hyper-vilisibised by its otherness. Girls are ‘experts’ in cheerdance in their eyes and as such can be accorded reverence and respect.

A comments further,

...like struttin’ and walkin’ like you’re ona catwalk. And then back to hip-hop attitude. And then in pom it’s all about...errmm...it’s all about jumps, turns technique. You’ve got to have a lot of stamina. You’ve got to have good stamina to do pom, which quite a lot of us don’t have, good stamina, so, and at the end, the end of dance we’re like (breathes heavily, everyone laughs) can’t breathe. So, but yeah, and you do all your facials, you pull different faces like smile, pout, wink and stuff like that. Girls work all that you know, it takes a lot of hard work to do it well

Evidently the boys have to adopt feminine body techniques to perform in pom. The quote indicates how different kinds of fitness are demanded by different styles of dance and that depending on the normalisation of certain body techniques some moves can be read as masculine or feminine and accorded a hegemonic position. Another boy (Participant L) in the same focus group responded to a question about how “behaving like a girl” made him feel. He said,

I think it’s funny. Coz you are boys and you know, you’re acting different when you do it.

And a further boy (Participant Ch) referring to A above says “...there’s a boy in our dance that does a girl, can be like a girl, so that’s comedy.”

Female judges act as gatekeepers regarding whether or not the boys involvement is accepted and taken seriously or not (see the comment from Ian in earlier sections on the score sheets). They are also coached by women (as well as by Ian) and the body techniques and all round knowledge of the dance form of the girls and women are held in high esteem. Alongside this, boys are willing to adopt feminine traits in order to present an ‘authentic’ version of cheerdance. They also embody this within broader frames of masculinity known and available to them, from friends and family, from the wider community and thus discursive practices and possibilities of gender potentially available (in a Butler type conceptualisation). Our claim is not so much that there is widespread acceptance of these (working class) boys in cheerdance, rather there are moments and indicators of different configurations of masculinity.

Participant L provides some interesting commentary on engaging in dance practice associated with discourses of femininity in popular culture,

I guess films that they dance seem girly because it’s all girls who do cheerleading in the films. So like, when you see all boys do it, it looks different. And it actually looks really good. Because you don’t expect boys doing it.

It would appear that the boys see this as broadening possibilities of masculinity rather than their role in diminishing certain feminine hegemonies. This is further illuminated in comments made by Ian about boys’ and girls’ views of boys in cheerdance.

The DAZL boys respect that the girls “naturally” (in dance) have an advantage over them but they play on the differences such as being able to switch from and between what is perceived as masculine and feminine characteristics throughout their routines. The boys are keen to win over the girls support and partly that is because they (the boys) admire girls’ flexibility and technique, they accept that they (the girls) do some things best. (Ian in conversation)

Whilst this reminds us that discourses of gender still rely on essentialist ‘natural’ differences, DAZL boys (and girls) reflect a sophisticated negotiation of this in relation to cheerdance. Another interesting comment from Ian is what the girls at DAZL think about the boys’ involvement.

From speaking to the girls they love watching the boys do “girlie” moves because this is the time when the boys lose all inhibitions and really go for it. Playing
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on the fact “we can be like you” (girls). Generally these sections are the best executed in terms of performance and projection because the boys work at femininity and masculinity at the same time. They are still “being boys” because they use their strength or more traditional “male” postures but they also do “girlie”. It’s amazing. (Ian in conversation)

Anderson’s (2005; 2009) research on men and cheerleading in the U.S suggests a site of inclusive masculinity. His findings are situated through his lens of diminished homophobia in sport and physical activity and so the focus of his argument remains rooted to sexuality. However, there are opportunities for us to draw on a broader notion of inclusive masculinity to indicate if and where different expressions of masculinity are viable and acceptable without the main indicator being sexuality.

One of the dad’s of the girls in a DAZL team who is also a longstanding family friend of Ian’s said “It’s a lot more open now, you know, it doesn’t matter what gender you are. A lot more boys are dancing, I think it’s great”. He is a man in his early fifties with two older daughters (and now he’s a grandfather) who has worked ‘in building’ all his life until his hands ‘got clawed’ from bricklaying and brick carrying and now he is a long distance truck driver. He grew up and lives where DAZL is based and had lots to say about the area, “I mean, without getting too deep, it has changed a lot. People are more open to gays, and that’s a good thing. Once upon a time, not that long ago, people wouldn’t have easily accepted Ian but now, they couldn’t care less [that he’s gay]”. His commentary moved in and out of the specifics of the dance group where now “everyone has a spray tan, even the boys!” to the changing community and work context of South Leeds “the jobs are not the same, boys, men, don’t go into heavy work like we did, there is no manufacturing.”

Diamonds are dazzling: Reframing our conceptual lens

This final section develops discussion of different expressions of masculinity and dance evident across the research with DAZL Diamond Boys presented here. We suggest the need to reframe and revisit questions regarding configurations of masculinity and to employ a feminist imagination more expansively to capture the nuances of these configurations. The anti-sport rhetoric central to Risner’s (2007) thesis requires a more nuanced reading rather than reproducing (and reconstructing) them as merely oppositional. Rather than claim ‘new’, alternative and/or inclusive masculinities we need to engage with articulations whereby working class sporty masculinity and involvement in (cheer-)dance are concurrent and simultaneous. A relational approach to masculinities and femininities is therefore helpful in examining how certain articulations of masculinity are invisible in practice as a result of power relations (Schippers, 2007).

Is the masculinity that is embodied through DAZL Diamond Boys non-hegemonic? There are certain codes and reference points that suggest there is something about masculinity that precedes engagement in activity, in particular cheerdance. However, this statement is offered in a cautionary manner, talking in terms of hegemonic and non hegemonic gendered social identities is somewhat limiting. In relation to Ian and DAZL Diamonds Boys, on one level it might be claimed that what the team, their practices and the boys themselves represent is transgressive, might even be regarded as an ‘ideal type’ for Risner (2007) and others. Glam, glitz, effeminacy are embodied in ways that undeniably broaden the perceptions and possibilities of masculinity available to the boys and perhaps beyond. That does not mean this is a risk free strategy for them because they are also products of meta-narratives of masculinity (Risner, 2007). These are locally and regionally positioned (Messer-schmidt, 2012) and in the case of DAZL Diamonds not all masculine relatives and significant others reflect a ‘dance is ok for boys’ rhetoric. What it does demonstrate is that we need to deconstruct a visible/invisible approach to different configurations of masculinity. Here we can only make claims about these disruptions occurring in cheerdance but arguably this approach could be applied to dance and working class masculinity more broadly (Rodosthenous, 2007).

Anderson’s (2009) conceptualisation of inclusive masculinities is helpful if we draw on the claims that sexuality is less of an issue rather than focus solely on say the acceptance of homosexuality. The obvious chain of explanation would thus be if you want to dance you must be gay and as males in dance is becoming more acceptable and has become popularised then it is acceptable to be gay (within dance). This does not really broaden our understanding of
masculinity that much and it does not engage with marginalised masculinities as opposed to say subordinated ones. What we see then is that a framework of hegemonic masculinity can in fact limit our analysis if we start from different categorisations as opposed to working from the messiness of embodied expressions of masculinity. If the boys who participate in cheer dance want to see it as sport, which Ian and those involved in DAZL state they do, then their bodily and social pleasures achieved through successful bodily techniques and value attached to winning cannot be denied (Wellard, 2007). We are limited by the lenses on masculinities and femininities that we have available.

What the DAZL Diamonds demonstrate is that ‘working class masculinities’ are changing, are complex and multiple and need further analysis of their particular manifestations in specific contexts. There may well be concerns about an ‘over romanticizing’ of the relative scope and possibilities of these expressions, that is, to accord them multiplicity is not automatically challenging or changing broader codes of masculinity that result in persistent marginalisation. However, to rely on and reproduce particular conceptualisations of masculinity can limit possibilities for real change. This is why we need to embrace further analysis of masculinities and femininities and to further unpack ‘hegemonic’ and ‘inclusive’ expressions, to approach them as relational in more nuanced ways. Dance offers a perfect opportunity to engage with this call and employing a more relational approach to gender conceptually can enable us to more fully examine what Pascoe (2012; p.164) calls “combined gender markers”. Working class masculinities as embodied and parodied by DAZL Diamond Boys are dynamic practices that demonstrate gender as performative and political, as well as politicised.

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References


Migrant construction labourers form a large part of the unorganised labour sector in India. Work contracts are short term and labourers are compelled to move frequently. Contractors supply labourers based on their skills, usually sourced from adjacent states or states where the skills are localized or where the contractors themselves come from. These workers remain largely anonymous and interchangeable at the sites at which they work and they do not stay in one place long enough to build significant relationships. In most cases they do not speak the local language to build social ties that would give them a sense of belonging. In addition, as most of them are young men, they are often considered to be wild, rootless, and recently, to be aggressors against young women in the cities.

Muthu (26) and Shaktivir (21) are friends from the same village who at the time had been working for ten years of which the last six had been in Bangalore. They come from agricultural families that hire the land they cultivate. A need to make more money than what they would have back at home, compelled them into this occupation. They found themselves all over the place in the first six months but then they found a mestri (contractor) for whom they have been working ever since. They go home four or five times a year for about six days and travel by train and bus. They stay in the watchman’s shed (there are eight of them) and find no difference working from one site to another. They work only on constructing houses, as that’s what their mestri deals with. They spend about a year on each site.

They work from eight thirty in the morning till six in the evening and break for an hour for lunch. They cook their own food and make lunch along with breakfast and then cook again at night.

When they first came here they brought nothing with them. All they had was the clothes on their back. They buy things for their home back in the village. They’ve bought TVs, radios and tape recorders. They do not buy things for themselves because they know they will not settle down anywhere. They keep themselves unburdened by keeping their possessions minimal. The less there is to lose the easier it is. They will marry whomever their parents want them to and they need to save money for that. They speak about their fears, about being afraid of going out in the dark, of also feeling vulnerable to violence committed against ‘outsiders’.

Their notion of change isn’t in moving from one site to another but real change is in having left home and not being able to develop roots where they live, leading to feeling that their lives here are in suspension and not quite their ‘real lives’. Adding to their own state of suspension is that as migrant construction labourers they exist in spaces hidden from sight yet often, in full public view. Their work is particular in being ironic, while the completion of a house they have worked on is the start of a new dwelling for the owner, this completion means another displacement of the meagre, temporal dwellings of these building nomads.
Don’t drop the soap: The reality behind a quip

Jenn S. Garnett
New Zealand

Abstract
Rape in prison is a long abused punch line of the big and little screen alike. No explanation is needed to the quip that title’s this piece, so widespread is the fact of prison rape in the social awareness. Yet in spite of that awareness, it remains an often ignored reality of the prison experience. This piece looks at the history of sexual violence and the focus third wave feminism brought the issue, going then into the specifics of male prison rape and its worldwide prevalence. Because of the high incidence and large academic focus of prison rape within the United States of America, much of the conversation that follows is centred around the US and its prisons. Looking at the issue in the context of prison culture and its exaggerated masculinity a gendered understanding of prison rape is offered. Finally, there is a discussion of responses to prison rape, both at a domestic and international level, with suggestion that the issue be reframed to be understood in the context of systemic rape.

Introduction
As the name of this collection indicates, the male victims of sexual assault are socially invisible. It is a known but unacknowledged part of society that if ever spoken about is reduced to colloquial quips not to “drop the soap”. To use another’s words to make my point: “in short we render male victim rape invisible, or at least un-articulable” (Capers, 2011, p. 1259). In a paradoxical state, men who are victims of prison sexual assault are both visible and invisible to us. They are invisible in the same way that all male victims of sexual assault are invisible victims, but their visibility comes with the fact that rape within male prisons is an “open secret” (Bourke, 2007, p. 331). That rape is part of a prison experience is a largely taken for granted fact of modern penalty, at least in some countries. Though a universal issue, some countries experience this more endemically than others. In light of this fact, much of the following discussion will focus upon the issue of prison rape within the context of the United States of America (U.S.). Furthermore, due to the scope of the project, the following discussion will focus solely on male prisoners and sexual victimisation it should not be assumed that prison rape is a solely male issue. While there are fewer studies on the issue there is clear evidence that sexual assaults in female prisons is a real and prevalent issue (see; Struckman-Johnson et al, 1996; Alarid, 2000; Struckman-Johnson et al, 2002; Hensley, Castle, & Tewksbury, 2003), with varying and significant consequences for the victims.

Many texts dealing with the issue of prison rape begin by recounting rather graphic details of prison rape (see: Capers, 2011; Wooden & Parker, 1982), largely, one would assume, to show the true brutality of the act and the desperation of the victim. While these accounts undoubtedly convey this, what struck me as more telling of the situation of rape within male prisons was an article in The Guardian. With the alarming title Is the US the only country where more men are raped than women?, Jill Filipovic (2012) goes on to argue against the title question, while still conveying the appalling state of sexual violence in U.S male prisons. In an insightful way Filipovic describes the reality of prison rape, its prevalence and the subcultural context that enables and demands its continuation. But more than that, she speaks of the apathy with which the issue is met by the general public: “They’re just men we don’t care so much about, or that society has decided deserves it” (Filipovic, 2012, p. 2).

The sentiment behind the apathy is almost as troubling as the issue itself, that there are some victims who are deserving of our time, and some who are not.
In a very real way this divides our community down a line. We are either all one society in which it is never okay to sexually or physically violate a person’s body, or we need to accept that we will never be free of rape of any kind. It is with a discussion of the wider issue of sexual violence that we begin this discussion. The first section looks at the third wave feminism of the 1970s and their focus on sexual violence that brought the issue to the fore of social discussion. Reframing the issue from one of sex to one of violence, the issue of sexual assault and rape were framed in terms of a larger gendered interaction between men and women. A discussion of masculinity and femininity, with relation to patriarchy, frames the discursive approach to sexual violence that follows. Section II will look at the specifics of prison rape, detailing international comparison of prevalence rates where they are available. Though a universal issue, those researching the problem of prison rape have mostly focused on the U.S. prison system in what is likely a reflection of their high prevalence rates. As a result, much of the conversation that follows section II primarily focuses on U.S. facts and literature. Section III looks at the role prison rape plays within the prison subculture, along with discussing and framing this subculture in the context of exaggerated masculinities found within prison institutions. How rape feeds into the establishment of gender hierarchies and the specific typologies of those victimised will also be discussed. Section IV offers details about what has been done to combat prison rape on a U.S. domestic level, as well as international treaties and advocacy groups that have engaged with the issue in attempts to change the reality of prison rape. The potential issues of some of these measures are discussed, along with a possible reframing of the issue within the context of systemic rape (an issue currently only considered in terms of rape in conflict) and the international discourse that currently exists around the issue.

While attempts have been made to be as inclusive as possible, the research included should not be considered an exhaustive example of work in this area. Key early works in the area of sexual violence (such as Brownmiller, 1984 and Naffine, 1997) and specifically prison sexual violence (such as Struckman-Johnson, et al., 1996 and Knowles, 1999) were included alongside a survey of the more recent journal articles.

Section I – Rape defined

As a human universal (Brown, 1988) rape has been a constant, yet often silent, part of ‘civilised’ societies. The act of rape is complex for a multitude of social and political reasons, but the issue of definition compounds that complexity. No single definition of rape is available, and those that exist often contradict one another (Bourke, 2007). Rape is not just a physical fact, embodied in the act itself, but also a social and cultural one which shifts and changes as cultures do. While victims of rape are predominantly female (for a discussion see: Russell, 1984; Spitzberg, 1999) it was not until the 1970s that attention was paid to the female victim and rape was framed as anything beyond an act of sex and property degradation. The feminist movement gave voice to the victims of rape, arguing that rape was a mechanism of patriarchal control over women that manifested not just in the violence of the act but through the constant threat and fear of rape (see: Brownmiller 1984; Griffin, 1971; Horvath & Brown, 2009; Naffine, 1997; Mardorossian, 2014; Walklate, 2013).

In its infancy, the issue of sexual violence was framed in essentialist and polarised terms with sexual violence a mechanism “by which all men keep all women in a state of fear” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 5). Rape is understood as an explicit violent expression of the implicit violent relationship that exists between the sexes. Put another way, rape is not an aberration of the traditional gender relations, but rather a clear example of the violence and inequality that forms the foundation of gendered interactions within patriarchal social order (Naffine, 1997). The act of rape and all sexual violence is purposeful and intended as a means of maintaining the system from which it derives. Within patriarchy (see: Lewontin, Rose & Kamin, 1984; Walby, 1997) masculinity is dominant, with sexual violence aimed at “maintaining male supremacy, through intimidation and abuse” (Delzotto & Jones, 2002, p. 2). That is not, however, to say that within this system all men are equally supreme. There is an ideal masculinity to which all others who fall short of the definition are subordinated. Discussed in terms of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) the ideal male archetype has no one definition, but rather can be contorted to fit any dominant group. For example, within prison the hegemonic male is
the “wolf” that dominates another man sexually, a definition of hegemonic masculinity that would not translate well beyond the prison system. What does remain the same, however, is the fact that there will always be a hegemonic masculinity in some form; within patriarchy there must always be the alpha male. While there may be no set definition of hegemonic masculinity, it is likely to follow prevailing social patterns, with gender inequality rarely existing in isolation. As such the dominant male is likely to reflect racial and social inequalities prevalent in the culture, for example hegemonic masculinity in the U.S. “accentuates male dominance, heterosexism, whiteness, violence and ruthless competition” (Sabo, Kupers, & London, 2001, p. 5).

Though masculinity exists in a hierarchy, with hegemonic masculinity at the top and all others subordinate to this, it does not exist in isolation. Gender is not a constant independent state, but rather is most often constructed as a dichotomy. Masculinity exists in contrast to femininity, with those attributes assigned to a woman often traits considered “unsuitable in a man” (Naffine, 1997, p. 95). Feminine is weak to masculine’s strong, powerless to its powerful and vulnerable to its security. While these are the ideals, it is important to note that gender is not constrained to these polarised binaries in every person all the time and in every situation. Gender is a continuum, but one that is always constructed in terms of these two contrasting sets of traits (Naffine, 1997). Patriarchy is, however, a double-edged sword. In prizing those attributes that are highlighted as masculine, patriarchy is also defining those things that a man may not be. In ascribing men with the virtues of strength and domination (see: Kimmel, 1996; Messner, 2003; Tarrant, 2013), the definition of what it is to be a man cannot bend enough to encompass the male victim. A ‘real’ man is not a victim, as they possess the strength to repel any attempt upon their physical integrity (Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Weiss, 2008). In keeping with the dichotomy of gender, to define men and their bodies as impenetrable is to assign the contrary to women; the female body is “penetrable and women are treated as destined to have their bodily integrity shattered” (Doherty & Anderson, 2004, p. 97). To be victimised is to be feminine, and thereby to have negated the construction of what it is to be a man. Fundamentally a man who is a victim of any violence, let alone a victim of sexual violence, has failed the standards defined for a man in hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Weiss, 2008).

The definition of masculinity is not alone in precluding the male rape victim. Prior to the recent turn of the century, most legal definitions constructed rape as a crime perpetrated by a man against a woman: the legislation often gendering the language by using ‘he’ to define perpetrator and including references to the penetration of vagina with a penis to identify the offensive acts. This language and construction of sexual violence is prominent in the legislation of England & Wales, (Sexual Offences Act 2003, Chapter 42, Part 1), New Zealand (Crimes Act 1961, s. 128(2)) and Northern Ireland (The Sexual Offences Order 2008, Part 2, 5 (1) a). There has however been a significant shift at a federal level in the U.S. in its legal definition of rape with U.S. Code § 920 Article 120 removing gendered language and the definition of rape in terms of sexed genitalia. Change does not happen overnight, however, with numerous US States still defining rape in the traditional, to greater or lesser degrees, male aggressor/female victim dichotomy (for example see: GA ST §16-6-1; ID ST§18-6101; LA RS §14:42; MD Code §3-303; NC ST§14-27.2). Though legal definitions allow for sexual violence against men to be recognised as sexual violation, men are not able to legally claim themselves a victim of rape. This may seem an issue of semantics, however in being denied the legal status of rape victim, men are also denied the social recognition that accompanies this term. They do not have the same facilities available to support them in the aftermath of the assault, and they are even excluded from international human rights conventions combating sexual violence (Stemple, 2009).

The absence of the male victim is reflected in the academic focus of most authorship on the subject of sexual violence. Until recently the issue of sexual violence was framed in terms of gender but in reality dealt with the issue of sex, an ironic conflation given the pains many took to differentiate these terms in social consciousness. The terms “gender” and “sex” are not interchangeable, with the latter a biological term denoting anatomy and the former a solely social construction (see: Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002; Kimmel, 2000). The importance of these distinctions
goes beyond mere semantics and sociological faux pas. Using a sex specific approach to understanding rape can prove dangerous, contributing to the perception of differences, and that these difference are a natural rather than social construction (Kapur, 2005; Stemple, 2009). Furthermore, a sex specific definition of sexual violence places men and women alike in essentialist and deterministic positions: women constantly constructed as the victim and men exclusively cast as the aggressor, negating any possibility of a reversal of roles (Stemple, 2009). Though the role of female as sexual aggressor is rare it is not unheard of, such as in the case of the sexual violence at Abu Ghraib in which one of the perpetrators was a female soldier (Petchesky, 2005), or the sexual violence orchestrated at Omarska Prison Camp in which female guards took part in the sexual abuse and humiliation of male prisoners (Helsinki Watch, 1993).

To discuss rape in a gender rather than sex-specific way does not mean disregarding the role patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity play. Rather it is to recognize gender and sex as two discrete categories and that to be feminine you do not need to be biologically female, nor to be masculine biologically male. To rape is to express violence and domination definitive of hegemonic masculinity as patriarchy understands it, but it does not necessarily translate that to rape you must be a male:

‘Men’ are not rapists. Some men are. A few women are. People choose their ‘coming into being’ from within a range of discursive practices circulating within their historical time and place. Their choices construct themselves as speaking subjects. (Bourke, 2007, p. 13)

Section II – Prison rape

In spite of limited academic and political attention paid to rape and sexual violence in prison this “dreadful degradation” was noted as early as 1826 (Katz, 1976, p. 27). Even with the early recognition, sexual victimization within prison has gone largely unnoticed (Jones & Pratt, 2008, p. 280). This trend of neglect has however begun to reverse, with the issue of prison rape gaining legislative attention in the United States with the passage of the Prison Rape Elimination Act in 2003 (PREA), and academic research reengaging with the issue (Miller, 2010; Smyth, 2011; Weiss, 2008). Though prison rape is discussed as a universal issue (Gilligan, 2000; Stemple 2009), and there would be few in Western society unfamiliar with the meaning behind the quip “don’t drop the soap”, worldwide prevalence rates pale in comparison to the United States. A study considered a “reliable baseline” (Dumond, 2003, p. 355) reports 22-25% of prisoners are victims of sexual pressure and that 10% are victims of rape (Struckman-Johnson, et al., 1996, 2000). This is a figure mirrored in other work, with Messerschmidt (2001) arguing that 1 in 5 male inmates were victims of rape. Yet other research has concluded prevalence of sexual harassment and assault was as high as 28%, with the longitudinal study finding 2000 sexual assaults occurred over a period of 26 months (Robertson, 1999). It is an ‘epidemic’ (Davis, 1968) in the U.S prison system to such an extent that “the constant refrain of prison is sodomy” (Pinar, 2001, p. 1069).

Of course with such a controversial, and some might argue subjective subject, there has been research which indicates a far smaller prevalence rate (Fleisher & Krienert, 2005; Robertson, 2002). This variance in findings and prevalence rates can be explained in terms of methodological differences; style of research, interviews versus surveys, and the definitional framework used to define what rape or sexual violence was, along with differences in time periods reviewed and the priorities of researchers (for a discussion see: Miller, 2010; O’Donnell, 2004). For example a facility that found no incidences of sexual violence was also on 24-hour lockdown, thereby not allowing the contact between prisoners necessary to facilitate assaults (O’Donnell, 2004). The perspective of the researcher can also heavily impact the research findings. Helpfully dubbed *It Ain’t Happening Here*, research conducted by Mark Fleisher and Jessie Krienert (2005) found low levels of sexual predation in prison, however, Fleisher’s “approach and conclusions seem to be influenced by his belief that prior researchers did not understand the context of corrections as clearly as he did” (Thompson, 2009, p. 128).

Even assuming the lower prevalence rates recorded were more accurate, though evidence suggests they are not, they would of course only be the tip of the metaphoric iceberg. Most studying the issue contend that prison rape is highly underreported (Dumond, 2003; Hensley, 2002; Struckman-Johnson...
& Struckman-Johnson, 2000; Struckman-Johnson, et al., 1996). Even when compared with crimes that themselves have large dark figures (such as rape in the general population) prison rape remains highly underreported (Dumond, 2003; Thompson, 2009). Very little research has been done on male sexual victimisation, possibly due to the acknowledgment that women are more likely to be sexually victimised than men (Baumer et al., 2003; Hodge & Cantor, 1998). The research that does exist, parallels almost identically female rationales (see: Bachman & Taylor, 1994; Baumer et al., 2003) for not reporting sexual assaults, primarily amongst them fear, shame and stigmatisation (Anderson, 1982; Levan Miller, 2010; Scarce, 1997). While these reasons for underreporting are found in accounts of prison victimisation, the issue is further complicated by prison itself. In research investigating perceptions for underreporting in prison, Levan Miller (2010) found that embarrassment, fear of retaliation and fear of harassment were the three dominant reasons for not reporting sexual violence.

While empirical data from other nations is lacking, there are qualitative accounts that suggest that, while not as prevalent, prison rape and sexual violence is not isolated to the United States (Stemple, 2009). In surveying the South African prison system Gear and Mgubeni (2003) found accounts of rape being used as a mechanism to establish gender hierarchies. Due to male victims gaining legal recognition only recently prevalence data is unavailable, however, the reported purpose behind sexual violence would imply that it is not an infrequent event. Research in the United Kingdom has suggested low prevalence levels (O’Donnell, 2004), with some research finding no accounts of sexual violence in prison populations (Power, et al., 1991). Those that reported findings of sexual violence found levels as low as 0.3% (McGurk, et al., 2000) with higher prevalence rates recorded not exceeding 2-3% (Edgar et al, 2003; Strang, et al., 1998). These low prevalence rates are mirrored in New Zealand. Though no academic research has been conducted, Professor Greg Newbold (2007) reports hearing only 2 incidents of prison rape during his 5-year period of incarceration in the 1970s. While recognising that the issue has not been systematically analysed, Newbold offers some possible explanations for the lack of rape within New Zealand’s prison system:

...shorter sentences, smaller prisons, less oppressive penal environment, high numbers in minimum security with access to home leave, and a general ethic of egalitarianism that prevails in New Zealand generally, as well as in its penal establishment. (Newbold, 2007, p. 164)

While his period of incarceration was more than 40 years ago now, there is a general consensus in the academic community that this picture remains the same. Given the commonalities that can be found between New Zealand and the United States prison inmate subculture (Winfree, Newbold & Tubbs, 2002), this difference is striking, and one that deserves further investigation.

Section III – Prison, subculture and rape

Prison subculture is the best example modern society has of the Hobbesian construction of humans left to their natural state. In Leviathan (1651) Hobbes declared that life was to be a “solitary, nasty and brutish existence”. As prevalence rates indicate, existence in U.S. prisons is most assuredly brutish, but to an extent beyond what even Hobbes could have foreseen. Violence and sexual domination are the foundation of inmate social interaction, where those who do not fit the idealized mould of masculinity are destroyed (Knowles, 1999; O’Donnell, 2004). The strong cultural association between masculinity and sexual aggression, dominance and violence are well established (Connell, 1995; Messerschmidt, 1993) and are a perfect vehicle for inmates to establish their masculinity. That male prisons are bastions of distorted and exaggerated reproductions of hegemonic masculinity is evident in research on the institutions (Hua-Fu, 2005; Robinson, 2011; Sabo, Kupers, & London, 2001). Beyond the violence of masculinity is the more insidious sexual tone this violence takes within the U.S. prison system. Though a universal issue, no other prison system worldwide boasts numbers as high as the U.S.: both in terms of incarceration rates, or prevalence rates of sexual violence. Taken in that context the “scope of the abuse is profound” (Stemple, 2009, p. 608) and clearly an intractable part of an inmate’s life in the institution.

Sexual violence is a guiding principle in the construction of gender hierarchies, and through that status, within U.S. prisons. As with civilian popula-
tions sexual violence in prison highlights the gender relationship of masculine and feminine through the violent domination of one by the other. As is true of all sexual violence, rape in prison involves the expression of power, control and domination (Gear & Ngubeni, 2003; Knowles, 1999; O’Donnell, 2004; Rideau & Wikberg, 1994; Stemple, 2009). The significance of this is clearly evident in the comments and accounts of a self-proclaimed rapist:

I had the guy so frightened I could have made him do anything that I wanted. I didn’t have an erection. I wasn’t really interested in sex. I felt powerful, and hurting him excited me. Making him suck me was more to degrade him than for my physical satisfaction. (Groth & Burgess, 1980, p. 32)

Encapsulated in this prisoner’s flippant remarks about his sexual assault is the reality of rape. Rape and sexual violence are not about the sexual act, or at least not solely about the act, but rather are about the domination of one person (or people) through the submission of another.

In one important way prison rape diverges from a traditional understanding of rape. Within a wholly male population, prison rape assumes the role of not just controlling but also creating the feminine. Through the violence of sexual assault, a process known in common prison vernacular as “turning out”, the victim is emasculated through the humiliation and subordination (O’Donnell, 2004; Knowles, 1999; Thompson, 2009; Wooden, et al., 1982). Victimization and vulnerability are attributes considered feminine in nature and so, through forcing these attributes onto male inmates, rapists are stripping the victim of their masculinity and supplanting it with femininity. Simone de Beauvoir, a prodigious feminist of the 20th Century, argued that “one is not born a woman, but, rather becomes one” (2009, p.52). Though likely never intended for this purpose, prison rape embodies de Beauvoir’s argument. With the violent sexual domination of an inmate, the victim is transformed socially into a woman:

A fifteen-year-old stood no chance at Atmore...Prisoner and warder were against him and he was quickly made into a woman. (Patterson & Conrad, 1950, p.79-85)

The acts of sexual violence play into a ‘sexual script’ that has the victims cast in the role of the kid/punk and assuming the feminine gender archetype, while the rapist is the jocker/stud considered embodying all traits masculine (Wooden et al, 1982). The dominating and gendering nature of rape can be found in Catherine MacKinnon’s statement “Man fucks woman. Subject verb object” (1982, p. 124). “To fuck” is to be a man, and “to be fucked” is to submit yourself, either voluntarily or through force, to the position of the submissive, of the feminine. Within the prison subculture of hyper-masculinity and violence and rape, the gender hierarchy created is the framework that defines who is abused and who is abuser.

While the gender dynamics within prison are clearly malleable, with the act of sexual violence men are being made into women, they are also fundamentally essentialist. Masculinity is a state inmates inhabit wholly, or not at all. Reviewing inmate interviews, Lockwood (1980) found a common belief that masculinity could be taken and, once lost, it could not be regained: “the victim of sexual assault suffers a permanent loss of masculinity” (p. 80). While this sense of emasculation experienced by male victims of sexual assault is not unique to inmates (Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Weiss, 2008) the consequences of being emasculated and constructed as a ‘woman’ are profound for those raped in prison. Beyond the original incidence of rape the victim is likely to experience a prolonged period of indenture to his aggressor (Knowles, 1999; O’Donnell, 2004), with the rape simply “the first act in what is often a lengthy drama of conquest and control” (O’Donnell, 2004, p. 244). Once an inmate is victimized and cast in the role of ‘woman/punk/kid they are likely to be repeatedly assaulted (see: Struckman-Johnson, et al., 1996) for once lost masculinity cannot be reclaimed, once gained femininity cannot be rejected.

Masculinity exists as a reflection of femininity, and vice versa. That is not say that they are mirror images, but rather that they are defined in reference to one another. Masculinity and femininity are seen as opposites of each other; the construction often framed with masculinity everything that femininity is not. Without women and the polarity of femininity to give the masculine world meaning, a man would have trouble constructing his male identity (Sykes, 1958). The distorted and exaggerated expectations
of masculinity within prison, institutions that are “crucibles of masculinity” (O’Donnell, 2004, p. 241), demand femininity within the social structure. Characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity are reified in prison (see: Bowker, 1998; Jewkes, 2005). An ironic consequence of hegemonic masculinity’s hetero-normative approach to sexuality is that prison rape exists within an environment of rampant homophobia (O’Donnell, 2004; Knowles, 1999). As most predators in prison identify as heterosexual (King, 1992; O’Donnell, 2004), the irony is possibly unclear to the aggressor, but the homophobia prevalent amongst rapists likely exacerbates the violence involved in the rape, so that there can be no confusion as to the sexual orientation of the rapist.

In discussions of rape beyond the prison context, few would be willing to define a typology of the rape victim. However, in prison those who are likely to be victimised can be easily identified. In keeping with the hyper-masculinity of prison, those most vulnerable to sexual violence are overwhelmingly, “nonviolent, first time offenders who are small, weak, shy, effeminate, and inexperienced in the way of prison life” (Stemple, 2009, p. 609).

The consistency with which victims conform to this archetype is even recognized by judges:

[It is well-documented in both scholarly literature and reported judicial opinions that young, slight, physically weak male inmates, particularly those with ‘feminine’ physical characteristics, are routinely raped, often by groups of men. (Riccardo v Rausch, 375 F.3d 521, 536 (7th Cir. 2004)]

Unsurprisingly, it is minorities who are overrepresented as victims. Inmates suffering mental illness or developmental disorders alongside those who identify as gay or transgender are recognized as being particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual violence (Donaldson, 1993; Peek, 2003; Tarzwell, 2006; Thompson, 2009). Within the context of the role hegemonic masculinity plays in the subculture of prison and prison rape, the victimization of gay and transgender individuals is unfortunately to be expected. The victimization of inmates with mental illness and developmental disorders can also be understood within the hetero-normative construct of prison life, with the vulnerability inherent in these inmates being equated with femininity and easily taken advantage of by predatory inmates. However, one risk factor associated with increased vulnerability to sexual victimization that cannot be as readily explained via hegemonic masculinity is race. Though it is widely recognized that black men are disproportionately represented in U.S. prisons (Alexander, 2012), those that are vulnerable to victimization are overwhelmingly white inmates (Bowker, 1980; Crowe, 2005; Knowles, 1999; Lockwood, 1980; Starchild, 1990). As mentioned above, the traits prized in hegemonic masculinity are not simply the physical traits of violence and domination but also the physiological trait of race, more specifically the white race. As such the victimization of white inmates does not fit within the mould of hegemonic masculinity that racially idealizes white above black. Some theorists have attempted to understand this in the context of the strained racial history between these two groups (Knowles, 1999; Pinar 2001). Pinar (2001) has gone as far as to say that “prison rape reflects, captures something essential about, racial politics and violence in America” (p. 1014). A discussion of the racial intersection of sexuality and masculinity is beyond the scope of this article, but further discussion is offered in Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson’s book Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America (1993), and Abby L Ferber’s article The Construction of Black Masculinity: White Supremacy Now and Then (2007).

Section IV – What next?

With the reality of prison rape laid bare, the next logical step is to question what can, or should, be done about it. Much of what is done about an issue depends upon how it is framed. Third wave feminism of the 1970s saw the issue of sexual violence brought to the fore of the social conscience (Brownmiller, 1975; Griffin, 1971). The transformation in public opinion, however slow that may be, that accompanied the attention on sexual violence seems to have extended right up to the prison walls, but no further. Once the discussion of sexual violence moves within the confines of prison institutions, there is a troublingly overt acceptance that rape is simply par for the course (Ristroph, 2006; Robertson, 2003; Thompson, 2009). More troubling still is that rape
is not simply grudgingly accepted as an unfortunate outcome of prisons, but often constructed as a consequence that the prisoner should suffer for transgressing against the law (Dumond, 2003; Eigenberg, 1989; Wooden et al, 1982). In response to the convictions of Enron Chairman, Kenneth Lay, then California Attorney General, Bill Lockyer, remarked that he “would love to personally escort Lay to an eight-by-ten cell that he could share with a tattooed dude who says, ‘Hi, my name is Spike, honey’” (Sigler, 2005, p. 563). Though not spelled out, this high-ranking proponent of California’s legal system is not just admitting his knowledge of prison rape, but endorsing it as a fair punishment for financial crimes. In addition to these flippant remarks are the responses that prisoners reporting rape are met with. In the introduction to their book *Men Behind Bars* (1982) Wooden & Parker recount the violent victimization of “Barry”, a seventeen-year-old small statured white male in prison for assault and robbery. During a classification hearing to deal with Barry’s victimization he was informed by a staff member “I don’t feel sorry for you. You’re getting what you deserve” (1982, p. 2).

Barry’s experiences, both that of violence and the prison official’s reaction, are far from uncommon. Those victimized are easily identifiable, to the extent that there are efforts in certain prisons to segregate those most vulnerable to victimization (Dolovich, 2011). Taken in concert with the sheer volume of people victimized, prison rape and sexual violence is clearly a foreseeable harm. In light of that fact, there is a responsibility for the state to intercede on behalf of the prisoner to prevent the harm from occurring. All citizens, including those incarcerated, have a right to live free of harm inflicted by others (Morse, 1996). Whether the right is negative, something that you have a right to be free of, or positive, something that you are owed, there is always a duty placed upon another party to provide for this right. The right not to be unjustifiably harmed by others carries with it a duty to protect; and in this case the duty falls upon the state: “The state has a duty to protect victims from such harm which would in itself be an attack on their rights” (Glazebrook, 2010, p. 91).

This duty of protection owed all citizens, is accompanied by specific duties that the state owes prisoners due to their incarceration. As society has chosen incarceration as punishment for offences, the state then owes prisoners a duty of care while they are imprisoned. Alternately defined by Dolovich (2009) as the “carceral burden” – the price society pays for choosing to incarcerate – the duty of care owed prisoners while incarcerated is based on the need to protect and provide for inmates within an innately dangerous environment. A fact of incarceration is that the prisoner becomes wholly dependent upon the state for almost everything. In many ways this dependency infantilizes the prisoners, removing from prisoner control those things which general society takes for granted, such as where and with whom you sleep or when and what you eat. It is no secret that prisons are caustic and exceedingly dangerous places (Dolovich, 2009; Gilligan, 2001) to the extent that James Gilligan (2001) has defined them as “abnormal, violent, pathogenic, traumatizing, brutalizing, and dehumanizing environments” (p. 119). It is through placing prisoners in an environment known to be dangerous, while removing almost all personal autonomy, that the state creates the obligation to keep the prisoner safe (Dolovich, 2009).

The duty owed prisoners is starting to be recognized, with the U.S. government taking steps towards standardizing rape prevention and treatment in the Prison Rape Elimination Act 2003. Calling for a zero-tolerance standard towards rape in prison, the Act introduced national standards for:

> Detection, prevention, reduction and punishment of prison rape; increased data on the incidence; standardization of definitions for collecting data; a system that holds prison officials accountable to detect, prevent, and punish prison rape; and a reduction in the costs of prison rape on interstate commerce. (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004, p. 3-4)

This is a significant, if long overdue, first step. However, implementation is likely to run into the same problems that researchers met when trying to trespass on a closed and very private institution. There is an overarching belief by correctional administration that sexual violence is not an issue within their prisons (Bell et al., 1999; Hensley et al., 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Moster & Jeglic, 2009). Given it is at the discretion of administrators as to who can
access the prison and its inmates (Moster & Jeglic, 2009), the failure of administration to recognize the pervasive and systemic nature of prison rape undermines any political efforts to alleviate the issue. Additionally, the administration's view on the issue will impact upon the willingness of guards to engage with the issue on the ground level. The only strategy based on empirical data (Eigenberg, 2000) indicates that the most effective strategies to prevent and treat prison rape require a high level of guard participation (Stuckman-Johnson, et al., 1996). However, nothing can be done about a problem no one is willing to look for, and while research (Eigenberg, 2000) indicates that guards are aware of the reality of prison rape and assert they would stop violations they became aware of, there is a wide base of anecdotal evidence that contradicts these findings. In discussing the issue of prison rape, a state corrections official stated “regrettably, [rape] is a problem of which we are happier not knowing the true dimensions” (Mariner, Herivel & Wright, 2003, p. 233). That prisons operate as a “one of underenforcement” (Casper, 2011, p. 1270) likely feeds into this willingness to turn a blind eye. Of course, there are reasons beyond administrative disinterest that may affect how prison guards deal with sexual violence.

With the overly litigious nature of the U.S., prison guards have to be concerned with possible legal repercussions to recognizing rape and sexual violence. Though criminal prosecutors are unconcerned with prosecuting crimes committed against inmates (Mariner, Herivel & Wright 2003), guards can still face civil litigation for failing to protect the inmate from the violence of others (Capers, 2011). The case law surrounding prison rape in the U.S. is complex, with the most famous case establishing prison official liability, Farmer v. Brennan, framing the extent of prison officials’ liability within very stringent parameters:

\[
\text{a prison official may be held liable...only if he knows that inmates face a substantial risk of serious harm and disregards that risk by failing to take reasonable measures to abate it. (511 U.S. § 825 (1992))}
\]

In establishing the standard of “deliberate indifference” the Farmer ruling ostensibly defined a prison guard’s responsibility to only those matters that they knew about. In this way the law has created conditions under which it is advantageous for prison officials to remain ‘officially’ ignorant of the sexual violence within their facilities (Capers, 2011; Mariner, Herivel & Wright, 2003).

Beyond the threat of civil liability, lies the more menacing issue of criminal liability. There are numerous accounts that go beyond implicit knowledge to explicit consent for sexual violence within prison. Prisoners have consistently reported that guards use prison rape as a means of ‘keeping the peace’, at times arranging for access to weaker inmates as a means of catharsis in order to prevent other forms of violence (Robertson, 2004; Scacco, 1982; Stemple; 2009). Yet other accounts have the officers actually using prison rape as a mechanism of control, arranging for the rape of inmates deemed ‘troublemakers’ (Bourke, 2007; Lehrer, 2001). One such account did not come from an inmate but from a researcher, who was unpopular amongst prison staff. They arranged for Athens to be locked in with a dangerous inmate who attempted to rape him (Athens, 1997). Additionally, there is data to suggest that prison guards are perpetrators of prison rape themselves (Bourke, 2007; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996). With guards acting as the police of the prison (Crouch & Marquart, 1980; Lombard, 1981) there is no hope of preventing sexual violence while they are involved in the practice, or if the legal standards create an environment where ignorance is the best practising standard. That prison rape exists as an institutional fact has led some writing on the issue to argue that prison rape will likely forever blot the landscape of U.S prisons:

Rape exists and will continue to exist in confinement institutions because it serves the interests of too many powerful elements of jail and prison societies including administration. Officials use the fear of rape by prison inmates to divert prison aggression, destroy potential leaders, and intimidate prisoners into becoming informers. (Knowles, 1999, p. 275)

If sexual violence is to be prevented, then the issue needs to be tackled not just an issue of violence amongst inmates, but as a systemic and institutional issue. Indeed, there is a “need to transform belief structures for genuine change to occur” (Thompson, 2009, p.175)
Changing belief structures

In light of institutional involvement, both explicit and tacit, some have chosen to go beyond the domestic framework, engaging with the issue of prison rape in terms of a human rights construct. With the discussion of prison rape in its infancy, the discourse is not yet extensive but there are a number of proclamations and treaties that deal with the issue of prisoners, either solely or in part. The International Convention on Cultural and Political Rights (1966) (ICCPR) discusses prisoners specifically in Article 10 (1):

All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. (p. 176)

Building on this is Article 7 in which the ICCPR dictates that no one shall be “subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (p. 175). This prohibition against torture is codified and expanded upon in the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment (1984) (CAT). There have been proclamations, but no treaties, made by the UN which instruct the manner in which prisoners are to be treated: Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of prisoners (1997) and the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (1990). The latter document speaks specifically to the issue of human rights and prisoners stating in section 5 that:

Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is within the discourse of human rights that advocacy groups, such as Just Detention International (JDI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), have framed the issue of prison rape. With reference to CAT and the ICCPR, Just Detention International argue that rape and sexual violence within the confines of prison meet the definitional requirements of torture:

Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed, or intimidating him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. (Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984, Article 1)

That sexual violence “meets every element of this definition” (Just Detention International, 2009, p. 1), is hard to contest, especially when the vulnerability and minority status of the victim is considered. More significant to the definition of torture is the institutional involvement in the sexual violence committed against inmates. The involvement of guards, both tacit and explicit, in addition to the administration’s wilful ignorance of the issue lends credence to the assertion that prison rape is a form of torture. Beyond the prison officials, who are themselves representatives of a political system, there is the involvement of the wider political community in the continued practice of prison rape. For prison rape to exist at the levels it does and with the repeated and continuous victimization of an easily identified group, it is not unreasonable for political officials to foresee and prevent the harm. That the harm is foreseeable and yet continues, allows for a strong argument that prison rape exists by implicit acquiescence of politicians. The JDI argument is corroborated by Human Rights Watch, which conducted an extensive survey of prison conditions across all 50 U.S. states (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Within the report, Human Rights Watch documented countless accounts of rape and sexual violence that they argued were representative of torture and, in some cases, sexual slavery (Human Rights Watch, 2001). However, Human Rights Watch went on to discuss how the limitations and caveats that the U.S. have attached to its ratification of both CAT and ICCPR have left the treaties impotent within the U.S. legal system, making the application of these treaties highly restrictive.

While discussing prison rape as a form of torture is relevant, it is not without drawbacks. Using the discourse of torture to understand prison rape negates the crucial role that sexual violence plays in prison. It frames sexual violence as the means of torture rather than as instrumental in creating the social and politi-
Theme III: Boyhood interrupted

Chapter 12

The cultural context of the prison. That the victims of prison rape are being tortured is absolutely an issue, but not one that will be resolved without looking at the larger issues surrounding it. Using rape and sexual violence as a means to create a gender hierarchy around which prison subculture revolves, redefines it as a tool; the violence can no longer be considered in isolation, but rather as an instrument in a political structure. A human rights discourse already exists to deal with the systemic use of sexual violence for political and social goals. However, as of yet, it has been applied solely within the framework of rape in conflict and war.

The systemic use of rape and sexual violence has been recognized internationally as a human rights issue and a crime against humanity however, only in the context of rape in conflict. The first international treaty condemning this form of sexual violence was adopted in 1949, in Article 4 of the Geneva Convention, prohibiting the rape of women along with “any attack upon their honor” (Askin, 1997, p. 246). It was not, however, until the close of the Twentieth Century that international advocacy and attention for the issue became substantial. The first prosecution for sexual violence during conflict occurred at the International Criminal Court of the Former Yugoslavia (Henry, 2011). In the wake of the international case law achieved in the Yugoslavian tribunal, along with a Rwandan equivalent, four major resolutions have been proposed and adopted by the UN Security Council that address directly the issue of sexual violence committed during conflict (UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2011). Alongside the work of the United Nations, a greater focus on sexual violence in conflict has been paid by Non-government Organisations (NGOs) with 4076 NGOs assisting with the issue (Stemple, 2010). This includes leading human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (DelZotto & Jones, 2002) but also organizations such as Physicians for Human Rights, who aim to use their expertise to end human rights violations and have rape in war as a central focus (PHR, 2011).

What accompanied the international focus was the acknowledgment that mass rape of civilian populations was not a by-product of the conflict but a strategic and deliberate weapon used to a political end (Kristof, 2008). Recognizing sexual violence as a “tactic of war” (UN Resolution 1820) highlighted the fundamental purpose of the act. Beyond the brutality and domination of rape is a wider goal, with rape not an end in and of itself, but a means to an end. It is the purpose beyond the act that is essential to systemic rape’s definition as a crime against humanity:

Rape becomes a crime against humanity not because of the act itself, but when it is permitted or committed for political ends. (Robertson, 2008, p. 393)

Ultimately then, what differentiates rape in conflict from rape prohibited by domestic law is the purpose behind the action. The same is true of prison rape, with sexual violence a tool in a much larger political and institutional purpose.

Beyond the commonality of purpose behind prison and conflict rape, the consequences for both sets of victims have significant commonalities. As with inmate victims of sexual violence, those victimized during conflict are stigmatized and most commonly socially rejected. Women who are raped in conflict may be disowned by their husband and family and ostracised by their community (Leatherman, 2011; UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2011). Men who are victims of conflict rape are unlikely to take any steps towards having this status recognised, due to culturally based gender taboos surrounding the issue of rape (Delzotto & Jones, 2002; Leatherman, 2011). Furthermore, the victims of rape often never see justice, with perpetrators of both prison and conflict rape operating with almost absolute impunity. Whether from institutional indifference, or because those victimized are reticent to come forward, rape in conflict (Leatherman, 2011) and rape in prison (Capers, 2011) are both crimes that are significantly underreported and under prosecuted. Steps are being made to rectify this with regards to rape in conflict (Stop Rape Now), however the same international attention has not been bestowed upon the issue of prison rape.

In addition to social consequences there are also health risks associated with rape. The transmission of HIV and AIDS is always a risk of sexual violence, but it is exacerbated by the high rates of HIV/AIDS, common to both U.S prisons and areas where conflict rape
is most prevalent, and the lack of access to condoms and other forms of prophylactics. That victims of conflict rape often go on to contract HIV/AIDS is widely recognised, with a follow up study on the conflict in Rwanda showing that, 15 years after the genocide, 70% of rape victims were HIV-positive (Ka Hon Chu & de Brouwer, 2009). In recognition of these sweeping health consequences, policies regarding HIV prevention and treatment have been included in action plans to deal with rape in conflict (Leatherman, 2011; UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2011). Prevalence rates of HIV amongst inmates within U.S prisons are 5 times higher than that found within the general population (Cusac, 2000) with 1.8% of all state inmates and 1.0% of federal carrying the disease (Maruschak, 2005). However, just as prevalence rates of sexual violence are only the tip of the iceberg, the same is likely true of the reported rate of HIV in prison; HIV screening is voluntary, with many carriers remaining asymptomatic and so without reason to seek help (Dumond, 2003; Greifinger, 1999).

**Conclusion**

“There are no innocent criminals” (Filipovic, 2012, p. 4) appears the mantra of many when confronted with the reality of prison rape. The general contempt that accounts of rape and sexual violence are often met with, does not extend to those victimised while incarcerated. Many see it as a just punishment, but does the punishment really fit the crime? Those subjected to this invasive form of degradation are often young men who are first time non-violent offenders, the weakest and most vulnerable in the prison population. They are quickly swallowed by the distorted understanding of masculinity, not conforming to the image of a ‘real man’ they are destroyed by those who do, to be remade into a woman. The widespread and targeted use of sexual violence within prison, speaks to the wider purpose of the act, with it integral to the development and maintenance of gender hierarchy within inmate subcultures.

After years of tacit recognition, the ‘open secret’ of prison rape was recognised at a governmental level through U.S. federal legislation in 2003. Though better late than never, efforts to combat the sexual violence in prison will be hampered by attitudes of administrator’s and prison guards with many denying or ignoring the issue entirely. Beyond the intentional ignorance of administration there is clear evidence of direct institutional involvement in both continuing – through allowing access to vulnerable inmates – and participating in the sexual violence perpetrated against significant portions of the U.S. prison population.

There is a difference between domestic rape committed under a common law definition and rape with a political purpose. Though one is not worse than the other, the latter is a systematic and institutionally governed attempt to advance a specific goal. What is encompassed within the term systemic/systematic rape is any act of sexual violence that is the result of larger situational, system or institutional conditions that enable the violence through their existence. Of course many would argue that all rape meets this definition with patriarchal institutions responsible for the conditions that enable rape. However, they are not orchestrated with the same collective purpose that is found in prison rape. Sexual violence is fundamental to the creation and maintenance of gender hierarchies within U.S. prison institutions, and as such rape becomes a tool of that institution. To understand prison rape as something beyond the act itself, but a means of the larger institutional culture is integral to creating lasting change. In many ways prison rape mirrors the intents and consequences of rape within conflict. This change needs to come just as much from outside the institution as it does within, as until sexual violence is tolerated nowhere, it will remain a reality everywhere.
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Hegemonic masculinity as a conceptual lens to understand the experiences of boys and men who are survivors of child sexual abuse

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Abstract
Many men and boys who are survivors of child sexual abuse face silencing, blaming, fear, stigmatization, and ostracization when others or they themselves perceive their abuse as a transgression of gender norms. Hegemonic masculinity is an important conceptual lens that can help illuminate ways in which many men and boy survivors experience child sexual abuse, and how they make meaning of their abuse experiences as men in patriarchal societies. In this paper, I introduce the concept of hegemonic masculinity, describe some of its core elements, and discuss some of the ways in which these might intersect with men and boy survivors’ abuse experiences and contribute to the oppression of sexual violence survivors.

Child sexual abuse often is a gender-transgressive experience for men and boys in several different ways. Many men and boys who are survivors of child sexual abuse face silencing, blaming, fear, stigmatization and ostracization when others or they themselves perceive their abuse as a transgression of gender roles. While the body of knowledge on child sexual abuse in general, and sexual abuse of boys in particular has grown remarkably in the last three decades, sexual abuse of girls still remains the primary focus of the scholarship on this subject (Alaggia & Millington, 2008; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006). Even when sexual abuse of boys is considered, the attention paid to the role of masculinity in informing and shaping survivors’ experiences has remained limited (Kia-Keating, Grossman, Sorsoli & Epstein, 2005). Child sexual abuse can be defined as the use of a child for sexual gratification by an older or more powerful person, and may involve both touch and nontouch behaviors (Gilgun & Sharma, 2008). Touch behaviors include, but are not limited to, penetration of a child’s vagina, mouth, or anus by penis, other body parts, or inanimate objects; simulated intercourse; genital touching; deep, sexualized kissing; touching of other body parts such as breasts, nipples, and buttocks. Nontouch behaviors include exhibitionism; voyeurism; exposure to age-inappropriate sexual activity or material; and use of a child in pornography or prostitution.

There exist strong variations in available data on the prevalence of sexual abuse of boy children. Some common reasons for such variations are the use of different definitions, methodological approaches and quality of research (Finkelhor, 1994), making it difficult to compare data from different sources. Recently, Barth, Bermetz, Heim, Trelle and Tonia (2013) studied research evidence from 24 countries and found that child sexual abuse prevalence estimates for boys ranged between 3-17%, and three out of 100 boys were victims of forced intercourse. Some have argued that the statistics on prevalence and incidence of male child sexual abuse do not represent the true extent of its magnitude since they rely on self-reporting, which suffers from under-reporting due to a number of reasons (Dhaliwal, Gauzas, Antonowicz & Ross, 1996; Violato & Genius, 1993).

Hegemonic masculinity
Hegemonic masculinity is a concept as well as a conceptual framework that examines power relations between men and women and among men. In this framework, one group of men – who practice hegemonic masculinity – use the power accorded...
Hegemonic masculinity and child sexual abuse
to them by structural factors such as gender, class, and race to force their interpretation of masculinity on the rest of the society and use this interpretation to suppress other expressions of masculinity and women in general (Connell, 2005; Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Connell (2005), who pioneered the development of this framework, based it on Gramsci’s notion of hegemony which is a sociopolitical situation wherein one particular group of individuals holds supremacy and long-lasting social control over other groups that the former group does not view as its allies (Litowitz, 2000). The dominant group exercises control through expression of violence, sense of entitlement, control over resources etc. Within the framework of hegemonic masculinity, the dominant group of men enjoys a privileged and more powerful status in society as compared to women and girls and non-hegemonic men, by virtue of patriarchy (Bhasin, 1993). In this way, this framework – being the interpretation of masculinity by the dominant group – also provides an idealized measure for testing boys and men to determine the size of their manliness (Tharinger, 2008). Those who fall short face subjugation and, often, stigmatization, by those who conform to the standard of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is rooted in, and legitimated by, the system of patriarchy that supports the domination of men and subordination of women (Connell, 2005). In this way this framework is congruent with feminist theory in acknowledging patriarchy as one of the primary vehicles of oppression and division among people along the lines of gender (Hoffman, 2001).

Men and boys exert patriarchal power, dominance and control over women and girls in a wide variety of ways. However, control over women is not the only form of control that is part of the principles of hegemonic masculinity. The group of men who conform to the idea of hegemonic masculinity also exerts power, dominance, and control over other groups of men who exhibit marginalized and non-hegemonic expressions of masculinity. The theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily assume that all men are part of this select hegemonic group of individuals. It accepts multiple masculinities, and assumes that within a patriarchal framework, some men have more power than other men, and that the former group of men have not only power over women, but potentially over the latter group(s) of men as well. This more powerful and domineering group of men espouse the idea of an exalted sense of masculinity as per patriarchal norms, values, and practices, thereby attempting to live up to the cultural ideal of masculinity, which legitimizes their power over women and non-hegemonic men. This exalted idea of masculinity includes, but is not limited to, compulsory heteronormativity, sexual prowess and virility, contempt for feminine-identified behaviors, homophobia, physical strength, and emotional stoicism (Cheng, 1999; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino, 1999). However, as Gilgun and McLeod (1999) have discussed, hegemonic masculinity is not the only way to be masculine, and there are other forms of masculinity that not only differ from hegemonic masculinity, but can also potentially resist, contest and challenge it. Non-hegemonic or subordinate forms of masculinity may include queer men (gay, transgender, bisexual), men in caring and nurturing professions, emotive men, men belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, stay at home fathers etc. It is also important to acknowledge that the aforementioned construction of hegemonic masculinity is contextually largely based in a western perspective of masculinities; globally, hegemonic masculinity is not a monolithic concept and does involve regional and local variations based on unique and diverse sociocultural contexts.

This is not to say that men occupying marginalized spaces with reference to hegemonic masculinity cannot, or do not, engage in patriarchal practices. In fact Connell (2005) has suggested that many men – whether they espouse the hegemonic or non-hegemonic forms of masculinity – support the notion of hegemonic masculinity, for this results in a “patriarchal dividend” (p. 79) that helps maintain the status quo of men’s collective power over women in the larger society, and greater advantage in terms of privilege and social value. Within the different groups that espouse forms of masculinity that do not belong to the dominant and powerful archetype of hegemonic masculinity, there are struggles for power to be the dominant and most powerful sub-group within these subordinate groups (Coles, 2008).

Also, masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity, are not static or unchanging, but are constructed in relation to other forms and axis of power, such as class, race, religion or sexual orientation (Connell,
2005; Kaufman, 1994; Messerschmidt, 1993). In this way, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is in line with West and Zimmerman’s (1991) idea of gender as the “activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category [male or female]” (p. 127). This means that men have the option of choosing, if they so want, which gender related behaviors to exhibit, and which to shun, depending on their social, cultural, political, and temporal contexts. It is possible for men to adhere to the culturally dominant archetype of hegemonic masculinity in one context and situation, and to choose not do so in another context and situation. While the concept of hegemonic masculinity does provide an ideology – a grand narrative – for how to be masculine to all men, men may subjectively use it as a guide and apply its principles to their individual lives. As Coles (2008) has suggested, men who may be subordinated by hegemonic masculinity do not reject it in totality; instead, they espouse the elements of hegemonic masculinity that offer them privilege, and discard the rest.

Since hegemonic masculinity represents the culturally dominant archetype of masculinity emanating from patriarchal values and norms, it is important to identify the different practices that maintain hegemonic masculinity in everyday lives. Non-adherence to these practices can result in stigmatization and marginalization as not ‘real’ men (Alden & Parker, 2005) and can even lead to violence and abuse (Brooks, 2000). Some such practices are discussed below. These reflect some of the core aspects of hegemonic masculinity. However, it must be acknowledged that these ideas are not exhaustive and may not contain all of the ideas that constitute the dominant archetype of hegemonic masculinity.

**Misogyny**

Misogyny, defined as the “feeling of enmity towards the female sex... specifically acted out in society by males, often in ritualistic ways” (Gilmore, 2001, p. 9), is one of the central features of the archetype of hegemonic masculinity. It is a patriarchal masculine practice that is based on a strong resistance to identifying with anything that might be considered feminine. Men trying to do hegemonic masculinity not only actively resist feminine-identified behaviors in their own behavior, but also treat feminine-identified behaviors and activities in other men with disgust, contempt, and ridicule. From early age, boys are taught not to engage any ‘sissy stuff’ (Brannon, 1976). Boys who display non-traditional and gender atypical behavior as opposed to the commonly accepted masculine behavior, are labeled as ‘sissy’ and effeminate by their peers and by society in general, and face increased risk of stigmatization, ostracization, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (Brooks, 2000). They also receive disapproval of adults and peers, who often make attempts to then ‘rectify’ such ‘faulty’ behavior. For example, Kane (2006) in her research with parents of preschool children observed that when male children played with dolls or painted their fingernails, often their parents – particularly heterosexual fathers – actively opposed these choices and behaviors. On the other hand, when boys conform to the norms and ideals of hegemonic masculinity, they often receive acceptance and approval of their other boy peers (Renold, 2001). This phenomenon of such treatment of feminine-identified behaviors in other men and boys has been termed as effeminophobia by some scholars (Richardson, 2009; Sedgwick, 1993). Effeminophobia upholds patriarchy, and supports hegemonic masculinity by insulting and threatening men who deviate from the expected gender norms of masculinity, and by rewarding men to conform to these norms.

**Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity is the “mundane production of heterosexuality as the normal, natural, taken-for-granted sexuality” (Kitzinger, 2005, p. 477). Heterosexuality is considered an important norm that all men are compulsorily expected to follow in order to assert themselves as masculine men, and to be perceived by others as such (Jones, 2006; Kimmel, 2001). Heterosexuality is considered an important norm that all men are compulsorily expected to follow in order to assert themselves as masculine men, and to be perceived by others as such (Jones, 2006; Kimmel, 2001).

The sociocultural scripts on hegemonic heteronormative script of masculinity not only rigidly prescribes the sex of men’s sexual partners, but also carries recommendations for expected sexual behavior. Not only is heterosexuality considered a rule, men and boys are also expected and encouraged to ‘be sexual’ with women and girls (Pelias, 2008; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Wood, 2001), meaning that they should be actively seeking sex with women and girls, and asserting their sexual interest in them,
in order to be considered genuinely masculine, and in this way virility emerges as an important concept. Sex between young boys and older women is also sometimes considered a masculine practice (Duncan & Williams, 1998). In a study of heterosexual college men in Puerto Rico, many participants felt that ‘being a man’ was strongly linked to a societal and cultural expectation of having frequent sex, and having multiple intimate women partners (Pérez-Jiménez, Cunningham, Serrano-García & Ortiz-Torres, 2007).

**Homophobia**

Centrality of homophobia within the discourse of hegemonic masculinity is well documented (Connell, 1987, 2005; Kimmel, 2001; Lehne, 1998; Martino, 1997; Pascoe, 2007). It refers to a general disapproval and disgust for gay and lesbian men and women, and may be understood as a social construct, as opposed to a phobia in a conventional psychological sense, since it is learnt by observing and interacting with others in society regarding appropriateness of certain gender-related behaviors and inappropriateness of others (McCann, Minichiello & Plummer, 2009).

Since heterosexuality is socially considered gender-appropriate behavior for men and boys, homosexuality is therefore considered gender inappropria. Connell (1987) has emphasized that “contempt for homosexuality and homosexual men” is an integral part of hegemonic masculinity, since “the most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual” (p. 186). “Gayness,” according to Connell (2005), “in patriarchal ideology, is repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity, the items ranging from fastidious taste in home decoration to receptive anal pleasure” (p. 78).

One way to look at homophobia is to view it as contempt for people who are sexually attracted to others of the same sex, or in this case, men and boys who are sexually attracted to other men and boys. As Bersani (1987) observed, “to be penetrated is to abdicate power” (p. 212). This alleged loss of power that happens when men are at the receiving end of being penetrated in a sexual context, not only threatens the power of the individuals being penetrated, but also the overall structure of patriarchy (Pascoe, 2007), since patriarchy is premised on the collective power of men in society over women. Men are expected to be the ones to sexually penetrate other women, and not be penetrated themselves.

Another way of understanding homophobia is by looking at it in a broader sense, to include contempt towards gender non-conformist behavior, instead of merely looking at it from the narrower lens of the perceived sexual orientation of the people who are the targets of such contempt. Pascoe (2007), in his research with adolescent boys in the USA, has posited that the term homophobia does not fully represent the nature and range of contemptuous activities of such nature, and has instead used the term ‘fag’:

‘Fag’ is not necessarily a static identity attached to a particular (homosexual) boy... becoming a fag has much to do with failing at the masculine tasks of competence, heterosexual prowess and strength or in any way revealing weakness or femininity, as it does with a sexual identity. (p. 54)

Within this perspective, homophobia is not limited to contempt towards homosexual men and boys, but also extends to heterosexual men and boys who might display gender non-conformist behaviors, which may lead to them being perceived as, or compared to, homosexuals and/or women.

People who are homosexual, or are perceived to be homosexual, face a significant risk of violence and abuse due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation (Brooks, 2000; D’Augelli, Grossman & Starks, 2006; Factor & Rothblum, 2007; Janoff, 2005; Martino, 1997; Ryan & Rivers, 2003). Boys who are gender atypical in their identity or behavior are at high risk of being persecuted, stigmatized, mistreated and violated (Brooks, 2000), and their mistreatment could include acts such as violent assault, sexual assault, mugging, stalking, being threatened with physical violence, and robbery (Factor & Rothblum, 2007).

**Invulnerability**

The archetype of hegemonic masculinity paints invulnerability and invincibility as ideas men ought to measure up to, in order to qualify as masculine men. Mass media portrayals of men often include projecting them as strong and tough (Pérez-Jiménez et al., 2007), and masculine toughness in the face of challenges is often celebrated in society. On the other hand, boys are shamed and mistreated if they admit to dependency or
vulnerability (Pollack, 2006). The mainstream sports culture also associates masculinity with toughness and invulnerability (Messner & Sabo, 1994). Eagerness to compete with others, and dominate the competition is considered an essential element of being masculine (Beutel & Marini, 1995; Messner 1992).

The expectation of invulnerability and toughness for men in order to realize the cultural ideal of hegemonic masculinity also contributes to men’s reluctance in asking for help or discussing any problems they might be facing, because for many men that amounts to revealing their vulnerability (Schofield, Connell, Walker, Wood & Butland, 2000). Many men force themselves, and/or are forced by the sociocultural norms regarding masculinity, to spend their lives behind a façade of invulnerability, even when they may be hurting and needing support.

**Emotionlessness**

Hegemonic masculinity requires men to maintain a stoic and stolid personality. Men and boys are expected to “don a mask of emotional bravado” (Pollack, 1995, p. 42) to hide their emotions, or avoid them altogether (Garde, 2003). Regulating expression of emotions is something young males learn at a very young age as they try to adopt the gender-identity of boy (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Scholars researching gender roles and expressions among children have found male children learn to hide their emotions, especially those of fear and pain, through important social spaces such as schools (Oransky and Marecek, 2009) and playgrounds (Messner, 1992). When Oransky and Marecek (2009) asked high school students what should one do if they wanted to be macho, one boy summed up an important rule of hegemonic masculinity in these words, “Not to care about emotions or other people’s emotions or even your own. I think it’s all, like, suppressing emotions” (p. 225). Boys fear that expressing emotions will project them as effeminate or homosexuals in the eyes of others (Oransky & Marecek, 2009), and this fear keeps them from displaying emotions, given the widespread prevalence of misogyny and homophobia. Instead boys are encouraged to espouse mental strength as constructed within hegemonic masculinity, which emphasizes values such as independence, self-reliance (Finkelhor 1985; Paine & Hansen, 2002), and rational and decisive thinking with little room for emotions (Struve, 2007). These norms foster emotional isolation and lack of emotional intimacy among men, including between heterosexual men, since emotional closeness and sharing is often viewed as gender atypical behavior for boys and men.

Having said that, boys and men are allowed – even encouraged – to display feelings of aggression, since it conforms to hegemonic masculine norms. While growing up, boys learn that being masculine is associated with being aggressive (Evans & Wallace, 2008; Toomey, 2001). Phillips’s (2005) study of adolescent boys and media messages found that for the majority of the boys in the study, masculinity was tied to practices of violence. One of the boys described his experiences with practicing violence in these words:

“I went to a school with a very big fighting emphasis … And I wasn’t really into fighting. But EVERYBODY was being mean to me. And so just, sooner or later, I just up and beat someone up. And then all of a sudden everybody … liked me. Cuz that’s just what you have to do to earn their respect.” (p. 226, capitals in original)

Sometimes men use aggression and violence as a way of expressing or dealing with their emotions. In their analysis of issues concerning men living with depression, Branney and White (2008) have discussed that violence towards others and self could be one of the ways in which men could possibly deal with depression, and this is tied to the cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

**Gender-related outcomes of child sexual abuse for male survivors**

Sexual abuse can potentially have profound and multiple outcomes for the survivors – during childhood, and/or later as adults. Many of these outcomes are linked to the larger social and cultural practices and norms in the context of gender, and especially in the context of masculinity when survivors are men and boys. In this section, I discuss some of the gender-related outcomes of child sexual abuse, in terms of how men and boys interpret being sexually abused within a context of hegemonic masculinity.

**Silencing**

One of the most important experiences that many survivors – both men and women – go through
following child sexual abuse is silencing, which refers to the reluctance or fear to disclose about the abuse, as well as reluctance to acknowledge oneself to be a victim of sexual abuse (O’Leary & Barber, 2008). Silencing regarding their experiences of abuse can be self-imposed (when survivors decide to not disclose because of feelings of guilt or shame that they internalize from wider social beliefs and attitudes), or imposed by others (when others refuse to believe the survivors, or tell them to not disclose to anyone else), or both.

Norms of hegemonic masculinity can likely cause silencing among men and boy survivors. Different studies have repeatedly shown that male survivors of child sexual abuse face significant difficulties in disclosing their abuse (Alaggia & Millington, 2008; Etherington, 1995; Holmes, Offen & Waller, 1997; O’Leary, 2001; Watkins & Bentovim, 2000). There exists a gap between the official statistics on the prevalence and extent of male child sexual abuse and statistics of such abuse based on retrospective self-reporting by survivors, indicating further that males find it challenging to disclose abuse (Etherington, 1995). A study by O’Leary and Barber (2008) with a sample of 145 men and 151 women on gender differences in child sexual abuse disclosure by survivors found that not only were males significantly less likely than females to disclose their abuse at the time of its occurrence, but it also took them significantly longer than females to disclose and discuss their childhood experiences of abuse with someone later in life. Some other research studies have also found that male survivors are likely to be more reluctant to disclose than females (DeVoe & Faller, 1999; Gries, Goh & Cavanaugh, 1996), although some studies have not found gender to be a significant predicting factor vis-à-vis disclosure of abuse (DiPietro, Runyan & Fredrickson, 1997).

As a consequence of silencing, male survivors often do not get to share their stories with others and get the help they need and deserve, and others do not get to gain a better understanding of male survivors’ experiences. Importantly, such silencing of survivors is strongly influenced by popular and stereotypical notions of gender roles (Alaggia, 2005; Alaggia & Millington, 2008; Bell & Belicki, 1998; Dimock, 1988; Holmes & Slap, 1998; M. Hunter, 1990), or in other words, by hegemonic masculinity.

Men and boys who have faced sexual abuse find it difficult to disclose and discuss their experiences since this would paint them as victims of violence, wherein they would have been vulnerable and not in control (Alaggia & Mollington, 2008; Blanchard, 1987; Dimock, 1988; Paine & Hansen, 2002). One of the major reasons behind boys’ and men’s difficulties in disclosing their experiences of abuse is their gender socialization along the lines of stereotypical gender norms (Dorais, 2002; Paine & Hansen, 2002), which in turn results in a whole host of factors that affect disclosure. Cultural norms tied to hegemonic masculinity in most patriarchal societies do not provide a space for men and boys to occupy the role of a victim in virtually any sphere of their lives. Vulnerability and victimization are typically associated with effeminacy (Kia-Keating et al., 2005). To ‘be a man’ means to be invulnerable and invincible. Since child sexual abuse poses a serious threat to such invincibility, it is not a matter of surprise that men could find it exceptionally hard to disclose their experiences of victimization and vulnerability. As Blanchard (1987) has noted, boys have little guidance for the phenomenon of victimization. Moreover, it has also been discussed earlier that many men find it very difficult to discuss emotional issues with others, since being emotional is considered a sign of weakness (McGuffey, 2008), and therefore considered unmasculine. Within the context of child sexual abuse – which could be an emotionally overwhelming and harrowing experience for any child – such reluctance could result in silencing.

Another way of silencing survivors is when their disclosure of abuse is not believed, or not taken seriously. Survivors’ families, communities and professionals too can contribute to their silencing not believing male survivors, or by aligning their views with widely prevalent myths which state that males are seldom the victims of child sexual abuse, boys like to be sexually active early in life and therefore any sexual experiences are adventurous to them, only ‘gay boys’ get abused, if a boy got an erection and/or ejaculated then he must have wanted it etc. In their analysis of comparison between statistics for males in national prevalence studies with statistics for men receiving psychiatric help through mental health professionals, Holmes et al. (1997) proposed that the figures regarding males identified as survivors of child sexual abuse in the former were higher than
those in the latter, because of four main reasons: that professionals were less likely to identify a male patient’s psychiatric problem as potentially linked to their childhood experiences of sexual violence; that professionals sometimes do not believe the disclosure of sexual abuse by their male patients; that professionals may respond in ways that contribute to the silencing of the survivors; and, that professionals are failing to ask their patients about the possibility of having been abused in their childhood. In their study with 111 psychologists, psychiatrists, and nurses, Lab, Feigenbaum, and De Silva (2000) discovered that these professionals were often not exploring the possibility of their male patients being victims of child sexual abuse. Richey-Suttles and Remer (1997) found that psychologists were less likely to consider sexual abuse for males than they would for females, even when they had been presented with identical case studies.

Responsibility

Men and boys who are survivors of childhood sexual abuse may also feel, or made to feel, that they are somehow responsible for their sexual victimization, and that they contributed in some way to their own abuse.

One of the ways in which this might manifest in survivors’ lives is when survivors tend to see their experiences of child sexual abuse as non-abusive. Fondacaro, Holt and Powell (1999) found that 41% of the male prison inmates in their study did not view those sexual experiences when they were children as abusive, which would have been classified as child sexual abuse under many widely accepted professional definitions. This could have been a result of various factors, such as the gender norms that do not stigmatize boys for engaging in sexual activity at an early age the same way as girls would be stigmatized in similar situation, they could have been too embarrassed to label their experiences as abusive since they might have seen it as exposing their vulnerabilities, or they might have seen these as coming of age experiences for a boy or perceived themselves as sexually accomplished men. In another study by Nelson and Oliver (1998) focusing on the issue of consent within adult-child sexual contact, boys older than 10 years typically described their sexual encounter(s) with older women as "consensual and desirable", even when every encounter had been initiated by a woman who was at least four years older than the boy – even if the boys thought they initiated, this is still child sexual abuse because of differences in power and understanding (thus fitting into most legal definitions of sexual assault against children), and in the majority of cases it was clear that the boy had been dominated or manipulated by the woman. This was because the idea of sex with an older woman was congruent with the patriarchal themes of sexual prowess and masculine potency for these boys, and therefore the boys constructed these experiences as status enhancing. Seeking and having sex with women are associated with men’s virility and normative heterosexuality, within the context of hegemonic masculinity as discussed earlier. It is therefore possible that many men and boys fail to see their abuse as an act of violence, because the experience of being sexual with women fits well with the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. The earlier they can see themselves achieving the milestones of being a man, the more gratifying it could be for them with regard to asserting themselves as masculine men in their own eyes as well as in the eyes of the world. It must also be acknowledged however, that many men and boys do feel ashamed of their sexual contact with women during childhood, especially when such sexual experiences had been with their own mothers (S. V. Hunter, 2009). This could perhaps be because mother-son sexual relationships and behaviors belong to the incest taboo, and therefore do not find any positive recognition within the discourse of patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity.

Sometimes boys may get gratification, enjoyment, or pleasure out of the sexual experience, while at the same time experiencing strong negative reactions because of the coercive and/or manipulative nature of the sexual abuse. Penile erection, ejaculation, and/or experiencing orgasm or other feelings of pleasure may indicate to boys that they participated in their own abuse, wanted it, and are responsible for it. In Alaggia and Millington’s (2008) qualitative study of men who had been sexually abused as children, some men expressed disgust at the fact that their bodies would respond with arousal to sexual stimulus by their abusers. Another participant in this study shared his thoughts regarding the abuse he had faced as a child, and said:
I wanted it. I mean I stayed there. I let it happen, it felt good ... when I ejaculated it felt great. But then after I'd feel, like, sick to my stomach. (p. 269)

The internal conflicts men and boys often face while making meaning of their abuse is evident in this quote. The boy is torn between enjoying the experience, and being repulsed by it. Such feelings of confusion can lead to ideas about their willing participation in the abuse. Once again, sexual norms for boys as per hegemonic masculinity celebrate boys’ sexual virility and prowess. Against this backdrop, it is likely that many boys would see themselves as active participants in their abuse if they experienced sexual arousal and pleasure, especially if the perpetrators were women, since sexual experiences with women are constructed as normative within hegemonic masculinity.

Traditional gender socialization of boys includes emphasis on self-reliant, independent, and decisive thinking (Finkelhor, 1985; Paine & Hansen, 2002; Struve, 2007). ‘Real men’ are also expected to know how to avoid problems (Dorais, 2002). As a result, many boys may also feel confused about their own role in their sexual experiences of abusive nature, since they are supposed to have made their own decisions.

These factors can come together during incidents of sexual victimization, potentially causing confusion in boys’ minds about the event, and eventually their conscious or passive acceptance of the event as non-abusive, or perceptions of having willingly participated in the abuse. The possibility of men and boys blaming themselves, to varying degrees, for their own abuse becomes even more likely because perpetrators of child sexual abuse often tend to blame their victims for the sexual activity (Veach, 1999).

Such ignorance and misinformation regarding male survivors and victims exists among men in the larger society as well. Spencer and Tan (1999) asked male and female college students about their perceptions regarding a hypothetical case of sexual violence against a male person at different ages, and found that respondents who were men were more likely to blame the male victim for his abuse at any age, as compared to the women respondents. This indicates that attitudes and perceptions that assign blame to the victims and survivors for their own abuse are shared by men in general, and not just by men who are survivors of child sexual abuse. This also indicates the profound internalization of gender stereotyping among most men and boys, and the ensuing lack of perspective to view fellow men and boys as vulnerable and potential victims of sexual assault.

Fears regarding masculinity
Since victimization is not something that the cultural ideals of masculinity prepare men and boys for (Alaggia & Mellington, 2008; Blanchard, 1987; Dimock, 1988), experiencing victimization can be a gender-transgressive experience for many survivors. As discussed earlier, in a context of sexual abuse, boys may feel vulnerable and not in control. Since invulnerability and control are associated with the socially constructed idea of ‘being a man’, such experiences can make men and boys feel like their masculinity has been damaged or weakened through these experiences.

There are other factors too that may contribute to survivors’ anxieties regarding their masculinity. An important one among them is homophobia. Most perpetrators of sexual abuse against children – female or male – are men (Banyard, Williams & Siegel, 2004; Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis & Smith, 1990; May-Chahal, 2006). Also, most of the male children who get abused, are abused by other males (McGuffey, 2008). Sexual abuse by another man or boy can lead to worries about their own gender and sexual orientation in the minds of the survivors, since heteronormativity and homophobia are integral and inextricable norms of hegemonic masculinity. When boys experience sexual abuse, they may fear that they would get labeled as ‘wimp’, ‘gay’, ‘queer’, or ‘faggot’ (Dimock, 1988; Finkelhor, 1985). They may question their own sexual orientation (Gartner, 1999; Scott, 1992, Tremblay & Turcotte, 2005), or fear that others would question their sexual orientation (Gartner, 1999; Dhaliwal et al, 1996; Dorais, 2002; Scott, 1992). In a study by S. V. Hunter (2009) of men and women who had had sexual experiences with adults when they were 15-years old or younger, many men participants who had had early sexual experiences with other men, worried that they had been chosen by their perpetrators because of their own concealed homosexual traits, or that they would become homosexual as a consequence of their experience. This
also sometimes leads to survivors’ reticence with regard to disclosing and reporting abuse (Dimock, 1988; Kia-Keating et al., 2005; S. V. Hunter, 2009; Hussey, Strom & Singer, 1992). This could also lead to psychological problems for the survivors, such as social withdrawal, isolative behavior, and depression (Scott, 1992). Not only the survivors, but their parents also may have significant concerns over the developing sexual and gender identities of their children due to the abuse (Deblinger & Heflin, 1996; McGuffey, 2008; Rogers & Terry, 1984), which in turn may exacerbate the anxieties and fears of the survivors. In a study of parental responses to child sexual abuse, McGuffey (2008) found that many fathers whose sons had been abused believed that their sons needed some sort of additional intervention on their part, because these children had been abused by other men. Some fathers used traditional ‘masculine’ activities such as sports to help their sons overcome the adversity of sexual abuse, since they believed that boys could learn how to compete and dominate on a sports field, especially since they had been dominated by other males during their abuse. Many other parents believed that boys needed to learn to be aggressive so as to prevent their masculinity from being compromised.

These fears and anxieties over a perceived loss of masculinity may translate into a profound sense of shame for some survivors. As Feiring, Taska, and Lewis (2002) have pointed out, the “phenomenological experience of shame is a desire to hide the damaged self from others, to disappear, or die” and that this shame for the survivors is a “state in which the whole self feels defective, often as a result of a perceived failure to meet self-imposed standards” (p. 79). These standards are often the norms, values and practices associated with the cultural ideal of masculinity.

Conclusion
The idea of hegemonic masculinity provides an important and useful lens to study and understand the experiences boys and men who are survivors of sexual abuse during childhood. Hegemonic masculinity defines the standards for ‘being a man’ in society. Heteronormativity, homophobia, misogyny, invulnerability and emotionlessness are some of the core components of hegemonic masculinity. Child sexual abuse can be a harrowing experience for any person, made worse by demands and expectations of hegemonic masculinity, which may lead to silencing of survivors, victim-blaming or self-blaming, and fears regarding being ‘unmanly’ among survivors. The reason why child sexual abuse is a gender-transgressive experience for many boys and men survivors is because of the individual and societal notions of hegemonic masculinity that are rooted in patriarchal norms and values. Patriarchy therefore becomes a double-edged sword that not only oppresses girls and women survivors, but also hurts boys and men survivors, blames them for their abuse experiences, and renders them invisible within the mainstream discourses on child sexual abuse.
References


Hegemonic masculinity and child sexual abuse


Chapter 14

The circumcision ritual as a rite of passage into manhood: The narrative of becoming a man through a case study of Turkey

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Abstract
When works related to gender studies are examined, it could be said that most of them focus on women and femininity, and new discourse and politics are produced accordingly, it is important to incorporate man and masculinity into the problematic when considering the relation between men and women as a social construct. This is to emphasize the need for understanding gender inequality which is a particular concern needed not only for the oppressed but also for the oppressor, the one who has the power and who is known to have the privileged potential of masculine practices. Thus, while analyzing practices of masculinity, working with the knowledge of how masculinity is defined, produced, and knowing what it means to society is helpful in explaining the reasons for the continuity of male hegemony, both geographically and historically.

Regarding the above mentioned reasons, this work in general has the aim of focusing on men who have to adopt the social roles that are imposed on them and internalize the values of masculine power, obeying the myth of masculinity in the patriarchal system. Hence, this work attempts to analyze how men are made to learn to be a “man” through particular social practices. In this context, what will be discussed here in this paper is the perception of circumcision in Turkish Islamic society; a) whether the ritual of circumcision is conceived a ritual of masculinity which is constituted through language and discourse, b) whether it emerges from the private sphere and expands to the public one, c) if it is legitimized and respected in the public sphere by the society. The discussion will be held through data gained as a result of in-depth-interviews conducted with men who have experienced this practice—circumcision. Within this framework, family albums and circumcision photos of interviewers including my brother, other images and texts of circumcision invitation cards will be examined.

“I was circumcised at the age of 8. I remember a time when I had no idea about the concept of circumcision. I didn’t know what circumcision meant then. Later on, when I attended older kids’ circumcision ceremonies, as a child, I began to understand what it means more or less. To me, circumcision is a ceremony, you know, the kind of ceremony that fascinates you when you enter. Therefore, I thought of it as something inevitable. They would say, ‘This one is not circumcised.’ So, you know everyone will be circumcised eventually. There is no escaping this. Indeed, in those days when we were in the toilet together with our friends, we would tease each other saying, ‘You still aren’t circumcised, when are you going to be?’ Those who are older than me gave me this weird impression, because you can’t be a man without being circumcised. I mean, as if you become a completely different man when you are circumcised, you rise to a higher social status. And so, even if you are a child, you are conscious of it. Real men get circumcised!” (1985, Adapazarı)

Sitting across from me, they tell me all about their masculinity and manhood. I listen quietly, trying not to make any reactions. They tell me what kind of a man they are, or rather, the story of ‘how they became a man’. Each of them tell me about that moment, which is the first moment of celebration and

* I would like to thank my dear friends Feride Eralp and Yaprak Sarıışık who translated this paper for me.

** All quotations from my interviews with men have been reproduced with their permission.
joy for some, or a memory they have wanted to forget about throughout their lives for others, reliving the pain or the pride they have felt... “They start telling a story, in which they were once the prince and out of the blue, accompanied by indescribable feelings and disappointment, have transformed into a frog.” However, later on as the seemingly frog-like body “becomes masculine” and as those around it attach more meanings to it, this time they find themselves sitting on the king’s throne with their specter. Each word that they use while telling the story, demonstrates evidently that within that moment they felt themselves to be kings; they thus sanctify such a ‘ritual of being made into a man’ for the generations to come. Because, the body experiences and touches upon the sacred through rituals. Everyday life operates through religious rituals or temporal ceremonies. How the body is transformed into a social entity thus begins to be revealed.***

An overview of the gender studies literature in Turkey shows that, to date most studies focus on the woman and femininity and construct (new) discourses and politics along these lines. Yet, the woman and femininity constitute only a certain dimension of gender and gender studies. Therefore, while re-conceptualizing and problematizing the relationships between the woman and man and their social construction, it is important to include the ‘man’ and ‘masculinity’ as well. Above all, such an approach highlights the necessity of understanding not only the oppressed, but also the powerful and the ‘practices of masculinity’ with their potential of privilege, in understanding gender-based inequalities through conceptualization of gender. Examining practices of masculinity opens up new questions to focus on such as: How is masculinity defined, produced, and what does it mean for the society? Such a perspective also allows us to shed light on the reasons underlying the geographical and historical perseverance of male hegemony and develop arguments to that effect. Therefore, studying men’s experiences in more detail and allowing room for their own discourses and practices in research constitute a significant step towards pluralistic questioning of power and hegemony.

Along these lines, this study aims to examine the myth of masculinity embraced by men, whom are obliged by the male hegemony to abide by certain social roles and norms within the patriarchal system, and therefore how male individuals are made into ‘men’, through a specific social practice. Within this context, I will focus on the assumption that the circumcision ceremony in Turkey, a Muslim society, is a ritual of masculinity that is constructed linguistically and discursively, nourished by and situated in the private sphere, and ultimately justified in the public sphere and accepted socially.

The age-long belief, also extending into modernity, that young men should go through certain ceremonies or rituals in order to achieve “real” manhood and practices along these lines, continuously reproduce the accepted male identity, while also enabling these practices to be socially confirmed. Only in this way a male identity to speak of can exist, and this identity becomes socially justified. Within this context, social institutions that serve as bridges in the passage towards manhood, religion and family, still form the basis of collective memory. A lifestyle and rituals structured by a rigid hierarchy, absolute obedience and strict rules, constitute cornerstones of “the culture of masculinity”. At this point, in order to analyze of hegemony, it is necessary to examine elements that directly constitute hegemony and power. In this study, by making men talk, I focus on key issues that are politically left out in the gender studies literature, through questions on circumcision and masculinity directed at male informants, and thus try to touch directly upon men and their masculinities.

I also aim to move beyond common debates on health and religion, and reveal how the circumcision ritual directly relates to transition into manhood. The circumcision ritual, in which a healthy and sensitive body part is cut off from a child who does not have the chance to object, defend himself or give consent, can be read as a symbol of the male child’s departure from the mother’s world and transition into the world of men. When considered from this perspective, it seems quite likely that the legend of the social acceptance of this phenomenon will never cease to exist and will continue to last for centuries. In the field of social sciences, there are numerous studies that focus on traditional practices on the body and the social control of the body. Because, the body has

*** After listening to the stories of circumcision by a group of men, I needed a brief pause before conducting new interviews. Within this pause, I tried to construct circumcision in the way they have described and with the language they have used.
long been used as a tool for social control and shaped into socially accepted images and norms accordingly. However, within the context of Turkey, the current study is the first of its kind as it examines the relationship between circumcision and masculinity through the case study of Turkey, using the ethnographic method from a feminist perspective.

The “Words” of the contract as stated in family albums

I am the youngest child in my family; exactly 25 years ago, I am being put to sleep on my paternal grandmother’s lap during my brother’s circumcision ceremony, which has been delayed with the hopes the younger child, I, would be born a son and the two brothers would have their circumcision ceremony together. Here I am in this frame, the little girl in her father’s lap...

This photograph from our family album, of a unique moment from my childhood, by looking awry finds its place in my mind as the moment my playmate is about to become a part of the ‘myth of masculinity’. Whenever I look at this photograph, this frame ceases to be a memory filled with happy recollections for my family and me, and instead transforms into a sign that represents the ‘image of masculinity’ embraced by my culture. Fostered by my personal history, as my eyes go over the details in the photographs, I have more questions in my mind: How is masculinity constructed? How is it embraced, adopted and internalized by the following generations? Which factors or role models are effective in the construction and legitimization of male subjectivity? And, what does masculinity represent? How are these questions, to which I could keep adding more, related to the photographs in our family albums; and what kind of possibilities and further questions does this relationship open up? After reading all these questions, would you please go back and look through your own family albums?

A significant milestone in the myth of masculinity, “circumcision” is defined as the first and most important rite of passage into manhood, and it is still practiced in Jewish and Muslim societies. This ritual, prepared through various ceremonies, evidently carries symbolic meanings. Circumcision is carried out as a mandatory religious practice in Jewish and Muslim societies; in Turkey, it is considered a significant ceremony in transition to manhood and celebrated with festivities. On this day, which has been planned by the family since the boy’s birth, the boy gets ready in his fancy outfit and huge specter in hand, to take a step towards manhood, or in other words, to enter the gender roles defined culturally fit for a mature, adult male. Therefore contemplating about not only the practice of such socially accepted rituals, but also the existence of various tools that enable the meanings attached to these rituals to be transmitted culturally and sustained, is essential in making sense of transition ceremonies like circumcision. This transmission enables the reproduction of social sanctions and approvals of the individual through ceremonies. The individual is born into and thus categorized within a certain religious, social, economic or sexual identity or group, the codes of which he/she then feels obliged to embrace and conform to throughout his/her life.

Examining the tools that enable the construction of identity (‘male’ identity referred to in this study) in modern societies in this way, its transmission through specific codes, and therefore the reproduction and acceptance of similar codes through different historical contexts; establishes the basis for laying out the how such rituals last and their compatibility with the changing structure of hegemonies. When the photographs that make up the basis of this article are considered as one such tool, especially within the
context of family albums; they stand out as not only true records of the world as seen and experienced, but also “tools of memory” that protect the legitimacy of masculinity.

Photographs in family albums, especially those from weddings, births, festivities, all of which are expected to be experienced in a ceremonial atmosphere, bear significant traces of the organization of everyday life, workings of traditional social processes, and regulation of social behaviors. Photographs of this kind are indispensable documents that demonstrate within the family that the institution of the family is functional. They not only verify the lived experiences, but also enable the transmission of cultural codes. In societies like Turkey, photographs from circumcision ceremonies are indispensable parts of family albums. Furthermore, photographs of boys who have just been circumcised are often used to decorate walls in houses, thus made continuously visible; through these frozen frames in time, that “moment” becomes eternalized and attributed sacredness.

Take a look at this dance by the father and son, who has just been circumcised. The meaning of the pose in this photograph can only be understood within the context of the symbolic order it is situated in. The father and the circumcised son are in the center of the frame; they are standing up, dancing proudly. The father’s pride can be seen on his face. As he accompanies his son in his blue suit, he is supporting his son in “becoming a man” with his arms wide open. Meanwhile, the child is smiling and feeling happy, as with this pose he is able to perform what is expected of him within traditional norms. In this society that values a proud stance, an upright head and glorifies the respect for these attitudes, it is truly important to enact such dignified and powerful images. Within the framework of traditional codes, the posing father and son are admired by the onlookers, engulfing the viewers into an enchanting world. While being pulled into this enchanting world, we also bear witness to the existence of what we see, that is the esteemed and praised masculinity and manhood. The photograph proves to us that this moment is everlasting and it continuously renews itself. Standing across a photograph, our consciousness forms a connection with the cultural history of the memory, thus socially and culturally encoding what it sees. This act essentially enables deciphering the relationship with hegemony from a different perspective. As the relationship formed between this act of witnessing and the object and memory is based on the cultural; it also demonstrates that materials used both in public and private spheres help legitimize the ideological discourse of power.
What we often see in photographs of circumcision ceremonies, and is often vivid in our minds, is the image of a boy on a horse, wearing his cape and holding his scepter. All these details in our mental imagery are indeed quite significant. The giant crown on a child’s head; the scepter in his hand, which reinforces his belief that he can rule the entire world; and his dignified stance on a horse that frightens all those around it when it rears, present to us the collection of the fragments of objects and their signifiers in our minds.

The details that construct the photographic space enable us to remember that which exists in our mind through associations. Thus, internalized concepts and images become mentally inseparable. These social images and the order established through these images, referred to as “culture of remembrance” by M. Halbwachs, transmit mental images across generations. Within this context, it is essential for images to be continuously repeated or performed. These repetitions enable the relativity between new social processes and the cultural codes that images refer to. Therefore, beyond the associated cultural meanings, because the tradition of circumcision is constantly repeated, it becomes an indispensable part of the culture and reconstructs it on a symbolic level though visualization of repetitions.

In societies where the circumcision ritual is commonly practiced, boys (just like their fathers) step into their new lives as “men” through circumcision. In this context, the father should also be considered as symbolic power; “the image and the function of the father perpetuate themselves into every child, even if the children do not know the father. The father has been fully integrated with the constituted authority. Domination has outgrown personal relationships and created institutions, in order to systematically meet human needs in an ever-increasing order.”

This study aims to systematically and thoroughly examine how the male body is disciplined to become a cultural symbol within everyday practices; it explores the social codes of the physical impact experienced and reflected upon the male sexual organ, the penis. Within the framework of “one day”, the study examines the origins of circumcision, a tradition that has been practiced for centuries and considered a transition into manhood, and its ceremonialization; and what this practice entails in Turkey. Through narratives of masculinity and manhood told by men, this study provides answers to questions such as the following: What kinds of preparations are carried out prior to this cherished day; who are the main actors of this day; what social purposes does this practice serve; what are the cultural codes that cultivate it?

Meanwhile, while I tried to analyze the narratives of “masculinity” I have listened to, I have realized all over again that the concept of masculinity affects numerous aspects of the social sphere. As Serpil Sancar emphasizes, when one speaks of masculinity, “it is unclear whether it is referring to men’s behaviors, or masculinity as a constructed identity, or masculinity represented relationally, or masculinities presented as images, or masculinity constructed as a discourse; or whether it is referring to masculinity as directly experienced, observed and practically performed.” The continuous hegemony is one of the most important areas of control masculinity holds within the patriarchal system; and this state of continuity causes masculinity and male sexuality to be socially praised and encouraged in Turkey. Therefore, through social institutions, which necessitate living in a universe established by the society of men and assure us that it is an undeniably real universe, we bear witness to the legitimization of the existence of masculinity in the public sphere.

1 ASSMANN, Jan (2001), Kültürbel Belok (Cultural Memory), (Trs.) Ayşe Tekin, Ayrıntı, İstanbul.
2 MARCUSE, Herbert (1968), Aşk ve Uygur (Eros and Civilization), (Trs.) Seçkin Çağan, May, İstanbul, s:98.
3 Serpil SANCAR, Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar (Masculinity: The Impossible Power, Metis, İstanbul, 20.
The circumcision ritual as a rite of passage into manhood

Social acceptance of sacred masculinity

In mythological narratives, which can be traced back to thousands of years ago, one can encounter stories of circumcision that have various cultural functions. In these stories circumcision may sometimes appear as a sign of belonging to a certain tribe, a way to punish (castrate) prisoners of war, a sign to recognize enemies or to distinguish oneself from others, and at other times as a symbol of transition from childhood to adulthood, proof of one’s strength, a symbol of fertility and sacredness resulting from blood letting, a way to prevent sexual pleasure, protection from diseases, a tradition of fulfilling religious rules by sacrificing a human being in the name of God.

Circumcision, referred to as the transition from childhood to manhood, has found its place within the belief system as a ceremony of acceptance. It can be argued that this tradition is intended for maintaining and reinforcing a particular religious, cultural, and even familial order. Ceremonies serve to continue the transmission of tradition across generations. Thus, a survey of ‘transition rituals’, such as the circumcision ritual that constitute a concrete process that unifies the community, proves crucial in understanding how tradition is transmitted, kept alive, and thus made to fulfill its social function. Once transition rituals or ceremonies have been completed successfully, the child is considered to have been initiated and included within the world of men; all men share an enhanced sense of self-worth at their ceremonies of transition into manhood. These ceremonies involve interventions on the body through various practices. While some of these practices leave temporary marks on the body, most marks left on the body are permanent. As a result of these ceremonies, the culture is inscribed on the body.

In existent narratives of transition to manhood ceremonies, we can observe certain recurring themes and reinforcement of their symbolic value. Transition ceremonies are often portrayed with an emphasis on pain, blood, struggle and the ultimately earned (merited) superior status, much like heroic narratives. The theme of blood seems to be the most significant indicator of the end of virginity at the transition ceremony and of belonging to a group. The consecutive processes of puberty, marriage and loss of virginity are often considered to be the symbol of transition into social adulthood. Various rites and rituals are used to mark the end of this process and to complete transition into adulthood. Since thousands of years before the three major religions, both circumcision and virginity have been traditions embraced by numerous societies. Both are related to genitals and sexuality; both have been sanctified and celebrated with festivities; and both have brought along physical and psychological suffering.

Symbols and symbolic gestures are crucial for transition ceremonies. Transition ceremonies constitute social and cultural acceptance of changes that are either currently happening or that have already happened. Therefore, the most important aspect of these ceremonies is the social acceptance of changes taking place. Weddings, too, are filled with such symbolic moments. “It is commonly believed that the white wedding dress is a sign of the bride’s virginity and purity... This might be because, the wedding dress is thought to symbolize the white sheets, upon which the bride is traditionally expected to bleed upon on the nuptial night in order to prove her virginity according to some cultures.”4 Along these lines, the long white shirt used to dress the circumcised child and the white sheets spread on the circumcision bed may carry similar symbolic meanings.

When various narratives are read together, it can be argued that through circumcision the man completes the transition process and attains a somewhat superior status — a status representative of power that is separated from the female world with pain and blood. With regards to circumcision, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, refers to the Oedipus Complex and associates the fear of castration that results from this complex with circumcision. According to Freud, circumcision is a surgical procedure that is practiced ceremonially in front of the public, and the ultimately earned (merited) superior status, much like heroic narratives. The theme of blood seems to be the most significant indicator of the end of virginity at the transition ceremony and of belonging to a group. The consecutive processes of puberty, marriage and loss of virginity are often considered to be the symbol of transition into social adulthood. Various rites and rituals are used to mark the end of this process and to complete transition into adulthood. Since thousands of years before the three major religions, both circumcision and virginity have been traditions embraced by numerous societies. Both are related to genitals and sexuality; both have been sanctified and celebrated with festivities; and both have brought along physical and psychological suffering.

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4 BLANK, Hanne (2012), Bekaretin El Değmemiş Tarihi (Virgin: The Untouched History), (Trs.) Emek Ergün, İletişim, İstanbul, s: 168.
“He injected half of the syringe into the right groin, and the other half into the left groin. They took me out to the balcony so that I could get some fresh air. Women were sitting in the kitchen. I told my mother, I am not going to be circumcised, tell everyone to leave! I started crying, and so did she. Everyone said, the child started crying because he saw you, and so they took my mother to the bedroom. I was trying to take shelter in my mother. Following that was quite a painful process; they were not able to hold me back. About five men in their 30s on average, were not able to lift me off the floor in the middle of the living room. Out of pure desperation. No one was able to control me, they literally laid me down by brute force and cut it forcibly. They put me down like a calf that is running away at the Feast of Sacrifice [Eid al-Adha]! I did not want them to make the cut at that moment, I even remember kicking one of them. They wouldn’t let me look. When I looked, I saw the scissors and kicked one of them. My maternal uncle was making fun of me. I was screaming, ‘Mommy, I don’t want to.’ At the time, there was a famous song that went, ‘Daddy, I don’t want to.’ As I screamed, ‘Mommy I don’t want to’, my uncle kept saying, ‘Daddy I don’t want to’, and made fun of me. I was infuriated. But you have no choice, it will be cut off!” (1984, Kırklareli)

“My mother was rolling a rolling pin while I was getting circumcised, so that it would be over with easily and without pain. While they cut it, they also cut a rooster at the same time. They say, ‘It has happened, it’s over, Maşallah [Praise be-May God preserve him from evil!]’ and then they sacrifice the rooster.” (1952, İzmir)

In circumcision, birth and menstruation, a certain blood flow is involved. Among these three, bloodletting plays an important role in the circumcision ritual as well. For it to be a “real” and “complete” ceremony, blood must flow from the male genital. Another meaning of this blood flow is the blood shed for the sake of the contract; in a way, it is the price one has to pay to become a “man” or to belong to “us”.

Circumcision is the phenomenon whereby a boy attains higher status, socially and culturally, as the foreskin on his penis is physically removed. Circumcision is public; therefore, the child becomes a male member of the family, a male citizen in the society, and a fellow member of the community of men. This tradition, which is handed from father to son, resembles the throne; as if the father is passing his throne in the family to his son. This is why it has to be a public event; he has to demonstrate it symbolically in the public sphere as he passes it on.

“In Turkey on the one hand there’s this notion of making sure the child does not remember it; he should have it at the earliest age possible, he should have it at the hospital, immediately after he is born. On the other hand, to the contrary of this notion, it is celebrated as a ritual, a ritual of transition into manhood. I believe that increasingly circumcision has been attached such a meaning, that is, the masculinity aspect has become emphasized, foregrounded. On the one hand they say make sure the child doesn’t remember it, but if circumcision is a ritual of masculinity, it becomes a thing to remember. [The child] should be 3 years old, 5 years old so that you can dress him up. For the modern, secular families, it does not matter whether it is remembered, whether it is at an early age or not. However, for more conservative, religious families, [circumcision] captures both a religious desire and the desire for masculinity. Conservative families think, let’s wait until he turns 7, then we can celebrate it with a ceremony. Masculinity constructed through circumcision necessitates waiting.” (1984, Adapazarı)

Narratives on how circumcision is played out in the public sphere, the role played by the state in the construction of masculinity, how the public approves of local communal circumcision ceremonies in which children aged between 3-7 are collectively traumatized; in other words, narratives which all revolve around the circumcision phenomenon, constitute the essential arguments that make circumcision both necessary and perpetual. Although it is often emphasized that circumcision is practiced for religious reasons, when we examine its origins and related practices, we must also decode the social and cultural meanings attached to circumcision as a ritual.

“At my circumcision ceremony, I don’t remember the first strike by the scissors. I only remember the approach of the scissors. I don’t remember the pain very clearly, either; I guess I must have repressed it so much. If they have asked me, I wouldn’t have let them do it. But at the same time, they enthralled you in such a way; for instance, wearing that cape. I mean, you feel like a superhero or something, above all there is a cape involved. The cape means everything. The cape is not something you wear in everyday life. Once you wear it, your entire appearance and character are altered. They put a fez on your head, it’s all feathery, glittery and gilded. For instance, even after my circumcision I had
The circumcision ritual as a rite of passage into manhood

kept on looking at those circumcision garments. Once in a while I would feel like wearing them again. The special circumcision outfit had completely fascinated me. You can’t tell whether it’s the event or you that is important, but you can’t help it happening at some point. This is something you have to do. It is instilled into your mind that if people care about this so much, there must be a good reason for it.” (1984, Adapazarı)

Just as pain and suffering are transformed into the means for acceptance in the social sphere, performing ceremonies is the means for legitimizing the ritual in question in public and making it “visible”. Circumcision ceremonies, which are still commonly practiced in our country, fulfill religious duties and at the same time, they serve as indicators of social status. Just as the circumcision ceremony signifies a circumcised boy’s transition into manhood, it also indicates the status of the boy’s family. While social status, economic resources, whether one lives in rural or urban areas, and respective regional characteristics are determining factors in circumcision ceremonies; ultimately the visibility of the ceremony enables the ceremonialized moment to become perpetual and continuously remembered by the collective memory.

“Real men must be circumcised”

“...Just a minute ago, you were a prince, now you are being sacrificed over there, it’s just not fair! I mean, if I’m the prince, let me go, I order you to do so.” (1981, İstanbul)

In Muslim societies like Turkey, circumcision has continued to exist as the symbol of transition into religion and as a religious obligation for men. Today, many men in Turkey cannot feel that they belong in Islam unless they are circumcised. However, circumcision is not mentioned in the Holy Koran; neither is there an Eid to commemorate circumcision. Nevertheless, in most narratives of circumcision, we see that circumcision is understood as a ritual mandated by religion, transmitted to male children as a sine qua non religious obligation.

The fact that circumcision is understood and practiced as an Islamic obligation, allows the circumcision ceremony to be repeated and preserved in the collective memory and transmitted to new generations. This is why it is important to scrutinize in detail the day of the circumcision ceremony, in order to comprehend the semantic codes embedded within the ceremony. Where does the significance of this day originate from, what kind of preparations are carried out for this day, who play active roles in realizing this ceremony, and which factors make the circumcision day so important and meaningful for the male child? What kinds of practices do we encounter in the way circumcision, the symbolic transition to manhood, is performed? Which emotions come to the foreground? Are there any particular requirements for this ceremonial and festive day?

Rituals, relationships formed with objects, spaces; as well as the meanings attached to them, constantly change depending on the context in which they are encoded and decoded. This process plays an active role in terms of making sense of the meanings attached to the ongoing practices of the past in conjunction with meanings being shaped within today’s politics. Within social sciences, studies that focus on understanding everyday practices, politics of marginalized identities, the effort to see outside from inside; and throughout these efforts, ethnographic methodology that pays attention and gives voice to personal experiences, gets to the actual source of information, can be determining in revealing the truth in the realm of social sciences.

In studies where personal experiences and narratives constitute the primary sources, like feminist studies, we must be cautious not to develop a unilateral perspective, when we base our study on the discourse constructed by the person recounting his/
her experience. The best way to avoid this is through situating the individual subject’s narratives well within the relevant social context.

Along these lines, the current study recognizes the network of relationships stated above and assumes that analyzing the construction of masculinity through everyday practices and focusing on the single day of circumcision constitute one of the ways to open to discussion which social norms and sanctions are at play in the existence of this cherished day. The day of the child’s first step into manhood, which has been anticipated by the family and the child for weeks, months, and perhaps for years, and to which all relatives and neighbors will bear witness, is designed to be celebrated with various preparations. This is a day shaped by the decisions of the child’s mother and father alone, without the intervention of any “outsiders”. In short, this is the day the family encodes as the first celebration for their son, the first moment in which he will give joy to his parents; inscribes in history; and the photographs from which will decorate the walls of the family home. During this day, from the moment he wakes up until the day ends, the child to be circumcised experiences a host of different and indescribable emotional states (such as excitement, fear, anxiety, joy, sadness) all intertwined with one another. In their own words, this is the day they are to become princes. Perhaps, for the child, it is the state of jumping out of bed and rushing outside; because this will be the day he will get to ride a horse for the first time in his life. Or perhaps, this is the first day that will make his father proud, and the first day his mother will feel like her little boy is drifting away from her. After this day, the child will understand later on that he has attained a superior status amongst his friends, and he is no longer a child but a young man in the eyes of his neighbors and relatives. This is an important day, when he will be made to feel all the theories and practices in his life revolve around a single body part of his. This is a day of strategic importance, which will gradually become subject of jokes, emphasized in his relationships with girls, and eventually turn into a story worth sharing with his own children and grandchildren in the future.

Focusing on the day of the circumcision ceremony is one of the possible ways to explain the symbolic meanings attached to the male sexual organ, the penis (phallus) and the reasons underlying the production and reproduction of the inequality between different sexes across different geographies. Circumcision is the story of different masculinities; of understanding what ‘being a man’ corresponds to in this geography; of becoming strong through suffering and pain; of becoming a man in tears; of a practice that has continued without questioning; in short, it is the story of how men in Turkey become men, in “their own narratives”.

**An ethnographic survey of one day within the circumcision ceremony**

Which room should the bed be set up in? How will the lacework look on the bed? What kind of lace would create a more stylish look: air lace, needlepoint or embroidery? When will the tour of his highness, the Eyüp Sultan mosque, be made and with whom? Who will hold the child during the circumcision? Well, then, who will hold the mother? What kind of laments will the mother make as she rolls the rolling pin she holds? How much rice and zerde, that desert with saffron, will be cooked? When will the thick syrup be poured over yeast fritters to prepare **lokma**? Will the child promenade on a horse, or will he arrive in a car? The young prince comes with his sceptre in hand, his special circumcision cap on his head and his cape trailing in his wake. Now let us try to look more closely at what kind of life awaits him at home by way of following the narratives of the interviewees.

“The special costume is that diagonal strap that says ‘Maşallah’ (Praise be!-May God preserve him from evil!), and they also give you a sceptre, a kind of baton to hold. On your head you have something that really doesn’t look even remotely recognizable, something that is supposedly a sort of fez. Prior to it you visit certain places wearing that outfit. The most important of these places is Eyüp Sultan. This is what always happens. And of course Telli Baba. That is a kind of shrine. You go there and your family prays. Its a long prayer, a multi-prayer even, composed of many commas. And we appear there before the Saint. So that he sees me and does not forget me! That area is of course also considered holy ground in the Muslim mind, so you will definitely go to Eyüp. You will go wearing the outfit, as I have explained, you either walk by the shrine or go inside. You are the first grandchild, the first male grandchild, the grandson. Maybe you are the first citizen who will go through this process, and all this could
The preparations begin days, even months in advance. Actually, the details of the circumcision ceremony have all been figured out in the family’s imagination long before the boy is even born. Indeed, this is the first celebration for the little boy, the first moment in which he will give joy to his parents, his first step into manhood. Therefore, in theory, preparations have started many years prior to the day of his circumcision. Since what is at stake is the reputation of the family, questions such as where the potential ceremony will be held, who will attend it, whether the boys outfit will be sultan or military officer-style, what the many circumcision accessories will be, must be considered at great length. And so the day is planned, designed, carefully calculated. Here I would like to point out that all of these preparations in question, these preparations that sustain and continue the traditions, are those that an urban family would like to point out that all of these preparations in question, these preparations that sustain and continue the traditions, are those that an urban family with a middle-class income would make.

This story begins with the women of the family (the mother, the aunts, etc.) taking the little boy to shop for the upcoming circumcision. The child is bought either a special circumcision outfit or a suit, shirt, cap complete with tinsel decorations, cape and ribbon. Moreover, the specially designed circumcision knickers (the diaper-like cloths that are fastened after circumcision), the towel, circumcision pyjamas, the circumcision dress, and the set of vests are indispensable parts of the general circumcision outfit. The clothing for circumcision is usually mostly white, blue and red. The necessary accessories other than this intricate outfit are, for one, the jewelry box and jewelry cushion required for the jewels and gold that the guests will pin on the child who is being circumcised as a form of reward, as well as pincushions in order to enable the actual pinning of these jewels. Furthermore, there must be the halay handkerchief for the halay that will be danced with the circumcised boy in the middle, as well as spoons to use in the dance. If a henna night will take place, the head covering, the gloves, the candle, the henna pouch and the henna tray must all be ready. And of course there is the absolute must: the sceptre that the prince shall hold in his hand. Finally, there are the shoes or slippers, the traditional amulets that are to protect the child from the evil eye, the Maşallah, decorations, and something that has become common in the recent years: albums and scrapbooks that are put together so that the child may remember this day when he is older. The invitations to the circumcision ceremony, with which the family proclaims that their male children shall be circumcised, circumcision candies that are to be offered to the guests upon arrival, the various nuts and snacks that will be put in small pouches to give out to guests who come to the henna night, the turkish delight that is stuffed into the boys mouth during the actual circumcision, the local version of lokma (a sweet made of yeast fritters in thick syrup) prepared for the occasion, and the almond syrup that is given out during the mevlid5 are other important elements of the circumcision ceremony.

Before the boy to be circumcised comes to the living room, it must be cleaned up and tidied. The windowpanes are cleaned and the curtains are taken down, washed, and hung up again. The heirloom lacework that is kept in chests for special occasions is taken out and placed in the most visible area possible within the room. This could be the top of the small coffee table in the middle of the room as well as the top of the long rectangular table around which the whole extended family can fit comfortably. As the lacework and table cloths are put in place, the antique pieces are also carefully and meticulously placed in their specific locations on the shelves of the buffet; and finally, it is time to lay out the dinnerware. Depending on the number of people that are expected extra dinnerware that matches the ones owned by the family itself, is provided by relatives and neighbours. Again, since the house where the circumcision is taking place shall be crowded, extra chairs are placed next to the sofa set that has been scrubbed clean. Hence, the living room is prepared for the occasion and its door is closed to prevent dust from settling.

After the room is done, preparations for the circumcision bed begin. A bedstead is placed in a convenient room in the house, and the wall that it leans against is decorated with a myriad of stickers. Balloons, colourful decorations, certain pieces.

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5 Mevlid (Mawlid): Mevlid is the annual celebration of the prophet Muhammad’s birthday. Mevlid is also a celebration of any birth, death, circumcision, wedding etc. in Muslim regions.
of lacework, and ribbons are hung from the ceiling. Strings are attached from the ceiling to the four corners of the bed, and these strings are decorated with needlepoint embroidered crepes and quilts, which are either all in a single colour or in multiple colours. Lacework bedding and satin sheets are taken out of chests yet again, and the bed is completed by setting out specially prepared sheets, blankets and pillows. If a bicycle has been bought for the boy prior to the circumcision, then that bicycle is most certainly placed by his bedside. The preparation of the circumcision bed, the buying of circumcision clothes, the visit to the Turkish baths prior to circumcision, the other visits (such as Eyüp Sultan), the welcoming of the guests, the fact that children from poor families are circumcised along with the rich children, the merriments and festivities organized for the children, the feasts prepared for the adults are all examples of the social dimensions of circumcision.

The circumcision ceremony usually begins with the 'circumcision henna'. Thus, some circumcision ceremonies end up lasting two days. On the first night the henna is applied to the child’s hand. For some, the henna that is applied is made in the shape of a gun. Along with the boy to be circumcised the women also apply henna to their hands.

“A day before the circumcision, the child, wearing his circumcision outfit, is taken to the Turkish bath along with the children of relatives, by the men who are invited to the circumcision. After this, visits are paid to relatives and the boy kisses the hands of his elders. If the ceremony is happening in Istanbul, paying a visit to Eyüp Sultan mosque has taken its place among the indispensable traditions surrounding the circumcision ceremony. Here, prayers are made in order to ensure the auspiciousness of the circumcision and the success of the operation. Following this ritual, the child is taken to the location where the circumcision is to take place, along with those who were invited to the ceremony. Usually, the child is brought on horseback. As he sits atop his horse, clad in full costume, carrying his sceptre looking ready for the new social world he is about to enter, most every child is actually quite afraid. He is afraid of this stateliness, this grandioseness; he is afraid of the many eyes watching him, of the majesty of the horse, of the changing attitudes around him, of being severed from the mother, of the animal that is about to be sacrificed for him, and of being about to be sacrificed himself for something he does not quite fully understand. He is afraid of the jeering and mocking glances of his friends and he is afraid of the power latent within the sceptre he holds in his hand.

As the child passes among the men, who have their palms open in prayer, on his way to where he will be circumcised he does not yet know for what purpose the stranger (the circumciser) awaiting him stands there. Usually, in order not to scare the children beforehand, full information about
the circumcision itself is kept from them, because circumcision is a terrifying thing for a child. What he is told is that a tiny piece of skin will be removed from his body and he will feel no more pain than in a mosquito bite; yet children do not really fully believe this story. The moment in which the child encounters the circumciser is entertaining for some, because he is either the neighbourhood barber or a person who has circumcised other members of the family. For others, the encounter is traumatic, because before him stands the stereotype of the old man with razor in hand. This classic profile of the ‘uncle circumciser’ has been branded into the memories of many a child. In the stories this uncle circumciser is described as a middle-aged man who, usually, has a moustache, and as he beckons the child with one hand, in his other hand he holds the razor. The children have always been mad at uncle circumciser for cutting a piece off of their willies, and later on, when they are older (i.e. during the interviews) they keep accusing uncle circumciser of having cut off too much. Yes, after that first encounter between the child and the circumciser, the circumcision itself, the event for which the whole family has gathered together, takes place under the worried and excited gazes of onlookers. In that moment the child is held tightly by his kirve.

The child refrains from screaming and crying; he dares not do so around the male family elders who proclaim things such as, “Do you think it is easy to be a man! You have to merit it.” As the circumcision procedure ends, the child is now ready to be a man. This day has been awaited for years and years, and the preparations for it have lasted many days. Yet its whole meaning is hidden within the couple-minute-long time period of the operation. These couple of minutes hold the proof that the child is now a man. The child who becomes a man through circumcision – circumcision, which can also be defined as a mark left on the body – will understand the meaning of this mark more fully in the future. Once he comes to comprehend that it will create obstacles in his life if he, as a man, has not undergone the circumcision procedure, he will be able to learn that circumcision itself is really not about religion, but rather it is a tradition that has lasted solely due to social and cultural reasons. Most probably he will then continue to uphold this tradition in his own family as well.

“Since you cannot isolate yourself from society, getting circumcised is the prerequisite for becoming a man. We must look at this from the vantage point of the society. I believe that the ritual is necessary. You must be circumcised in order to be a man. This is why I would also get my child circumcised, and would do so with all the pomp and circumstance associated with circumcision ceremonies.” (1985, Ankara)

After the circumcision is over, what is next is the whole gift-giving ritual. The child is laid down on the bed that has been prepared for him, wearing nothing but his circumcision shirt and covering his circumcision area with his fancy circumcision hat or cap. The reason this cap is so sizable and voluminous to begin with is because it has this function of protecting the area that has been cut. Those who have attended the ceremony approach the child one by one, and whether they are going to pin jewels (gold) or money, they do so either on the child himself or on a cushion that has been propped up next to him. Other presents are left on the child’s bed. None of the family members who have pinned gold or money on the child neglect taking photographs one by one with the child because that photograph is the greatest proof that they have witnessed this moment.

The gift is an element that must be emphasized among the traditions of circumcision because it has the effect on the child of appearing as and being a reward for the courage he has shown. The gifting practice, which Marcel Mauss has determined to be one of reciprocal obligation, exists within the practice of circumcision as a form of obligation as well. This is why who the person that gave each gift was is always necessarily found out and declared publicly. This is important because in response to every gift that has been received, a gift must be and is given. One of the signs that shows that circumcision gifts do have an economic dimension is that the gifts themselves are usually expensive and valuable objects. The fact that watches are common circumcision gifts may point to their symbolic meaning regarding the function circumcision ceremonies have as a transition into manhood: The watch means time, and the time now is the time to transition into manhood. Circumcision is the first important transition period in the life of a boy.

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6 The kirve is the person who holds the child still by gripping his arms very tightly in order to prevent any kind of mistake from happening during the operation that could be caused by a sudden movement of the child.
Chapter 14

Theme III: Boyhood interrupted

After the circumcision ceremony: The first step into manhood

The circumcision ritual legitimizes the contract of masculinity, declaring that the child is now a man; and along with modernity this situation becomes symbolic. The penis, which is the symbol of a relationship of hegemony, makes its domination over the male child felt at a very young age through the circumcision ritual. Thus, it ensures that the child is brought up with a sense of mastery and dominance. Rituals that have become conventionalized and even institutionalized cause the body to be experienced, schooled and disciplined through everyday practices; and thus the circumcision ritual that has become accepted as the first step into manhood is consecrated and sanctified within the geography we live in.

"In order to become a man within Turkish society what has to be done is, first of all, get a circumcision. Secondly, you have to take care of the household, look after your woman and your children, keep everything under control, have a certain amount of power and not lose the power you have, build a kind of authority with that power, and sustain your family into the future with that authority. You have to protect that family, which we refer to as a kind of "pack" or "flock", against the outside, against external threats. You also have to preserve internal order, and sometimes preserving this internal order may mean using force, you know, like violence or by pressuring those in the family. You can also do this by using different methods of course. And, you must ensure not only your own sustenance, but also that of your wife and children. All of this is what manhood means in Turkish society." (1980, Aydın)

After the circumcision ends, the process of dressing the wound begins. For the first few hours the child does not really feel the pain from the area where the skin has been cut due to the effect of the presents he is receiving and because of all the painkillers he has been given. The only thing many children think about in that moment are the toy cars, footballs, the uniforms of whatever team they support, and games such as playstation or video games that they have received. The family that is hosting the circumcision ceremony, however, is more interested in who gave what and who pinned how much money or gold on the child. In ceremonies such as this one (i.e. circumcision, marriage, etc.) the way in which families relate to guests may mostly be through the precious objects that have been presented or pinned on to the person or people being celebrated. For instance, the question, “Of whom are you? Whose line are you from?” is known to be a determining factor with regards to the environment within which a person lives, as well as their status. In a similar vein, within celebrations that are conducted in the form of weddings or circumcision ceremonies, especially if the ceremony in question is considered a new beginning in life, the question, “Who gave what? How much did each person present in the form of valuables?” can become very important. It does indeed become the very question that preoccupies the minds of the family that is hosting the ceremony. This is why, in order to follow what has been pinned on the child by whom, one of the women of the family such as the mother or the aunt waits next to the child during the ritual of pinning money and gold. Though they often say they are there in order to hold pins, this is mostly
an excuse; and what they usually do is keep their eyes are on the money or the gold that is being pinned.

The first moment in which the child senses pain is the moment he needs to go to the bathroom. Until then he is either running around the house with his friends, wearing his long white shirt, or lounging in his bed. Then, suddenly, the prospect that he will need to go the bathroom dawns on him and he starts getting afraid. Hence families try to prevent the child from consuming a lot of liquids during the first days following the circumcision.

“So, I was circumcised, and they put me in the bed. That bed had been prepared weeks in advance and carried to the middle of the living room. It had been decorated with lacy stuff and some kind of fancy netting. New bed sheets had been placed on it. A variety of shiny sheets... I became kind of calm and mellow. I slept until 8 or 9. It was like a trauma, all of my energy seemed to seep out of me. I honestly don’t remember much about what happened later. When I woke up I still wasn’t really aware of anything. They told me I needed to go to the toilet. I told them it was burning. They said it was good for it to burn. We managed that, but to be honest, I can’t say that I had any fun. There wasn’t any food left for me. I had to go hungry. I was probably the only person they didn’t take care of and pay attention to during the ceremony. So it felt weird, you know.” (1986, Izmir)

After the fear of the “first pee” is over, the child’s next challenge against pain begins: namely, the process of dressing the wound. Most of the interviewees said that dressing the wound hurts much more than the circumcision itself, and recounted how they wailed and screamed and cried loudly during that process.

“The circumcision itself, and recounted how they wailed and screamed and cried loudly during that process. Since I interviewed people who had been circumcised between the 1960s and the 1990s, apparently in that period the first wound dressing was done using gauze bandages. The penis would be wrapped in gauze bandages, leaving the tip open so the child could pee. This bandage, which, I was told, the children referred to as the “bloody bandage” amongst themselves, would first be opened after 24 hours and this procedure was repeated every day until the wound was healed. That first moment in which the bandage that had stuck to the penis was opened up, was, as they explained, so dreadfully painful for the child that most of the interviewees inadvertently grimaced or clench their hands in ways that made it seem as if they were reliving the pain while recounting it:

“It wasn’t that bad during the circumcision, but the aftermath was horrible. I still remember that part. Especially what happened to me and my brother... So apparently our circumciser was kind of a novice, a beginner. After the circumcision they do something, like they dress the wound. So this guy, I don’t know how he managed, but this idiot (if I may say so?) did something ridiculous as he was dressing the wound and left the cotton stuck on the wound itself. You actually have to remove that. Normally, you aren’t supposed to leave it there, it has to be taken off immediately. So usually they do something with vaseline and it comes off quite easily. But for us it was not so. When the time came to open and remove the bandages me and my brother, we were in a way worse state than when we were being circumcised. We got them opened at the same time. My mum and dad were home. There were some other people, but right now I can’t remember who they were. Because it had stuck completely to the wound, that dressing was taken off slowly, it was pulled and peeled off millimetre by millimetre. I had cried a lot during the circumcision, but that was only from fear – I didn’t actually feel anything, only a tiny prick of pain while they were giving me the injection to numb the area. This time, when the dressing was being opened, that’s when I really cried from pain. I suffered the greatest pain I have ever suffered in my life there and then. They kept going at it: lets do it with hot water, no lets do it this other way, etc., etc. I have no idea why we didn’t go to the hospital then, but they took off all of the bandage around the penis ever so slowly, just like that. And this removal operation lasted half an hour or 45 minutes. Every minute of it there was pain. People even came running from the streets, the whole neighbourhood came to see if something had happened to someone. I remember how the neighbours came when they heard us screaming. A mark was left there because of that electrical machine, there is still a slight marking there. You know, there is a kind of deformation. I mean, there is nothing wrong with the function, but there is something different in how it looks, in its appearance.” (1980, Aydın)

This wound that has been opened symbolically causes the child to feel pain, but it is also one of the first traumas experienced by the male child. Since the child is being inculcated with the sense of his masculinity by everybody around him in that moment, he is not yet aware of the trauma he has experienced, but later he starts sensing that he keeps reliving that same
moment over and over again. “At the point where thought is inadequate or unnecessary, the eyes, the ears, the nose, tongue and skin come together one by one in order to record into memory the appearance, the sound, the taste, smell, texture and feeling of the recollection of the moment.” At this point the memory formed by the body steps in, and the body reacts involuntarily in the form of a reflex sometimes during dreams and sometimes in the moment in which an object that was used during the circumcision is encountered. The body carries all the elements of a story with well-narrated flashes of memory when it comes to questions such as: where did the event take place, who told me what, who was next to me while it happened, how did I react, etc.

“After the circumcision I kept seeing that moment in my dreams, it was terrible. It has to happen and everybody is watching you. For my older brother, I remember, it was very bad. It did real damage to him. He was very embarrassed. Where I come from, a kid who is still in highschool is being married off and he is also actually just getting circumcised.” (1975, Kars)

In research with regards to how masculinity functions within the existing social structure and how the culture of masculinity is transmitted, it is very important to think about the factors that play a role in the ‘masculinization’ processes of men, as well as about the existence of homosocial* structures that maintain and support these processes. For instance, with regards to the circumcision ceremony, the culture of the neighbourhood within which boys socialize and grow up together is very important for the formation of patriarchal culture. This is one of the societal spaces in which children who are in the same age group may observe each other and act together. The family is accepted as the locus of the first period of socialization for the child. Similar to this, the neighbourhood emerges as the second social group following the family, to which individuals feel a sense of belonging and with which they live in a state of constant and organic interaction. In events and situations such as birth, marriage, and death the neighbourhood takes on an even more intense function with regards to this socialization that has been mentioned.

In the case of the circumcision ceremony, mass circumcisions that enable the socialization of masculinity through the consent this masculinity has obtained from the public sphere provide a good example. Examples of this kind demonstrate yet another instance where men are forced into an acceptance of the codes of masculinity by way of social pressure. Here it is necessary to point out that along with women, who are directly affected by the impositions of masculinity as the language of hegemony, men themselves, also get their own share of the effects of this imposition because they are ‘insiders’ to it – though this effect is (perhaps) not direct. This is so because masculinity is something that has to be merited and earned, constantly and always all over again. It is not at all a mistake to argue that women are oppressed within the institutionalized cultural acceptance of male hegemony. Yet, men who do not accept the set of social and cultural codes called ‘masculinity’ or ‘manhood’ – even though they, of course, do function as supplementary to power and hegemony – are still worn down by hegemonic masculinity. They even face the threat of being degraded and belittled to the point that their existence is denied by society. ‘True’ or ‘complete’ manhood is achieved by way of successfully overcoming a set of difficult, arduous and painful traditions. This manhood, which has been earned by way of a certain struggle, will then begin to confront us in the form of a mechanism of power that is no longer questioned or questionable. What Connell wishes to express with the notion of “hegemonic masculinity”* is that the status a man has based on his gender, is a category that is definitive in terms of the relationships he forms with individuals of the same sex as well. Not only do sexist, racist and homophobic factors play an intensifying role in the formation of an hegemonic masculinity as such, but they are also prerequisites for the continuity of a rational masculinity in and of itself.

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8 The concept of the ‘homosocial’, as Pierre Bourdieu uses it, designates areas where certain forms of behaviour gain legitimacy by way of taking place within small communities, formed separately by members of the same sex. It is possible to point at spheres formed by communities such as the army or by members of sports activities as examples to homosocial structures.

9 What is meant by hegemonic masculinity is how power enters into the private sphere by way of cultural codes and thus gains legitimacy within the social structure.
The circumcision ritual is a tradition that has existed for centuries. It has not lost anything from its significance, and today it is still seen as an important step in the social and cultural encoding of masculinity. The circumcision of men carries many meanings: it is the symbol of a social contract, the marking that designates prisoners of war, and the signifier of a variety of things such as belonging to a tribe or obedience to the father. With the advent of modernity, it has started becoming a tradition that has a place in the Christian world as well. This tradition confronts us within the framework of modernity in the name of health and hygiene. Due to the claim that the circumcision 'operation' prevents certain specific diseases, this procedure has taken hold upon not only Jewish and Muslim societies, but also Christian societies. It is thus able to cause the opening of a kind of 'wound' in the body of baby that is born in perfect health, in the name of a set of beliefs. The male child rises in status, or is made to believe that he rises in status, through this wound that has been opened in his body – namely, through the removal of the foreskin on his penis. He thus enters the society of men, having paid the price deemed necessary within the geographical context in which we live.

Amongst all the organs in the body the penis, the male member, is the one to which this kind of symbolic and emblematic significance has been accorded. This significance has been preserved and reproduced by the existing system across the globe. In attempting to understand the reasons behind this phenomenon and to explain them, it is not adequate to approach its mentality only through one of the social sciences, that is, only through sociology. Thus, it is necessary to make use of a variety of disciplines when conducting a study on male circumcision. The fact that an organ on the body is symbolically detached from the body and is projected through inscriptions onto cave walls, is reflected on sculptures and stones; that it is then embodied in various cultural codes and perceived as a kind of social sanction or acceptance that can work to signify law or justify certain forms of enforcement; and that this has been sustained and continued in this manner requires, in and of itself, that the study of it be interdisciplinary. In this sense, it is crucial that this project be undertaken in a way that allows for an overlapping between disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography and archeology along with sociology. This is the only way it to be possible to understand the relationship an important symbol in the determination of culture has with the social realm – and to understand this relation from within, through deeper research. For example, in order to see the power of the phallus over people during the times when it was not yet recognized as a symbol (that is, in a state of unawareness) it may be necessary to take into account archeological data that has materialized in the form of stones. Comprehending the relationship between the phallus and law and belief, on the other hand, may require looking into anthropological and sociological data. The phallus was formed and shaped in the period preceding the written word, and it has been used within social relations throughout the time period leading up to its later coding as a kind of mark of the social contract. The fact that it has been effective all of this time, and that it has been used to signify similar meanings, without conceding a single bit of its power already shows that there is a lot to say about the phallus. Thus, in thinking about the phallus, one of the most important symbols of masculinity studies, the aim is also to observe the meanings attributed and ascribed to the penis, which is the object of the practicing of various rituals and ceremonies, and to see its [the penis'] transformative effect upon societies. This is why I have attempted to handle the circumcision ritual as a practice of masculinity in this study, in order to demonstrate how influential the penis is in the formation of a masculine social structure.

I conducted in-depth interviews with many men in order to look more closely into the circumcision ceremonies that are performed in Turkey, and into the myth of masculinity that feeds the stories that come out of these very ceremonies. As a result of these interviews I came to realize that there were many commonalities in the circumcision stories of men who came from very different social classes, ethnic and religious groups. In order to understand how these ceremonies were carried out, what the cultural codes within them were, how the family structures functioned and what the language and grammar of the objects meant, I asked my interviewees to tell me about the day of their circumcision. I asked them to recount that day also in order to better comprehend the tradition of manhood that maintains and supports itself through these ceremonies. Within this one day
in question, there lay a story of masculinity – a story for which the preparations and the expectations had begun years and years in advance. Thus, in thinking about the issue of how on earth this day – this day that is constructed as a single day – manages to become the first, and one of the most important steps in the life of a male child, in order for him to be able to continue into the following stages of his life as a ‘complete man,’ a man lacking nothing; indeed, in dwelling on this question more effectively, these interviews actually ended up becoming invaluable to me.

After every single interview I once again understood that yes, circumcision is a religious tradition indeed. It may still be continuing in Muslim societies as a religious requirement or it may rather be an operation that is conducted with some reference to health. The real reason for the implementation of this tradition is, however, based on the relationship circumcision has with masculinity, with the earning and gaining of manhood, with blood, the social contract and social pressure. Circumcision is carried out through ceremonies because it is, simultaneously, a display of the status and wealth of the family. Circumcision is performed in a ceremonial fashion because it is a kind of declaration of the passage from childhood into manhood made publicly known to all members of the family, relatives and inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

In Turkey, with those who are currently in power in the political system, institutions that foster and cultivate the patriarchy have continued to dominate without the slightest sign of a loss or diminishing of power. Indeed, institutions such as that of the family, with its male figure that appears as the father/patriarch, the institution of marriage that confirms the heterosexual male and heterosexual relationships, the institution of male justice, which aims to control women sexually and socially, implements sanctions and punishments in the name of morality and takes shame and honour as criteria for decision making, are still quite intact and functional. We know that the men who work within these institutions have undergone the circumcision operation, because when institutions such as marriage, military service and family come into question, it is not possible to even begin to contemplate the presence of an uncircumcised man. Competition through circumcision begins amongst children who are yet in primary school and thus no more than 7-10 years old. For them, circumcision is already a sign of power and rivalry. During military service, being uncircumcised is considered the same as not being Muslim, not being heterosexual. This can result in the young man being subjected to serious physical, psychological and verbal harassment and violations. Moreover, in order to get married a man must be circumcised, because families do not wish to “give” their daughters to an “uncircumcised” man. As can be seen, the circumcision ritual is one of the influential symbols that is recognized and accepted in all societal institutions functioning in the foundation and construction of masculinity; it is a symbol that indeed sustains and empowers masculinity. It, in and of itself, is the source of power.

"As men in this society, we have been accustomed to the idea that we had to be in power, that power had to be in our hands, since we were little. What it means to have authority is that things have to be under your control. Men are brought up in fear, raised by being made to be afraid – and so are women. Because they are brought up in fear they inadvertently try to grab hold and take away in the way that dogs do you know, just like dogs that bark when they are afraid. There is fear, yes, I think the essence of the whole deal is fear. It is about not being able to trust people, not being able to trust yourself."10

It is clear as day that fear is involved in this business. When we look at circumcision, for example, we see how the child is obliged to complete this ritual in and through fear. Yet it is also clear that there is a victory following this fear. This victory is precisely what provides proof to the whole discourse around how “a true man does not cry” in the construction of masculinity in the public sphere. A kind of encouragement exemplified in that of the circumciser speaking to the child, saying “Don’t be afraid, you have now become a man,” is taking place through this ritual. In that case, the circumcision ritual has continued through the centuries as a tradition that gains legitimacy in the practices of masculinity, is widely accepted in the public sphere, and functions as an invariable element of belonging. Just as it has sustained itself through the centuries in this way, today it continues to reproduce and bolster masculinity within new structures.

10 Serpil SANCAR, Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar (Masculinity: The Impossible Power), 117.
The circumcision ritual as a rite of passage into manhood

of meaning, such as mass circumcision ceremonies by which a municipality, and hence the realm of politics, obtains consent from the public sphere. What I wanted to point towards at this moment in this study is an increased emphasis on precisely this structure of circumcision that has remained unchanging and unquestioned over centuries, and I hoped to be able to suggest a new perspective, a new framework through which to look at the tradition of circumcision. My most important aim with this study was to first of all create a certain consciousness within myself, and then to lay out the known and unknown realities as well as the different beliefs regarding circumcision, in order to raise consciousness in other individuals about the cultural, social, medical and religious dimensions of circumcision.

So what conclusion, then, did I reach after all of these interviews? After all of this reading, critical thinking and questioning? Let me respond to this by way of a question from one of my interviewees: “OK, I guess I’ve kind of got what you mean, but tell me now sister, are you against circumcision?”

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Chapter 15

Depiction of masculinity in Astrid Lindgren’s work

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Abstract
The curricula for preschools require that educators who are active in these types of schools counteract traditional gender patterns and gender structures and promote gender equality. The teachers I have worked with over the years have rarely reflected on how boys can be victims of gender structures. One of the most prominent writers in fiction aimed at children was Astrid Lindgren. Her stories are interesting from a gender perspective, as she is known to have very strong girl characters in her books. I have done a discourse analysis of Astrid Lindgren’s books where I examine the roles boys and men have, and their ascribed attributes. My results show few good role models for boys in these books, and the adjectives and properties shown are the ones historically associated with men. Although there are exceptions, some men and boys are described with attributes and behave in ways that break traditional gender patterns.

Introduction
In my work I chose to focus on gender roles given that this topic is and has been controversial. Gender roles have fascinated me throughout my training to become a teacher and it can be a provocative topic to discuss. Regardless of what one thinks about gender roles, it’s something we educators must approach (Harriet Holter, 1970). Schools and preschools are social environments that shape students and children. The curricula for preschools and schools also require teachers to counteract traditional gender patterns and promote gender equality (Lpfö98 revised 2010). To have the opportunity to grow up in a society where one is considered to have the same value regardless of gender is a democratic right.

Throughout my training to become a teacher I mainly read about and witnessed equality work in practice directed towards girls. In class we read about gender and how structures in society create norms that children and adults strive to live up to. The books we read were mostly focused on how women and girls historically have been portrayed in literature and children’s books, and how the teachers should open up opportunities for them.

The teachers I have worked with at various sites over the years have been very aware of how girls and women are discriminated against and how they do not get the opportunity to develop their full potential because of their gender. However, it has rarely been reflected on how the boys too are victims of gender structures. I have often heard teachers talk about the biological reasons why boys are mischievous, aggressive and loud. In order to work towards the gender equality goals, the teachers have been focusing on giving the girls more space and support them in achieving qualities that boys generally possesses. Boys’ right to be developing characteristics that are not consistent with prevailing gender structures have rarely been discussed. I seldom heard teachers discuss how to support boys in conquering attributes connected to femininity, such as displaying emotion, kindness and so on.

Children are, very early in life, made aware of what behaviour the world expects of them, based on their gender. Research shows that children in preschools are aware of what is appropriate behaviour for boys and girls and that they are working to maintain those boundaries (Käreland, 2005). These stereotypes of what is considered appropriate behaviour come from different parts of society, from pre-school, home, media, art, books, TV, etc.

One of teachers’ main tasks is to introduce books to children. Reading fiction is very important for an individual’s identity development and global under-
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standing but also for the perception of relationships between people and cultures (Lindö, 2005).

Astrid Lindgren was one of the most prominent writers in fiction aimed at children. Her books are immensely popular and her work has been read to many preschool children. Her stories are interesting from a gender perspective, as she is known to have very strong female characters in her books. Astrid Lindgren was a writer who gave girls more opportunities than the prevailing societal structures could provide. And with this background in mind, I thought it relevant to research how Astrid Lindgren portrays her male characters in her books.

**Purpose**

This study aims to investigate how boys and men are depicted in Astrid Lindgren’s books. The reason for focusing on Astrid Lindgren’s books is that these books are classic children’s literature read to children for decades. The books are still popular and are still widely used by teachers. Her literary work is also according to the Swedish Authors’ Fund one of the most popular children’s books in libraries. Since 2009, her books remained in second place of the most borrowed books in Sweden (Statistics on the most borrowed books in Sweden, 2013; May 22). One can thus conclude that many children are still reading her books as well as having it read to them.

**Problems**

- What attributes are men and boys associated with?
- How is Astrid Lindgren describing these boys/men in her books?
- What roles have men/boys in Astrid Lindgren’s books?

**Background**

Preschool is the first form of structured teaching children encounter. Here they learn: Social codes, to be considerate to others, to act according to common rules and so on. This very important period in children’s lives lays the foundation for everything that comes later in life, and that is why it is very important that teachers reflect on how their actions affect children (Johansson, 2001).

How do books and pictures, the children come in contact with at the preschool, affect them? In what ways do the educators approach affect the children? These are questions that educators ask themselves constantly to evaluate their practice. Working to counteract traditional gender roles is one of the main missions educators have (Lpfö98 revised 2010). An equal approach will open up opportunities for the children to develop all their attributes, not just the attributes that have traditionally been linked to gender.

Alleklev and Lindvall (2000) write about how important books are for children and the importance to read and write along with them. Educators must find ways to get children interested in books and reading. Reading to children is a firm tradition at Swedish preschools, this activity has through the years introduced children to reading. Ann-Katrin Svensson (1998) writes in her book “Barnet, språket och miljön” about the importance of reading aloud and its importance for children's development. She writes about how books can serve as tools for discussions on various themes found in children’s literature (Svensson, 1998).

Children perceive structural gender codes very early (Kåreland, 2005; Lindö, 2005) and one of our mission as teachers is to counteract traditional gender roles (Lpfö98 revised 2010). Should teachers choose books carelessly, there is a risk of consolidating traditional gender patterns. In the book “Den meningsfulla språkväven”, Rigmor Lindö (2005) describes the outcome of a three-year gender project by Lena Kåreland. Of the 217 picture books Kåreland studied, 128 books had male leading roles and 71 books had female (Lindö, 2005). The number of children’s books aimed at boys are said to be more than the number of books targeted at girls. Often the books have male leading roles and many male supporting roles. According to Lindö (2005), the books aimed at girls often include male characters that girls can identify with, while in the “boy books”, there are rarely women and almost never female heroes.

According to Lindö, boys tend to dissociate from books with female characters (Lindö, 2005). An unequal approach may, according to Svensson (1998), have serious consequences. Boys do not, to the same extent as girls, get a chance to engage in dialogue. They also generally have an inferior vocabulary and hence they may not get a fair opportunity to develop nuances in their spoken language (Smith, 1998). In an equality project, Kajsa Wahlström (2003) became
aware of how children were deprived of opportunities to develop certain qualities because of the teachers’ lack of work towards equality. The study concluded that the boys did not, to the same extent as the girls, learn to develop empathy, helpfulness, intimacy, positive body contact, relationships, and language skills (Wahlström, 2003). Although this can be disputed.

Method

My investigation of Astrid Lindgren’s books is a discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). According to Jørgensen and Philips (2000) the term “discourse” is defined as “a particular way of talking about, and understanding the world (or a section of the world)”. When people live in a social context we build common structures of what belongs to the normal and what doesn’t (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). These structures are carried with us both unconsciously and consciously, and the structures enable us to interpret the world from different discourses. Everyone is affected by these social structures, more or less depending on how well we are aware of them. Social structures tend to change over time, which can be seen for example when we are reading books from a certain era. A discourse analysis can provide a chronicle of the current society and its structural composition which the book depicts. My discourse analysis focuses on what roles men and boys have in Astrid Lindgren’s work. The word “discourse” is defined very differently and the meaning is somewhat arbitrary depending on the author’s interpretation of it. My interpretation of the word tallies with Jørgensen & Phillip’s definition (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000).

During my analysis of Astrid’s texts, the focus has been on the gender structures that appeared in the discourse. Especially stereotypes concerning boys and men. To get a range of books that differentiate from each other, I have chosen books with different lengths and from different periods in Astrid’s career. A subjective selection has been made, which means that it is the researcher who possesses knowledge of the population that selection is made from (Holme & Solvang, 1997). Do to obvious time and space constraints, a selection fourteen of her thirty-three books were analysed.

There are many interesting perspectives one can examine the Astrid Lindgren books through. I chose to analyse them from a gender perspective, specifically how boys and men are described as well as which roles they have. The focus has been on which attributes Astrid Lindgren associates each male character with and whether or not he has a villain or a non-villain role. These descriptions of the characters attributes can be looked at and analyzed from a gender perspective. I have made an epic analysis (Holmberg & Ohlsson, 1999) from a gender perspective. What do the men and boys do, how do they act, and what does not conform to prevailing gender structures? My focus has been on analyzing how Astrid Lindgren describes the male characters from her perspective as a writer, or how the protagonist describes men and boys. This is due to the fact that different characters can describe people in an individual manner, an “evil” person can describe a “good” man like “wretched”.

Notes were regularly written during the analysis to serve as input to the discussion. In order to deepen my knowledge on gender and children’s literature, my analysis was preceded by research on how gender roles are created. Even literature that explains how children’s books contribute to children’s identity has been used in exploratory purposes prior to my examination. After the completion of my investigation, my results have been compared to previous research and literature.

Results

The following section presents each man and boy mentioned in the Astrid Lindgren books I have read. I will write what attributes the men and boys are described with and what roles the men have in the books. This means that it is my interpretations of the men in these books and what relation they have with the book’s main character that determines their role. I will describe in what context men are included in the book to make it clear to the reader. Sometimes the book does not describe the men in detail but Astrid has let the characters’ actions speak for what kind of people they are. In these cases, I will write a bit about what they do to make it clear to the reader what role they have, whether they are “good” or “bad”. Some books are longer than others. This means that more characters will be introduced and more things will happen compared to shorter books. Thus, the summary of the longer books will be longer.
Pippi Långstrump (Pippi Longstocking), 1945

We’re presented to the key roles, Pippi, Tommy and Annika. The description of Tommy is not particularly detailed, but he has a non-villain role. In the beginning of this book Pippi meets Bengt. He is the leader of a gang of bully boys. Bengt is described as “evil” according to Tommy as he fights all the time. Bengt and his bullies have villain roles. Pippi also meet a couple of thieves who rob her one night. They’re called Dunder Karlsson and Blom and are looking for her gold money. These men have villain roles. Later in the book a house is on fire, the fire department is called and a bunch of firemen arrive. Their ladder does not reach the fire so they need Pippi’s help. The firemen have non-villain roles.

Pippi Långstrump går ombord (Pippi goes aboard), 1946

Pippi’s father Ephraim comes home to the city to visit, he is described as thick and acts in a nice way towards Pippi, Tommy and Annika. Pippi’s father has a non-villain role.

A man in Ephraims crew, Fridolf, has a terrible toothache. According to Pippi, he eats candy every day. Ephraims crew consists only of men and they are non-villains.

Pippi Långstrump i Söderhavet (Pippi in the South Seas), 1948

Pippi visits a store with a male employee. She also visits a male doctor. These men have non-villain roles. Later in the book a “rich and pretty mean man” visits and want to buy Pippi’s house. He exclaims, including “Children are the worst I know”. Pippi is according to the mean man, rude and he begins to threaten her by shouting “Then you get to see otherwise”. Then he threatens children with a beating. The man has a villain role. Pippi goes out to the South Pacific to an island. Two men appear by boat, Buck and Jim. These men are after the island’s gems which the children found. They threaten the children as well as to kill Pippi’s horse if they do not get the gems. The men have villain roles.

Bara roligt i Bullerbyn (Six Bullerby Children), 1952

This book is about six neighboring children, Lisa, Britta, Anna, Lasse, Bosse and Olle. Lasse described as the noisiest, he produces as much noise as ten ordinary boys. Astrid does not describe the children thoroughly. Lisa’s dad appears once in the book to comfort her, he has a non-villain role. Later in the book, they meet one of the children’s grandfather, he also has a non-villain role.

Lillebror och Karlsson på taket (Karlsson on the roof), 1955

Astrid describes Lillebror and his family; his father is described as “absolutely normal” (Lindgren, 1955). Bosse, Lillebror’s big brother, likes football and is doing poorly in school “so he is very ordinary, he as well” (Lindgren, 1955). Lillebror is described as “regular” (Lindgren, 1955). He’s also described to have blue eyes, a flat nose, unwashed ears and ragged pants, implying that those characteristics are those of a normal boy (Lindgren, 1955). Karlsson is described as, in contrast to Lillebror, as unusual. This is because he lives in a house on the roof. He is also described as small and thick. These men and boys have non-villain roles. Lillebror encounters a group of boys who fight and express disappointment when they stop. Lillebror has two friends named Krister (male) and Gunilla (female). Krister has a non-villain role. In the book’s later chapters, two thieves break into Lillebror’s home. The thieves are two men named Rulle och Fille, they have villain roles.

När Lisabet pillade in en ärta i näsan (When Lisabet put a pea up her nose. My translation), 1991

There are only two men mentioned in this book. Uncle Berglund who is a doctor. Madicken’s father is also mentioned briefly. Both these men have non-villain roles.
**Mio, min Mio**  
(Mio, my son), 1954

This book’s main character is Bo Vilhelm Olsson, who lives with his uncle Sixten and aunt Edla. Sixten and Edla are described being mean to him, Sixten has a villain role. Bo is described in a police report as mentioned in the book to have blond hair and blue eyes. Bo has a best friend named Bengt, he has a non-villain role. The book also mentions Bengt’s father, he has a non-villain role. Bengt’s dad always talks to Bo, unlike Sixten, and helps him build model airplanes. Bo’s father is talked about in the beginning of the book. Aunt Edla said there is no one who knows where Bo’s father is “but one can figure out what he was a slob” (Lindgren, 1954). Bo decides to go to the kingdom of the spirit where he will meet his father the king. Bo meets his father who is a king and compares his looks to Bengt’s dad, only more handsome. Bo’s father has a non-villain role.

Bo meets Jum Jum and is described to look like Bengt, same brown hair and equally brown eyes. Jum Jum has a non-villain role. Jum Jum’s father is the rose garden master to the king, Bo’s father. He also has a non-villain role. Jum Jum tells about the cruel knight Kato who keeps the country in fear. Bo, who in this land is called Mio and Jum Jum take on a journey to rescue the country from the cruel Knight Kato’s grip.

They meet a shepherd boy called Nonno and a boy named Jiri. Jiri talks about his sister who has been captured by the knight Kato. They meet five children at the well, “The biggest was a boy. He laughed with his whole face and looked nice” (Lindgren, 1954). The others also looked very happy. These boys have non-villain roles. Both the old man and the sword maker have non-villain roles. Kato has guards who are looking in the woods for people to kidnap. Kato’s dark guards also seem to be all men, in a paragraph in the book one is given the pronoun “he”. They have villain roles.

**Sunnanäng, 1959**

Sunnanäng is a collection of short stories in four parts. It consist of: Sunnanäng, Spelar min lind, sjunger min näktergal?, Tu tu tu! and Junker Nils av Eka.

Mattias and Anna are two children who end up with a farmer after their mother died, they are described as having “the clearest, good eyes and faithful small hands” (Lindgren, 1959). A schoolteacher visits their village to educate the children, he has a non-villain role. The farmer who takes care of the children has a villain role. There is also a mention of a priest, he has a non-villain role. One of Mattias and Anna’s classmates, Joel, brings pancakes to school. When they look at him, he says; “poor kids, have you never seen food before?” (Lindgren, 1959). Joel has a villain role.

**Spelar min lind, sjunger min näktergal?**  
(My nightingale is singing), 1959

This short story is about Malin. She lives in a workhouse with a group of servants. The servants consist of both men and women, but are not described more closely. The men have non-villain roles. One day she meets a couple of boys who look at her angrily. This gives the impression that the boys do not want her well. The boys have villain roles.

**Tu tu tu! 1959**

This short story is about Stina Maria who lives with her grandfather. The grandfather is described as the oldest man in the village. The text also mentions the town’s men going off to hunt. The grandfather and the men have non-villain roles. Stina Maria is out walking in the yard one evening, when she meets a little man in the night. “His eyes were old as dirt and as stones are old, his voice was old as the water murmuring in the river and the wind again in the trees”(Lindgren, 1959). The man grabs Stina Maria by the arm and takes her to the underworld and takes her as a prisoner. The man has a villain role.
Depiction of masculinity in Astrid Lindgren's work

Junker Nils av Eka
*(Nils of Eka. My translation), 1959*

This story is about a young boy named Nils. Nils’ father works and provides the family’s only income, he has a non-villain role. Nils meets Magnus Rex, he needs Nils’ help to overthrow the evil ruler, the duke. Magnus Rex also has a non-villain role. There are 200 armed men guarding the duke’s palace. The duke is described as having a “black soul” (Lindgren, 1959). The duke has a villain role. Later in the book the duke meets a musician that plays outside the castle. The duke threatens to throw the musician in the dungeon. The musician has a non-villain role.

“Måns yxa” is one of the Duke’s guards, he is described as big as an ox.” He has a villain role.

The executioner is to perform a killing at the end of the book. A bunch of men gather to watch. The executioner and the men have villain roles.

Emil i Lönneberga
*(Emil in the soup tureen & Emil and the great escape), 1963*

Emil is described as “a wild and stubborn kid” (Lindgren, 1963). Emil lives with his father, mother and little sister on a farm along with a farmhand and a maid. The farmhand, named Alfred is described as “a strong and clever lad” (Lindgren, 1963). Emil happens to get stuck fast with his head in a soup bowl and is taken to a doctor in Mariannelund. These men have non-villain roles.

At one point in the book, Emil hoists Ida up the flagpole. When Anton sees this he takes Emil by the arm and shakes him, then leads him to his shed.

Mästerdetektiven Blomkvist
*(Bill Bergson, master detective), 1946.*

In Mästerdetektiven Blomkvist we meet amateur detective Kalle Blomkvist and his best friends Anders and Eva-Lotta. Anders has a non-villain role. Early in the book the character Einar appears and explains he is Kalle’s mother’s cousin. Einar has a non-villain role. There are three male main villains. There are also police officers in the story which one cannot really know what sex they are since they are referred to by surname, although it’s clear they have non-villain roles.

Summary and analysis of the results

There are some recurring patterns in Astrid Lindgren’s books when the roles of men are analysed, especially the supporting roles. In several of the books analyzed, there often are two male villains. In Pippi Långstrump we meet Buck and Jim and Dunder Karlsson and Blom. In Karlsson på taket Fille and Rulle and in Bröderna Lejonhjärta Veder and Kader. The common denominator for these men are that they are greedy. Buck and Jim holds Pippi

Bröderna Lejonhjärta
*(Brothers Lionheart), 1973.*

The book’s main character name is Karl, also called “Skorpan”. Karl describes himself as ugly. Jonathan is described in many parts of the book as beautiful and blue-eyed, he has a non-villain role. The brothers also have a father who left the family when Karl was two years old, he also has a non-villain role. When the brothers arrives at Nangijala they meet an innkeeper named Jossi, he is described as a large, ruddy and good-looking fellow. Jossi has a villain role. Tengil which is the main villain and is described to be cruel as a snake, a grim face and cruel eyes. Karl meets a man named Hubert, described as having a sullen voice, red curly hair, red small beard and a grumpy voice. Orvar is one of the freedom fighters. Both Orvar and Hubert have non-villain roles. Karl encounters two of Tengil’s men to the cave, Veder and Kader. They are described as having serious faces and they both have villain roles. Karl meets a man he pretends is his grandfather to save him from Veder and Kader. The ”grandfather” is named Mattias and described as being kind and has good arms, he has a non-villain role. One of Tengils men, Dodik is described as thick. A man named Pjuke is described as haughty. Dodik and Pjuke have villain roles. During Tengil’s visit to a town, a man walks up and spits on Tengil and shouts “traitors”, he has a non-villain role. One night, two guards search Mattias’ house looking for Jonathan. The guards are described as having rough hands and necks, the men have villain roles. Later in the book, the brothers encounter a bunch of guards. One of the guards, Pärk, abuses his horse to make her jump over a stream. The brothers encounter four of Tengil’s men and later another pair of Tengil’s henchmen. Pärk and Tengils henchmen all have villain roles.
and other children hostage in a cave and threatens to kill Pippis horse if they do not give them gems. Even Dunder Karlsson and Blom are after money, as well as Fille and Rulle. This greed is also a characteristic that Emil's father Anton shares. In the book Emil gets stuck in soup bowl on his head. Emil's father's reaction is “are you out of your mind? It cost us four crowns” (Lindgren, 1963).

Another attribute that most villains have in common is that they are violent. In Pippi Långstrump, a man wants to buy Pippi’s house. The man threatens the children with a beating when Pippi does not sell him the house. Hubert in Bröderna Lejonhjärta beats Skorpan. Pärk, also from Bröderna Lejonhjärta, abuses his horse until she gives in to his will and jumps over a stream. In Junker Nils av Eka, the town executioner is to perform an execution where a bunch of men gathered at the square to view. Not just the “evil” men show tendencies towards violence but also the “good” men. Lillemor in Karlsson på taket watches as a group of boys fight in the street and gets disappointed when they stop. The three villains of Kalle Blomqvist traps children into a basement with no possibility of escaping. Bengt and his bully gang in Pippi Långstrump usually fight according to Tommy.

Another recurring pattern in the books is that the main villains are male, Riddar Kato (Mio, min Mio), Myrabonden (Sunnanäng), The Duke (Junker Nils av Eka), The subterranean man (Tu tu tu!) And Tengil (Bröderna Lejonhjärta). The male supporting roles are often linked to a profession, for example the firefighters in Pippi, the schoolmaster (Sunnanäng), Dr. Berglund (Madicken), Svärdsmidaren (Mio, min Mio), the doctor (Pippi Långatrupp), the shopping assistant (Pippi Långstrump) and the rose gardener (Mio, min mio). The men who appears in the context of family, generally do not have that prominent roles, for example the king in Mio, min Mio, the grandfather in Bröderna Lejonhjärta, Ephraim in Pippi, the grandfather in Tu tu tu! and the father in Madicken. Tommy and Annika’s father are mentioned in the books briefly. In the end of the book when the children are on their way home from Kurredutt island, Annika says that she misses her mother. She does not mention the father. There are several non-villains mentioned in Astrid Lindgrens’ work as well. Especially in the longer books, for example Mio, min Mio and Bröderna Lejonhjärta. These men and boys have both small, as well as prominent roles, and help the heroes of the stories in different ways. Mattias in Bröderna Lejonhjärta, Alfred in Emil i Lönneberga, Bengt and Bo’s fathers in Mio, min Mio and Magnus Rex in Junker Nils av Eka are just some examples.

**Discussion**

My study shows that the roles men have in Astrid Lindgren’s books are often linked to a certain profession. These professions are often strongly gender-coded and historically linked with masculinity, such as fire fighters, doctors and police officers. Many of Astrid’s books also portray soldiers and henchmen, all of whom are men. These male supporting roles closely follow the norms about men’s roles in all books; these are linked to attributes such as violence, courage, physical activity etc. Thus, these books do not challenge existing gender norms regarding male supporting roles but rather reinforce them. With that said, there are also many men and boys who are positive role models. Male characters who displays attributes that aren’t linked to traditional gender roles. Some of the heroes are described with having weaknesses and act in ways that isn’t in any way regarded as ”heroic”. The conclusion I can draw from my analysis of Astrid Lindgren’s books is that because boys and men are described and linked with concepts such as courage, strength, activity, competition and violence the books maintain existing gender structures surrounding the boys and men. The men and boys who are positive role models and have a more prominent role in the books are: Jonathan, Skorpan and the grandfather in Bröderna Lejonhjärta, Birk in Ronja Rövardotter, Mio and Jum Jum in Mio, Min Mio, Kalle Blomqvist in Mäster Detektiven Blomqvist, Emil and Alfred Emil i Lönneberga and Tommy in Pippi Långstrump. These characters are the ones who are dedicated the most time in the books and those who are described with positive attributes. These characters stand for goodness, courage, friendship, solidarity, etc. They challenge the gender stereotypes that exist around men and boys. Skorpan is often scared and unsure (Mio, min mio), Birk is considerate and caring towards Ronja (Ronja Rövardotter), Emil is very empathetic and cares for people around him. These characters show emotions and attributes that do not fit with prevailing gender structures and are thus positive role models.
If the children’s books that we read to the kids only contains these stereotypical characters that fall within the male norm, we risk consolidating the gender norms that exist, and thus preschool teachers do not follow the curriculum directives (Lpfö98 revised 2010). The fact that boys generally can’t relate to female roles in the books is a big problem. This means that boys are missing many important pieces of their social and emotional development. One problem Kåreland (2005) mentions is that boys learn that attributes linked to femininity means low status. One could argue that this creates a conception that women themselves have low status. This could explain why Lindö (2005) found that boys are reluctant to read books with female lead roles.

According to Eva Johansson (2001), the ethical conflicts children encounter lead to discovery and learning. Astrid Lindgren’s books deal with many different themes of key messages, themes that are important for children to reflect upon like democracy, alienation, and fascism. According to Johansson (2001), ethical issues that arise related to, inter alia, consideration, respect and rights are always a current topic of discussion. Preschools are to provide children with ethical issues to reflect on and to prepare children for adulthood.

There is evidence that gender structures are disadvantageous for boys and men. Research shows that boys do not get the same opportunity to develop empathy, helpfulness, intimacy, positive body contact, relationships, and language to the same extent as girls (Wahlström, 2003). Boys’ unwillingness to listen to and to read books with female characters, stem from profound societal structures (Kåreland, 2005). Teachers’ expectations of children, based on their gender, maintains prevailing gender structures (SOU 2006:75). When analysing children’s hero stories in popular culture, generally the stereotypical male heroes are described as independent, strong, fierce and competitive (Nikolajeva, 1998). The heroes’ missions often include to protect the weak and passive women of the stories.

Kåreland (2005) writes about this indoctrination of gender structures that children are exposed to. Children early on become aware on what behaviour is appropriate for their own sex, and they become committed to uphold these stereotypical behaviours. Children, both boys and girls, learn to embrace this hierarchy of male dominance. Boys and men are actively trying to live up to the masculine ideal, and because there is a male superiority, the attributes linked to femininity have lower status (Kåreland, 2005). When a boy gets described with feminine attributes, peaceful, passive, dependent and feminine it’s perceived as something negative. According to Lindö, this is what causes boys reluctance to read books with female lead roles and supporting roles (Lindö, 2005).

We need more literature that broadens the gender roles and give girls and boys role models with different attributes disconnected from gender structures. No one benefits from unequal or one-sided literature. I close with this quote from the book “Små barns etik” which emphasizes the importance of the teachers to have a considered approach that seeks the goals contained in the curriculum.

“The question is whether we understand the importance that teachers in kindergarten have for future generations of humanity?”

References


Analyzed literature


Internet pages

Chapter 16

Urbanism, workplace hazards and social positioning efforts of male adolescent labourers in suburb sawmills, Lagos State Nigeria

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Abstract
Urbanism as physical and social space provides multiple options for social relations and organisation of resources that promote inequalities within and around class interests. Within an ideological framework like neoliberalism, urbanism facilitates individualism and promotion of privileged class interests by ensuring their survival over those at disadvantage. This social arrangement promotes vulnerability as disadvantaged social categories engage in different but explainable activities for survival. Such is the case of adolescent dwelling in a number of urban suburbs across cultures. Based on sixteen face-to-face interviews with adolescent boys working as labourers in suburb sawmills, this chapter situates the notion of boyhood and survival into adulthood within a social space. The findings revealed conscious absorption with the notion of boyhood through certain rules of engagement and survival measures. These strategies include self-care practices geared towards achieving a healthy body for contextualised performance in the factory settings. However, this comes with series of consequences - both intended and unintended as boys lived out the social notions of boyhood and rules of engagement in activities for survival and social recognition. Hence, understanding and targeting the positive survival strategies of this social category of adolescents could be useful to empower and minimise the hazards of working and growing as adolescents in the physical and social spaces of sawmills.

Introduction
Urbanism provides both physical and social spaces for social relations and the organisation of resources based on class interests (Tonkiss, 2005; Unger & Wandersman, 1985). As an ideological framework, urbanism ensures the over-representation of individual interests and susceptibility of some other social categories to evitable risks and hazards (Davis, 2011; Murray, 2004; Wright, 2010). As a space, there are contentious positions on how urbanism skews social arrangements and relations towards social inequalities than equality of different social actors. Dominant in this direction is the cast of aspersion on the adequacy of urbanism and neoliberalism as ideological frameworks that could address social inequalities in postmodernity (Wright, 2010). Such is the case of suburb dwellers in a number of cities in the sub-Saharan Africa and other developing nations (Davis, 2011).

Urbanism and neoliberalism seem to have compounded the everyday challenges of boyhood and transition to adulthood. High cost of living, unemployment and poor housing conditions among other factors are common in the everyday challenges of young people especially those in urban suburbs (Cubbin, LeClere, & Smith, 2000; Kabiru, Izugbara, & Beguy, 2013). Surviving the everyday challenges in urban suburbs requires the development of certain social relations, strategies and skills for survival and social recognition. However, there are consequences (both intended and unintended) as boys are encouraged to lived out the cultural notions of boyhood and appropriate certain rules of engagement for survival and social recognition purposes. Despite this, available evidence shows that a few studies have focused on survival and social positioning efforts of adolescents in vulnerable spaces (Cauce, Cruz, Corona, & Conger, 2011) including sawmills in suburban areas.
Sawmills in Nigeria and a number of social settings in Africa are hazardous physical and social space to work as an adult and adolescent (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010). The worse scenario in the Nigerian context comes from medium and small scale industries where workplace hazards and compensations often went unreported or handled in a paternalistic manner (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010). With the peculiarities around residing and earning, a living in urban suburbs there is a need to explore what it means to grow up and survive in sawmills as adolescents. The context, nature and physical space of sawmills create differential survival options for the boy and girl child even as they work and live within and around their immediate physical environment (Horn, 2000). However, among the various studies on the conditions of sawmill in Nigeria, no study has focused on the situation of these adolescents and what it means to live, work and survive in urban sawmills in Nigeria.

Empirical evidence has shown a continuum of coexistence on the influence of social structural factors and how social actors employ their individual agency in negotiating life challenges and associated outcomes (Kohli & Meyer, 1986; Shanahan, 2000). Hence, this chapter situates the notion of boyhood by interrogating the view of adolescent boys working as labourers in suburb sawmills. Particular focus is on their survival strategies including self-care practices aimed at productivity enhancement and the unintended consequences such actions could have on their survival into adulthood. The overall aim of this chapter is to contextualise the variations that exist within a given context for the boy child and how such variations could shape decisions and survival into adulthood. From a relational approach to masculinity and well-being (Courtenay, 2000), the study situates the meanings and experiences of 16 adolescent labourers within the spaces of urbanism and slum sawmills, in Lagos State, Nigeria. The chapter proceeds by focusing on the urbanism and boyhood experiences. This was followed by contextual overview of sawmills and work safety challenges in Nigeria. The methodology adopted in generating the empirical data, came next and followed by a presentation of the findings. The chapter ended with a discussion of the implications of these findings and a conclusion.

**Urbanism and boyhood**

As a psychosocial and physical space, urbanism creates unique socialisation process for the boy and girl child (Penderi & Petrogiannis, 2011). This includes the inculcation of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, normative means of expression and judgemental basis of assessing a boy from a girl child (Ruddick, 2003). The question of who and what differentiate boys from girls are paramount to gender studies (Gardiner, 2013). Thus, as a social construct, gender provides a framework to understand boys and girls for whom they are by focusing on the roles of cultural beliefs, norms and values. Through this approach, rich body of theoretical and methodological approaches have emerged to account for the existence of multiple masculinities and femininities among boys and girls within similar and different cultural settings.

The existence of multiple masculinities and femininities is an indication of the heterogeneity that exists even within a given cultural context. In addition, it indicates the active role of individual agencies in interrogating cultural prescriptions and expectations. Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku (1994) argue that boys and girls adopt the notions of masculinity and femininity from their cultures in a co-constructor manner that provides the opportunity for relative flexibility and diversity in orientations within and between genders. By utilising individual agencies, boys and girls can process and deploy attitudinal dispositions and context relevant orientations in relating to and resolving life events (Messerschmidt, 1993). Social actors require this form of active involvement in constructing and reconstructing their social realities for several purposes. However, this does not occur without some degree of variations. There are gender differences as boys become masculine in orientation they become more susceptible to practices including health-related ones that could undermine their well-being (Courtenay, 2000). Such orientations are perceived useful and needed partly for adaptation and surviving social and physical challenges including crime (Courtenay, 2000) and other forms of life challenges in the sub-burbs. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) pointed out, masculine roles and norms are contingent on varying socio-contextual factors and are fluid rather than static. Through this perspective, this study explores how adolescent
employ their masculinities in responding to the survival challenges of working and living in sawmill community.

As a physical space, suburbs are characterised by poor physical environment and housing conditions that impact on well-being and network of social relations (Cubbin et al., 2000; Sawyer, 2014). Historically, small and medium sawmills in Nigeria are often located in sub-burbs with poor physical characteristics (Akachuku, 2000; Fatusi & Erhabor, 1996). In addition, these sawmills double as factories and communities where people with similar socio-economic activities earn their living and reside. The typical sawmill in Lagos Nigeria is often located close to the ocean. The few habitable areas are sand filled or filled by sawdust-bye products of woods. Through this process, spaces are created for wood processing, temporal or makeshifts rooms for habitation as well as limited spaces for recreation. All these among other factors make the environment uniquely hazardous to healthy living. Over the years, sawmill communities in Lagos have a history of recurrent episodes of fire outbreaks. The recent of such occurred on April 2nd 2014 at Ebute Meta (Akinkuotu, 2014). From empirical studies on the influence of environment on behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000), contexts and relationships shape the experiences and activities that make the boyhood phenomenon as a lived reality. Thus, the uniqueness of each environment has consequences on the inhabitants. As such, the experiences and activities that make the boyhood phenomenon are better appreciated within contexts. Ironically, in Nigeria, no study has explored the experiences and uniqueness associated with earning a living and residing in sawmills communities.

Studies have shown how privileges and marginalisation within space and time influence the growing experiences and obtainable socio-economic activities, and health outcomes (Cubbin et al., 2000) among various social categories. Without relegating individual agency in the outcome of life events, Wolch and Dear (2014) argue that the geography of a social setting has telling effects on career choice, friendships, and obtainable economic and social activities within and amongst different social categories. From a relational constructionist position, growing up as a boy in sawmill communities would be very challenging as experiences and orientations of who and what a boy could do are shaped by structural and network of relations. The next section provides additional details on the nature and operation of sawmill factories in the Nigerian context.

**Sawmills and work safety challenges in the Nigerian context**

Nigeria as a country has been afflicted with many preventable occupational hazards which serve as a reminder that occupational health and safety is undermined (Adeogun & Okafor, 2013; Ezenwa, 2001). Series of preventable hazards have occurred over the years. For instance, the leakage of domestic gas on the 14th of April, 2008 at Kaduna Refinery that resulted in an explosion and intense tongue of fire killing five people and causing secondary accidents, as well. Series of repeated fire outbreaks have occurred in sawmills with devastating effects on workers and residents around these sawmills in Lagos State, Nigeria. Despite the colossus loss associated with these fire outbreaks, marginal efforts have been directed at ensuring the safety and health of those working and living around sawmills in Nigeria.

As a place to earn a daily living, employment consideration at sawmills is based on paternalism and physical look not minding the age of the job seeker. This does not imply that employers or owners of sawmills are unaware of the labour laws and factory safety acts. Rather, it is the dominance of fragile monitoring framework and the desire to maximise profits. Similarly, attitudes also influence the implementation of compensation for labourers that suffer hazards in the course of their employment (Ahiauzu, 1984; Bamidele, Adebimpe, & Dairo, 2010). While the legal environment contributes in great dimension, such factory practices have concomitant effects on worker’s expectations and dispositions towards hazards as well as the obtainable safety nets in the event of any evitable hazards (Bode, Giwa, & Oke, 2000; Fatusi & Erhabor, 1996). With the fragile framework of action, working in sawmills may prove quite challenging for male adolescents. This may also be associated with the social preference for masculinity in deciding on the nature and quality of productivity that is expected from boys compare to girls working in sawmills.

The nature of work in sawmills creates high plausibility of workplace hazards especially in a social
context where adherence to minimum safety measures is far from standard practice. Sawmill workers in Nigeria are exposed to evitable work related and environmental hazards and avoidable deaths in some cases (Bode et al., 2000; Fatusi & Erhabor, 1996; Osagbemi, La-Kadri, & Aderibigbe, 2010). The situation is complicated by the use of obsolete machines and equipment, poor working conditions, poor safety practices, inadequate monitoring, workers' negligence and poor work posture (Bamidele et al., 2010; Osagbemi et al., 2010). The growing industrial and technological activities with inadequate monitoring and flagrant disregard for the law have increased the vulnerability of the average factory, unemployed youths that are seeking a living by all means (Ezenwa, 2001).

Work practices and safety observation are crucial to ensuring safety and minimization of workplace hazards. Safety culture has different meanings across cultures and within work environments (Zhang, Wiegmann, von Thaden, Sharma, & Mitchell, 2002). The literature is filled with different interpretations and meanings of safety culture. Two among these interpretations appeal more to this study: “The safety culture of an organization is the product of individual and group values, attitudes, competencies, and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of an organization’s health and safety management” (Zhang et al., 2002). Safety culture as “shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with an organization’s structures and control systems to produce behavioural norms” (Zhang et al., 2002). In Nigeria, safety culture at the factory level in particular especially among small and medium scale industry seems elusive (Ezenwa, 2001). The international labour organization has suggested factory safety recommendations with details on what the safety standard should be. In reality, a deviation from these standards has been the case while the results are evitable hazards with grave consequences.

Despite the availability of best practices and the promulgation of laws that will ensure their enforcement, oftentimes in practice, organizations and employees /workers deviation has been a regular pattern (Kouabenan, 2009). At the individual and organisational level, risks analysis and prevention is associated with a number of factors. Some of the factors include individual beliefs and prevailing cultural practices in the workplace (Kouabenan, 2009). Ironically, in the literature, there is a marginal focus on the essentiality of beliefs in understanding hazards occurrence and prevention (Guldenmund, 2000; Kouabenan, 2009). In the Nigerian context, where religious beliefs and practices are held in high esteem including workplaces (Adogame, 2010; Ahiauzu, 1984), the tendency to construe the occurrence of work hazards as an ordinary occurrence remains high.

By the International Labour conventions, every employer of labour is required to make the workplace conducive for the employees and others having any business within an organization. The labour laws specify the rights and privileges of the employer and employees, including the need for the employer to present in clear terms, the possible occurrence of hazards or risks and ways or measures of avoiding them in the workplace (Baram, 2009). However, in practice, deviations from this expected norms and values are also a frequent occurrence in small-scale sawmills in Nigeria (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010). Presently in Nigeria, the enforcement mechanism of the factory laws in the small-scale sawmills seems frail. Some of the pitfalls include employers’ claim of ignorance on certain aspects of the provisions of the ordinance, laws, code or decree. Desperate job seekers are more interested in getting the job than worry about the effect on their health (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010). The “man-must-die” syndrome is usually the posture. However, when the realities of the new situation begin to dawn on them, they refuse to discuss it with the employer for fear of losing the job (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010). As argued by Kouabenan (2009), an explanation for these deviations may also not be far from cultural beliefs and safety practices that may also vary within time and space.

The provision and efficient utilization of factory tools or equipment may ensure safety but not the absolute removal of injury or hazards. The possibility has been accounted for in the factory act under which an employer may be exonerated if the case of professional negligence can be established in the event of mishaps or hazards in the course of employment. The same also applies to the employer when there is established evidence of negligence in providing minimum safety measures in the factory or work-
place. Beyond the mere recognition of the fallibility of human and negligence either consciously or otherwise, there is a need to understand the underlying cultural assumptions beliefs or practices that may be influencing workers and employers disposition towards work safety measures. While there are benefits in toeing this direction, cultural understanding of safety practices and patterns does not possess all the needed information that may be relevant in achieving a holistic prevention of work hazards and work safety promotion. However, exploring the reactions and interpretations of work hazards and the plausible direction of seeking redress may be useful in averting the occurrence of work hazards within a factory setting that operates far from the minimum standards.

**Methodology**

**Research design**

Empirical data is derived from a qualitative exploratory stance in investigating the notions of boyhood, urbanism and survival strategies of sixteen adolescent labourers in slum sawmills in Lagos state, Nigeria. Exploratory qualitative approach provides an opportunity to interrogate and understand social realities from the viewpoints and experiences of social actors. It also provides an avenue to understanding the context and rationale for the evidence provided without which would have been difficult (Charlton & Barrow, 2002).

**Study setting**

Ebute Metta, the study location, is one of the largest timber yards in West Africa and has a long history of fire outbreaks (Akinkuotu, 2014). Sawmills in Ebute Meta are largely small scale, a feature of sawmills in the West African region. In response to industrial developments and expanding demands for quality wood, a considerable number of sawmills have been established in Nigeria, and these provide employment for many people (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010). Geographically, the rainforest areas in the South western part of Nigeria have a thick presence of quality wood making it sustainable for saw milling activities. The largest concentration of sawmills is in Lagos, Ekiti, Osun, the Cross River, Ondo, Oyo, Ibo, Edo, Delta, and Ogun states. Together, they account for over 90% of saw milling activities in the country (Bamidele et al., 2010; Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010).

Sawmills in Nigeria and a number of social settings in Africa are hazardous physical and social space to work as an adult and adolescent (Fatusi & Erhabor, 1996). The situation has grown worse with the instability in the political economy cum the absence of monitoring and implementation of factory safety practices and compensations in the advent of hazards. Structural, factory based (organisational) and employee’s oriented factors contribute in diverse dimensions to the current state of the industry in Nigeria (Bello & Mijinyawa, 2010; Fatusi & Erhabor, 1996). Without a doubt, worse case scenarios exist in a number of African settings where neo-liberalism and crave for profiteering have contributed to the vulnerability of certain social class, gender and age as well the compromise of workers’ safety and well-being. These scenarios are diverse based on contextual and historical factors. The diversities are also observable from the publicity attracted and the management of these crises over the years. Work hazards and compensation in the Nigerian sawmill industry often go unreported or handled in a paternalistic manner (Ahiauzu, 1984). This creates a sense that the provision of organization statements on safety practices does not translate to the existence of safety culture. However, the context, nature and physical space of sawmills create differential survival options for a boy and girl child even as they work and live within and around their immediate physical environment.

**Recruitment procedure data collection and analysis**

A total of sixteen face-to-face interviews were done among 16 adolescent labourers. The interviews were conducted with the help of two field assists. Both assistants are male postgraduate students in the department of sociology and anthropology with working experience in social research among adolescents. Before the data collection, the research assistant were trained with the interview guide and asked to role-play. Despite my familiarity with sawmills in the study location, to gain the rapport of potential participants, we spent four days interacting with three adolescents within the communities and shared the study objectives with them.
The interaction took place on an open football field in the evenings after they had close from the sawmills where they work. This provided the informants more time to ask questions about the study and relay the information to potential participants. Through this interaction, two additional participants were recruited for the study. Subsequently, the five participants referred us to other adolescents with similar characteristics. On the overall, sixteen interviews were held among adolescents working in the sawmills within the community. All the interviews took place in preferred locations and after working hours. Weekdays were busy, and Sunday was considered more appropriate by the interviewees. Thus, ten of the interviews occurred on Sunday, while the remaining six were held late evenings on Fridays and Saturdays. All the interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and translated from Yoruba to English language.

The data analysis was done using a thematic approach. At first, all the transcribed and translated interviews were read several times in order to understand the data with a sense of depth. This helped in coding the data deductively in relation to a relational approach to masculinity and how the adolescent labourers adopt their masculinities in negotiating an identity, survival and meaning makings within the spaces of urbanism and slum sawmills. Through this process, similar patterns were identified and categorised as themes as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Without losing participants’ voice, the thematic presentation of the findings was supported with extracts from the interviews and to also provide a context for the participant’s positions.

Findings
Boyshood within the physical and social spaces of urbanism and slum sawmills require conscious awareness and active engagement with the norms and strategies for survival. This is essential to coping with the challenges and depressing nature of sawmills as workplace and living areas. The emerged themes speak in diverse but interrelated manner to the experiences of these adolescents within sawmills as a sub-burb community. From the analysis, the four themes of interest include the notion of boyshood, rules of engagement and survival measures; self-care practices geared towards a healthy body; performance enhancers and possible health consequences; and survival into adulthood, and the ‘man must die syndrome.’

Participants’ profiles
The socio-demographic characteristics of the 16 interviewees revealed similarities in parents’ socio-economic status. The average age at which the participants started working in sawmills was 13.5 years. This low average age of the participants prompted further questions on their years of schooling and future aspirations. From the responses, poor academic performances and access to education was a problem prior to their search for employment at sawmills. Only three out of the interviewees disliked schooling due to physical punishments and the view that both educated and non-educated would end up working for money. As such, an early start will bring them the needed money. Ironically, the average labourer at sawmills works for 10 hours per day and earn a daily wage that is about 7 US Dollars. From the narratives and based on erratic power supply, the average wage per day vary and could even amount to zero income on occasions when there is total outage or load shedding of power supply. On such occasions, the interviewees will engage in footballing and table tennis with the hope of returning to work without further delay.

Due to poor wages and low socio-economic background, a higher proportion of their incomes are expended on feeding with little left for clothing or savings through daily contributions known as Esusu1. It is worthy to note that the poor income and survival challenges notwithstanding, three of the interviewees claimed to have girlfriends. In addition, six among the remaining participants already had their first sexual experience. Smoking and drinking is also common among sawmill workers and a few of the participants. Two of the interviewees admitted to smoking but were reluctant to disclose whether they smoke marijuana or cigarette or both. However, they argued that smoking helps in reducing their worries and stimulate their spirits. On the average, each interviewee has worked or lived in sawmills for a minimum of two years. All the adolescents work as

1 An informal system of savings common in many communities within South western Nigeria. See (Osuntogun, Adeyemo, & Osuntogun, 1981) for more details.
auxiliaries to the machine operator and other older or senior workers in sawmills. On few occasions, four among the interviewees that were aged 18 years of age served as assistant machine operators. A predominant responsibility of the interviewees was loading and off-loading of timber and planks. Only one of them is involved in packing and dumping of sawdust. The hope of leaving the Sawmill was dim. However, almost all the participants pray against evitable hazards and miraculous financial breakthrough to enable them settle for a brighter tomorrow.

**Sawmills as factories and residential areas: entry and exit rationale**

Despite the existing variations in the participants’ narratives, individual patterns and consistency emerged in the rationale provided for seeking a living in slum sawmills. Entrance and exit routes are diverse for current and potential inhabitants and labourers in the sawmills. Starting with the entrance, situational factors including the social inequalities and the perceptions of sawmill as a promising source of earning a living and relatively affordable space for living stimulated the move or relocation of some of the adolescents to sawmill communities and factories. For some of the interviewees, the survival challenges associated with high poverty level, high cost of living and low socio-economic background are critical push factors to search for a living at the sawmills.

Life is difficult, but as a boy you just have to search for a way out so that you don’t die of hunger.

My parents are indigent and there is none around to assist, so I need to work since I don’t want to steal.

Among the five participants who shared deprivation experiences are those whose parents or relatives reside within the sawmill communities. The other group includes those whose means of livelihood and residence are within sawmills, but whose parents are living outside the sawmill. This latter category consists of adolescents that are school dropouts and lack meaningful supports from their significant others.

However, there are also those whose desire for early freedom and the need for financial independence from parents or relatives are critical determinants.

At the initial stage, I thought it would be easy to make cool money once I start working here (sawmill). Unfortunately, the money is not easy to come by, yet I do not want to return to my parents because I want my freedom (Adolescent aged 17)

Interestingly, the narratives of some of the adolescents in this study pitched them within the category of young minds in search for a living and future due to socio-economic pressures. Interestingly, some of the participants also perceived their labouring efforts as part of their social obligations to their parents. To these interviewees, there is an urgent need to support their poor parents and reduce the burden of living in urban areas. Hence, the motivation to work and live in the sawmill community. However, with time and mixed experiences, the factors that shape the move to work or live in sawmills expand as social life, and other contextual challenges emerge. This promotes individualism and personal determination to overcome the everyday challenges in sawmills settings. The daily routine includes early resumption at work, limited time for personal hygiene and craves to make more money. Paradoxically, the daily efforts of keeping soul and body together makes them susceptible to evitable work hazards that could cause partial, permanent disempowerment or death in some cases.

While no one desires early death, a male child can only die once. So a boy must go out there and hustle.

**Work hazards in sawmill, perceived negligence and cultural beliefs**

Work hazards are routine occurrences at Sawmills. This includes minor, major and death in some occasions. With a minimum of two years working experiences, the interviewees described work hazards as a normal occurrence that has the influence of both physical and spiritual forces. Against this cultural perspective, the physical dimension to hazards occurrence lies in the nature of the hazards and their association with the use of obsolete equipment in the logging of timbers. A number of the interviewees argue that some hazards are preventable events through the provision and right use of modern equipment. Unfortunately, such equipment is lacking despite that sawmill owner and labourers are aware of the hazards and the need to promote safety at these
factories. While some of the interviewees also symp-
pathise with some sawmill owners who have left the
business due to the high cost of operation and poor
returns on investments, provision of safety measures
is inevitable and varies from one sawmill to another.

In contrast to the sympathetic disposition towards
some sawmill owners; four among the participants
argue that many owners are insensitive to the plight
of their workers. Moreover, what is paramount to
such employers is how to reduce and save costs at
the expense of lives and safety of those working for
them. With some years of working in sawmills, it
could be possible for some of the participants to
have observed the indifference in the disposition of
some sawmill owners to safety practices. This may
be having ripple effects on the disposition of workers
to safety measures in their daily tasks. From a binary
position, it could stimulate fear and panic as workers
may adhere to the safest form of practice to avoid any
mishap. In contrast, it could also encourage Luke
warmness and vulnerability to hazards.

I think they (sawmill owners) see you (labourers) as
voiceless and vulnerable since many of us working here
(sawmill) are from a low-socioeconomic background.
Some ogas (sawmill owners) will curse and abuse you
as nobody. No wahala (no problem) for omo boy (the
boy child).

Some of the interviewees belittled the passive atti-
dudes of sawmill owners towards the provision and
enforcement of adequate safety measures as well as
discretional implementation of compensation in the
course of an accident. Only a few owners provide
gloves, dust mask, goggles/face shield and fall pro-
tection equipment.

It is true that some sawmill owners are reluctant in
providing some needed safety measures like gloves,
shield and others. However, they are not the only ones
at fault. Some greedy employees have stolen such in
the past and on some occasions and for some reasons;
some employees hardly comply thereby complicating
the situation.

The possible frustrations that come along with the
view that employees (sawmill workers) are from the
low ebb of the society could promote low adherence
and disloyalty among the labourers. Low adherence
to safety practices promotes the vulnerability to
different hazards that are capable of predisposing
sawmill workers to various forms of health problems.
The interviewee confirmed a frequent occurrence of
conditions such as arm injuries, eye problems; cold,
catarrh and electric shocks among sawmill workers.
For some of the participants, these conditions oc-
cur partly due to negligence and inadequate safety
measures.

In the same vein, one of the employees also
expressed dismay in the negligence and passive
dispositions of some machine operators towards
complying with safety standards in the Sawmills.
Thus, the effectiveness of safety measures and haz-
ards prevention also depends on other factors like
the quality of materials and perceived usefulness of
the available measures.

Some operators are carefree and will not check for leak-
ages or naked electric cables on the machine. Through
such negligence, many inevitable deaths have occurred
on many occasions.

The perceived relevance of and adherence to safety
standards in the workplace did not stop some of the
interviewees to invoke a cultural belief that the em-
phasis on the inevitability of certain events in the life
of any individual. This position could be described
as a soft determinism towards hazards occurrence
as a number of them emphasised safety adherence
as a useful practice. From this soft predetermined
worldview, some of the interviewees expressed
the view that work hazards are sometimes difficult
to avoid except through prayers and adherence to
safety standards. In support of pre-determinism,
four among the interviewees described ori (inner
head) and evil machinations a critical determinant
alongside with negligence of workers.

Some hazards are questionable and beyond ordinary
explanations. In this year alone, I have seen two cases
of electrocution that are not just explainable.

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2 In the Sawmills, machine operators are directly in charge of supervision of
the sawmill factory as well as cutting of the timber to desirable size.

3 Ori iju is a Yoruba worldview that emphasizes the place of predeterminism
in the occurrence of events in the life of an individual. In the same vein, as
a philosophical view, ori is critical to the occurrence of good and evil in the
lifetime of an individual and it is one’s ori that helps in creating a distinc-
tion in the patterns of occurrence from one individual to another.
As a boy, you just have to believe in prayers and spiritual matters to avoid some evils especially the evil machinations of those around you.

Despite this latter emphasis on spiritual forces causing some hazards, a consensus among the participants was the need for urgent efforts at curbing the worrisome situation of evitable hazards in sawmills.

**Survival and the rules of engagement in the sawmill**

Surviving boyhood within sawmills consists of exposure to prevailing norms and values; the inculcation and normative demonstration of these values in everyday activities. Within time and space, boys are expected to adopt and utilise traits that will qualify them for higher responsibilities associated with being a man. To scale through the boyhood stage into adulthood, it requires conscious efforts, determination to adapt to certain norms and practices that characterises male adulthood. The narratives of the participants reveal how adolescents within sawmills struggle and compete to look like older males within the community. This involves emulating certain rules of engagement, which include frowning, developing thick and baritone voice, ruggedness and fearlessness.

Behaving like a girl cannot fetch you anything in life. You have to be hard as a boy and face life challenges whether good or bad.

In addition to hardness of the mind is the need for hard or bold look. Maintaining a bold face is essential and functional for many reasons. One of such reason is to show to others that you are someone that is serious. By this disposition, it will be frightening for exploiters and those around to cheat or look down on your physical strength. It also helps in confronting issues and people that ordinarily you keep mute when in their presence. Providing a further explanation on the need to maintain a bold face, a participant described how his smiling face in the past has been misconstrued for weakness.

These rules are aimed at modifying the physical look and the mind even though dissimilarities may exist between individual beliefs, feelings and prevailing rules of engagement. However, survival of the fittest is the rule of the game. From the narratives, physical strength is essential for performance and respect. For the adolescents, all efforts are thus required to achieve a scaring physical fitness.

With the nature and quality of productivity that is expected from labourers within sawmills, physical strength as a rule of survival attracts high premium. How then is this achieved? Enhancement of performance is normative and possible with substance use, quality feeding and building of the muscles. The poor wage that labourers in the sawmills earn might have influenced their definition of good food as eating heavy meals that take more time to digest. Ironically, substance abuse and building of muscles coexist in the everyday practices of male residents in the sawmills. Three among the interviewees gave a vivid description of the relative ease at which substance like marijuana is easier to afford than getting a balanced meal. In their opinion, many male adults in sawmills consume marijuana at different degrees to maintain a level of boldness and cope with the stress of their work and dating.

People consume many fish (marijuana) in this place during break time and after work. I do not take it, but some of my age mates working in that sawmill over there does. I am afraid of its future consequences on my health.

Boys take some of those things so that they can talk to a girl or fight a boy to win over his girlfriend.

Similar to marijuana use is the consumption of herbal mixtures of different types. These mixtures are perceived as beneficial in keeping the body in good shape. There are herbal mixtures with water, and there are those that are mixed with dry gins and other alcoholic drink. Interestingly, there is a preference for the herbal mixtures with alcohol. An explanation for this preference may be associated
with the psychological effects of alcohol and the bitterness of some of these herbs. In the narratives of one of the interviewees:

Herbal mixtures are very nice, and they work for different purposes. The very common ones are to enhance your performance (sexual) when you meet with a girl, and there are those to help your body and wade off infections.

**Self-care practices geared towards performance enhancement and healthy body**

Self-care practices and performance enhancement emerged dominant in the participants’ narratives. Throughout the interviews, individual survival and success were hinged on resilience and cultural beliefs. The interviewees described the body as a given object that houses the spirit and the soul, which requires regular and adequate maintenance. Without proper care, living becomes threatened as the strength to support activities that will guarantee profitable returns reduce.

Work, rest and give your body what it needs to keep your spirit and soul together.

As stated earlier, keeping a healthy body also includes consumption of traditional medicines like herbal mixtures. Participants also consume synthetic drugs through self-medication. The consumption of caffeinated drinks and drugs with caffeine was widely reported. Through experience, such drugs and drinks help in lifting the mind and quick relief from aches and stress. A number of these drugs are sold by medicine vendors who hawk these drugs around sawmills and within the community as a whole.

**Discussion and conclusion**

This chapter situates the notion of boyhood by exploring the view of adolescent boys working as labourers in suburb sawmills. Particular focus is on their survival strategies including self-care practices of enhancing productivity and the unintended consequences such actions could have on their health. The chapter’s overall aim is to contextualise the variations that exist within a given context for the boy child and how such shape the decisions and survival into adulthood. Empirical qualitative data is derived through face-to-face interviews with adolescent labourers in commercial sawmills in Lagos state, Nigeria. Sawmills covered in this study are factories and place of residence for a high proportion of the suburban population in Lagos State, Nigeria. A phenomenological theoretical stance guides the data generation as well as interpretations.

Empowering adolescents and youths in Nigerian suburban communities requires concrete and directed efforts. With the early entry into the labour and contextual rationalisation of such efforts among adolescents in this study, the findings support other studies. Child labour was widespread in different contexts and communities in Nigeria (Fetuga, Njokama, & Olowu, 2005; Omokhodion, Omokhodion, & Odusote, 2006). However, suburban communities are largely marginalised in diverse ways including inadequate social amenities and limited employment opportunities. Marginalisation of suburban communities has grave consequences on the larger society and not the communities alone. As an open and interactive sub-system, suburbs like sawmills provide essential services to the larger society. One of the functional roles is the provision of timbers for different purposes, sources of employment and income for diverse social categories and a relatively affordable place of residence for urban dwellers with low social, and economic status (Aiyeloja, Oladele, & Furo, 2013). The covert roles include pollution in various forms (Oguntoke, Otusanya, & Annegarn, 2013; Oloruntade, Adeoye, & Alao, 2013) and social space for learning and transmission of social vices.

Sawmills as factories and residential areas provided mixed expectations and outcomes for the limited number of adolescents that were interviewed in this study. The incongruence between life events, personal desires and expectations, emerged vividly in the outcomes and experiences of the adolescent labourers. The adolescents adopted different but related strategies in adapting to the social expectations and norms that separate boyhood from girlhood. Appropriate response to challenges and opportunities stimulate entrance into higher responsibilities and social acceptability. This also sustained the resilience to look forward to the future by working harder to keep body and soul together. As factories and residential physical and social space, prevailing careers within the immediate environment could alter the
career aspirations of these adolescents and other youths in the communities. This possibility has been established in a Kenyan study on career aspirations of youths in suburban slums (Kabiru, Mojola, Beguy, & Okigbo, 2013).

Besides career aspirations, there are possibilities of developing values and practices that may be unhealthy to the adolescent or their peers and their communities (Kabiru, Mojola, et al., 2013). In this study, the rationalisation of marijuana consumption by some of the adolescents despite the health implications is worrisome. This finding supports existing studies on the influence of environment and social behaviour including smoking and alcohol consumption among adolescents (Acuda, Othieno, Obondo, & Cromie, 2011; Rowe, Woulbroun, & Gulley, 2013; Sznitman et al., 2013). Public production and consumption of marijuana in Nigeria is illegal. Studies have shown how different factors keep aiding the production and consumption of marijuana among youths in Nigeria (Acuda et al., 2011; Mamman, Othman, & Lian, 2014). Unfortunately, the growing rate of substance abuse creates dilemma for some of the participants in this study as they struggle between what is attractive and personally beneficial as a survival strategy. This also supports other findings on substance abuse among adolescents in Nigeria (Mamman et al., 2014).

The search for a living at sawmills also implies exposure to different work hazards. A number of these hazards cause incapacity and sudden death in some cases (Osagbemi et al., 2010). Prevention of hazards is collective and requires timely and adequate provisions and adherence to safety measures. Ironically, there are deviations as employers fail to provide these safety measures while some employees are negligent in complying with expected safety practices. This supports other studies that safety in small and medium scale sawmills in Nigeria remains a challenge as many evitable hazards have occurred over the years (Bamidele et al., 2010; Osagbemi et al., 2010).

However, the cultural beliefs that some work hazards are inevitable as expressed by some of the participants calls for more sensitisation on workplace safety. This worldview is synonymous with the position that an adequate provision of safety measures and effective adherence does exclude absolute exclusion of hazards. While this may be true for certain natural events, hazards in sawmills as reported by several studies are preventable or predictable. Unfortunately, the unwillingness to accept compensation responsibilities among sawmill owners and the prevailing cultural beliefs around life events as expressed through other avenues will keep on propagating the view that caution and carefulness are insufficient measures of avoiding workplace hazards. In the literature, De Santis et al. (2007) argued that work 'safety culture can be evident through the actions and inactions of personnel at all levels of the organization no matter how robust the systems and the engineering are in that organization.' The absence of adequate safety measures or the indifference of sawmill owners towards 'healthy factory' may be synonymous to worker’s indifference to their safety at work. This may be an indication that such factory owners are not expecting any occurrence of work hazards or are optimistic that such occurrence may be minimal.

Ability to adapt is a requisite survival for any living organism. Sawmills as a sub-system have its norms and values similar to the larger social system but with possible particularities. The prevailing norms and values within sub-systems also change depending on developments within and around the larger system. Through this continuum, social actors adopt strategies that are useful in navigating through the opportunities and challenges within and around their various spaces. The adolescents in this study confirmed the existence and perceived relevance of norms and values that are required for daily survival and growth into adulthood. This requires understanding the common forms of survival and redefining these measures in interacting with others around and within sawmills. Through this process, language, appearances and attitude among other behavioural traits are modified. The rules of engagement are hazy, and changes as the adolescent spend more years in sawmills. Unfortunately, both useful and harmful practices transmitted through this process. However, whether an adolescent will acquire beneficial or harmful practices also depend on other factors such as career aspirations, religious beliefs and practices and a network of support including neighbourhood and housing types.

At the individual level, survival in sawmills requires determination and doggedness as there are
moments of despair and lack of income. From the participants’ narratives, there are many events and life outcomes that labourers face on a daily basis. Erratic power supply remains a major threat to regular income. The problem of power supply in Nigeria has lingered for many years with devastating effects on small and medium scale organisations and the economy at large. While there are ongoing efforts at improving power generation and distribution in Nigeria, the experiences and effects of power supply problem will differ for individuals with the same social setting. From the narratives of the adolescents in this study, interruption or power outage creates opportunities for leisure and starvation if the problem lingers for days. However, the resilience to face each day as it comes and move on with life helped in one way or the other. In this same direction and as stated earlier, substance abuse becomes rationalised as some adolescents take to marijuana consumption as a way of coping with daily challenges and performance enhancement. Ironically, substance abuse and alcoholic consumption in adolescence has proximate health effects in adulthood (Bachman, Wadsworth, O’Malley, Johnston, & Schulenberg, 2013; Chassin, Pitts, & Prost, 2002) and dating aggressions (McNaughton Reyes, Foshee, Bauer, & Ennett, 2014).

Among the participants, reliance on self-care including medication is expected due to inadequate income, poor or absence of social amenities in suburban communities. Self-care practices are rationalised initiatives taken by social actors in resolving or adapting to the needs around them (Denyes, Orem, & Bekel, 2001). Self-medication is common among adolescents and other social categories in Nigeria. Structural, community and individual factors account for the widespread of this practice (Omolase, Adeleke, Afolabi, & Ofolabi, 2007; Sapkota et al., 2010).

To some of the participants, self-care practices such as medication and consumption of substances qualify as proactive steps in sustaining productivity and healthy body. Self-medication encourages drug abuse and with possible negative implications on health. However, with inadequate income and absence of medical aid or free health services, it is predictable that individuals would engage in self-care practices including medication and consumption of herbal mixtures as espoused among the participants.

The findings from this study are limited based on the research approach and focus on the experiences and survival strategies of adolescent labourers in suburb sawmills. With an emphasis on workplace hazards and survival in sawmills, other issues such as their sexual and reproductive health are not covered. A mixed method approach could have provided additional insights and generalizable findings with the study context. Despite the limitations, this study is first amongst others that will focus on adolescent labourers as a social category and their boyhood experiences as workers and residents in sawmill factories and communities.

In conclusion, this chapter presents the notion of boyhood among adolescent labourers in suburb sawmills, Nigeria. Sawmills as factories and place of residence for adolescents provide opportunities, and that warrants the appropriation of individual resilience for survival and social positioning. Through this process, male adolescent labourers are socialised into norms and practices that promote self-care practices aimed at improving performance and maintaining healthy bodies. Unfortunately, prevailing work hazards and inadequate compensations within the sawmill industry in Nigeria are disastrous to the aspirations and quality of labour force within the industry. In the same vein, the unending struggle to earn a living and enhance performance through marijuana and herbal mixture consumptions has health consequences. Investigating existing health practices among youths currently employed within the sector could also be useful in providing information that could be utilised for addressing existing health challenges and the promotion of health within the study settings. Sustainable measures that are commensurate with the increasing workplace safety challenges in low-resource settings are required.
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Chapter 17

Resilience and surviving post-conflict reconstruction challenges:
Views and experiences of adolescent boys in a community in Nigeria

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Abstract

Post-conflict reconstruction is a period that requires enormous resources especially in the area of labour force participation. Ironically, how communal crisis affects the notions of boyhood and labour force participation in the post-conflict period attracts has received marginal research attention. From an Interpretative Phenomenological stance, this chapter examines the challenges and notions of boyhood within the context of post-conflict reconstruction challenges at the household level. Eleven face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with male adolescent aged 15 to 18 years that lost one or both parents during the 1997 or 2000 Ife-Modakeke communal conflicts. The findings revealed how the loss of a parent, or both truncated the education of many of the adolescents as they learn trades that could develop them to contribute productively to their households and community. However, not in all occasions do adolescents engage in positive practices for survival in such context. Some of the adolescents confirmed the indulgence of other adolescents in unscrupulous activities, thereby increasing the risks of been exploited and vulnerable to participate in future conflicts. Limited options and inadequate supports available to adolescents could make them become potential machinery to ignite communal clashes and conflict or ethnic violence in the community. In conclusion, post-reconstruction initiatives such as empowerment programmes must account for the differences in the challenges and experiences of adolescent boys for sustainable peace and development. A neglect of this critical aspect of reconstruction could spell doom for the society and including the quality and quantity of labour force needed with such context.

Introduction

In many social settings, human desire for autonomy, scarcity of resources, inequalities and marginalization are products of political and power relations. Unfortunately, this social arrangement contribute in great deal to raising communal conflicts (Brosché & Elfversson, 2012; Butler & Gates, 2012). Communal clashes have long historical roots in Africa. This dates back to the pre-Trans-Atlantic slave trade when communal conflicts revolve around conquering and building of empires for governance, economic, social and religious purposes. However, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the discovery of America with the booming sugar cane plantation among other factors are said to have fueled the frequency of ethnic and communal conflicts in Africa. Several communities and ethnic groups suffered a massive loss as their members were taken into slavery. After more than 400 years of booming Trans-Atlantic Slavery trade; the industrial revolution and emergence of factories in Europe, watered down the demand for labour from Africa. However, with new demands as more European countries scramble for Africa in order to gain access to raw materials and identify new markets for their finished products. During this period, many African communities became colonies and subject to the rulership of colonial masters. Partly, the history and experience of colonialism provided the bedrock for more communal and ethnic conflicts in the everyday life of the African people. Without attributing sources of conflicts to colonialism experience alone, conflicts often arise from perceived inequalities among groups or communities irrespective of the similarities in religious affiliations, ethnicity and racial identity (Stewart, 2006). This
Resilience and surviving post-conflict reconstruction challenges

may be observed in the complexity of factors supporting the frequent occurrence of communal clashes and the defiling search for solutions. From the politically motivated conflict in Egypt to the conflict among the nomadic groups in Sudan and the civil war in Libya, thousands of young men and adolescents were not left out as they forcefully became soldiers or recruited as militants or members of rebel groups (Honwana, 2011; McKnight, 2010).

Whether some of them participated unwillingly or willingly, fighting as a child soldier or victims of war involves sacrificing self-interest and even lives for a cause (McKnight, 2010; Stewart, 2006). Unfortunately, after engaging these adolescents or children in war, their voices are silenced. Thereby forcing majority of such children soldiers or victims of war to make a living by themselves (O’Kane, Feinstein, & Giertsen, 2009; Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2000). Self-help may stimulate resilience; however, it may also lead to marginalisation and neglect in post-conflict development efforts. Mobilisation of resources for wider impact in post-conflict communities requires the involvement of social actors with positions and resources, which are unavailable to adolescents as victims or fighters. Hence, this creates challenges for adolescents as they become more vulnerable and marginalised in the process of harnessing resources for post-conflict resolution efforts. However, self-help strategies in post-communal communities will differ within and across contexts, and this could affect the meanings and notions of boyhood and labour force participation. Inadequate research attention and insensitivity to the nature and peculiarity of self-help strategies has consequences on developing sustainable empowerment initiatives for different social categories of adolescents in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. As a period, post-conflict reconstruction requires enormous resources especially in the area of labour force participation.

Post-conflict reconstruction is the process of rebuilding a war or conflict torn community to the path of economic functionality and development. As a stage in a community’s life, it post-conflict periods require different stakeholders including international and local communities, to collaborate with governmental and non-governmental organisations before meaningful period of stability can occur (Edomwonyi, 2003). Through the socialisation process, boys and girls are nurtured differently with the expectation that they will respond differently when faced with negative life events. From a demographic perspective, this chapter examines the challenges and notions of boyhood within the context of post-conflict reconstruction challenges in Modakeke-Ife. The Yoruba community is in Southwest Nigeria with history of the series of inter-communal crisis. Post-conflict reconstruction is still ongoing in the community. Hence, this chapter focuses on how persistent history of communal crises could influence the notion of boyhood, resilience and surviving post-conflict reconstruction initiatives.

This chapter argues that self efforts and initiatives of communal victims especially the adolescents are essential in post-conflict empowerment initiatives. Thus, empowerment programmes must account for the differences in the challenges and experiences of adolescent boys to increase their socio-economic status and achieve sustainable peace and development and economic recovery. A neglect of this critical aspect of post-conflict reconstruction could deter economic recovery of the communities at large. Hence, this chapter adopts a qualitative approach in investigating the resilience and survival approaches of adolescent boys in handling post-conflict reconstruction challenges in a Yoruba community with history of inter-communal crisis within the last 12 years.

Communal conflicts in Nigeria

In recent years; the continent of Africa has been plagued with devastating conflicts thereby emerging as the highest contributor to the world’s population of the displaced persons and refugees. There is an increase in the vulnerability of children, adolescents (both male and female often recruited as soldiers and sex slaves respectively) and women as a result of the unending conflicts (Crisp, 2010). The situation is similar to what obtains in many other African communities where communal clashes are conventional and normalised. Nigeria, a sub-Saharan African country has witnessed series of communal crises at different periods and new cases are re-occurring due to complex factors among which include politics, religion, socio-economic and ethnicity (Falola, 1998). A focus on these conflicts and the devastating effects are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a brief
overview of the Ife-Modakeke crisis will provide additional insights into the history and complexity of the factors promoting this conflict between these two neighbouring Yoruba communities.

The first conflict between the people of Ile-Ife and Modakeke-Ife people date back to 1849 and lasted until 1854. After a short period of peace, another conflict resurfaced again in 1904 whereby several houses were burnt, and thousands wounded or killed. The conflict led to the forceful eviction of the Modakekes from Ile-Ife to a new settlement called Ode-Omu which several kilometres from Ile-Ife (Agbe, 2001). The Modakekes hailed from different Yoruba kingdoms and became refugees in Ile-Ife and their hosts (Ifes) gave (Modakekes) several hectares of land to use for farming but with the payment of ‘Isakole’ (royalties) continuously to land owners (Ifes) (Agbe, 2001). The intervention of the federal government brought the Modakekes back into Ile Ife in 1992. Another conflict broke out several decades between 1946 to 1947 when the Modakekes refused to pay ‘Isakole’ to the Ifes prompting the then King of Ile Ife (called the Ooni) Oba Adesoji Aderemi to take the Modakekes to court to claim back the land given out to them (Toriola, 2001). The already built tension and strained relationship was further tested in the early 1980’s leading to another bloody conflict when local government was created for other communities but Modakeke, who felt marginalised (Toriola, 2001).

The conflicts plagued with destructions of properties, farms that was the major occupation and many lives including children and women and on some occasions innocent travellers passing through the two torn communities. The Ife-Modakeke conflict was also marked with complete chaos and spousal killings through betrayals and giving up of partners or children from inter marriages between members of the two communities. The Ife-Modakeke crisis also witnessed the involvement of adolescents as fighters as well as victims. Unfortunately, the psychological effect of fighting for one’s community or losing a significant other during such periods has remained under researched or addressed within the Nigerian context. In the same vein, considerable research efforts have focused on wide impact initiatives targeting vulnerable groups in societies with conflict experiences (Jabareen, 2013), however, there is with little attention on the resiliency and surviving challenges faced by marginalised social categories like adolescents.

Although, several interventions have been embarked on by different governments in power and several stakeholders at different point in time, however, the effects of conflicts (political, social and economic) remained with both communities’ decades after. This however has such negative implications on the lives of the victims of war especially the male adolescents who either were displaced, orphaned or lost a parent to the Ife-Modakeke re-occurring conflicts.

Challenges and notions of boyhood within the context of post-conflict reconstruction

A common trail with many communal clashes is the inter-connectivity that exists in the causal factors and the effects on survivors (Bagudu, 2003; Falola, 1998). With the many evitable implications of communal crises on survivors and social development, efforts are been directed at restoring social order at different levels. Some of these initiatives have been motivated by external factors like international conventions and bodies aimed at respecting and promoting fundamental human rights (Abdullahi & Saka, 2007).

Appreciable results are associated with some of these programmes as there are evidences to show growth, development and maintenance of peace to an extent. However, a common characteristic with some of these efforts or initiatives is a huge concentration on listening to vocal and privileged social categories that oftentimes have the power and resources than less privileged categories like women and adolescents (O’Kane et al., 2009; Stewart, 2006).

While encouraging efforts have been directed at improving the situations of women in post-conflict reconstruction efforts, oftentimes, adolescents are marginalised those born during or shortly after the crises especially. In addition to the psychosocial effects of war, post war or post-conflict periods also creates unique challenges for different social categories. The influence of such periods on survival and resilience has also remained on the margin in the available literature on post-conflict studies in Nigeria in particular. With growing trend and increasing complexity around communal conflict in Nigeria, there is a need to understand how resilience, agency
and individuality may help survivors such as adolescents cope with post-conflict challenges.

Growing up as adolescents may differ for both boys and girls especially in post-conflict situation. This may be associated with cultural norms, beliefs and practices that differentiate what it means to be a boy from a girl. While girls may suffer from sex-violence such as sexual harassment, gang rape and abduction for sex slavery, the boys often face the risk of becoming child soldier (Harriette E. Williams, 2006; Zuckerman & Greenberg, 2004), forceful abduction into rebel groups and become fighters, also assuming the responsibility of a man by fending for the family in the absence of an adult in the household.

Conflict not only divide the community but escalates the poverty level of many and increase the population of the displaced and refugees, maiming, killing and taking advantage of many disadvantaged groups within the population which are the women, children and adolescents. The young ones (boys and girls) become separated from their parents and families, deprived of the opportunity of educational attainment or to access health care, become traumatised and even stigmatized in the case of sexual slavery (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2000). Coping then becomes the only means to an end for survival as a boy when they become reunited either with relatives or as an adult though still a boy when they are all alone to fend for themselves and siblings.

Conflicts have both short-term and long-term consequences on those living within and around a war-torn area or community. It disrupts the lives of many young children and adolescents who have become the unseen and vulnerable group (O’Kane et al., 2009). They are left shattered and broken after becoming victims themselves or losing families, becoming displaced and refugees in a new and different setting where they adjust to the new phase of their lives traumatized feeling insecure and loss of social well-being. The neglect of adolescents especially the boys who have at times participated actively in the war is paramount to a continued state of anarchy and waste of rebuilding process because they play roles in advancing peace or conflict in the society.

On the overall, many of the adolescents are often marginalised in the post-conflict resolution. Many of the boys now grown into full adolescents were babies at time of conflict and therefore encountered or have different experiences about the conflict. Surviving the post-conflict period will as well require adjustment by adopting strategies to cope. These boys become senior tutor to other young boys as well, provide companionship to each other, and earn a living for themselves and family. Thus, situating resilience or coping strategies of young boys within a good policy environment whereby policies are enacted to secure lives and properties, restore good governance and create economic opportunities for the economic performance of the conflict-torn community (Forman, 2002).

**Methodology**

**Research design**

The study adopts an interpretative phenomenological approach in looking at the experiences and survival strategies of male adolescents in a Yoruba community. This approach provides an opportunity to understand what it means and how to survive boyhood in a post-conflict community. It also provides an opportunity for the researcher to learn from the subjective and constructionist interpretation of realities that will not have been possible through other research approaches (Smith, 2007).

**Study setting**

The study is carried out in a Yoruba community (Modakeke-Ife) in Ife Central Local Government of Osun State in South-West zone of Nigeria. The Community members practice Christianity and Islamic religion. More than half of residents are farmers and their farm products supplied to all neighbouring towns for consumption. Modakekes has fondly called were said to have migrated from the Old-Oyo Empire about more than ten decades ago after its collapse. The Oyo refugees became settled on a large parcel of land given to them by the King of Ile-Ife widely called the Ooni who accepted them into his community (Asiyanbola, 2009).

The settlement was referred to later as Modakeke, and they became useful to their host (Ifes) to do farm work and good hands during warfare. However, this cordiality between the Ifes and Modakekes soon turned sour as conflicts began between the two communities when the Ifes called the “landlords” labelled
the Modakekes “strangers.” Clashes began between the two communities over land ownership, entitlements, struggle for resources and inequality to political power or political representation (Asiyanbola., 2009; Stewart, 2006). To date, several conflicts have occurred at different periods between the two communities and caused deaths of thousands of people, permanent injuries and disability and destruction of properties.

**Recruitment procedure and data collection**

As a research approach, phenomenology involves the selection of a small and manageable sample size (Hall, 2014). From the literature, the sample size could range from less than 10 participants to less than 19 in a single study (Cunningham, Barry, & Corprew, 2014; Hall, 2014). This provides an opportunity to achieve depths and contextualised knowledge on the phenomenon of interests.

The study participants were recruited through snowball approach. As a hidden population, two key informants within the age range of 20-25 years served as a link in identifying the adolescents. The eligibility criteria include being a male adolescent between 14 and 18 years of age and the loss of one or both parents during the 1997 or 2000 communal conflicts. The two informants provided the link in securing the first two initial interviews with eligible participants. Thereafter, the participants through referral provided the link with other adolescents of similar background. This resulted in the recruitment of 11 participants. The data was collected through In-depth Interview, which was conducted by two male-trained field workers. Interviews were conducted in the native language (Yoruba) of the participants and at preferred locations. The average interview lasted 47 minutes.

**Data analysis**

Thematic approach was used to analyse and interpret the qualitative data. Each recorded interview was turned into a verbatim transcript to capture information fully in participant’s words, phrases and expressions. Transcript was read several times and coded line by line. Three related themes are focussing on the notion of boyhood, challenges and survival experiences as well as future aspirations emerged from the data.

**Ethical consideration**

The essence for the study was discussed with each of the participants and consent was obtained before commencing the in-depth interview. Due to the sensitivity of some issues raised in the interview guide, participants were informed of and were made to understand that they have the right to decline or withdraw their voluntary participation at any point during the interview session.

**Findings**

**Participants profile**

The average age of participants is 17 years. The eldest of them is aged 18 years while the youngest is aged 15 years. Out of all eleven respondents, only three attained secondary education, five completed primary school education, and remaining three were dropouts. Four among the participants were apprentices, three were employed as clerks, two were menial workers and remained two is self-employed. About five of participants were in single parent households, two were currently living with relatives and two were living alone while the remaining two said they were scouting with friends.

**Real boys versus small boys**

The notion of boyhood produced two typologies. The first centres on the “real boys” that serves as a benchmark of accessing the degree of normativeness and social fulfilment. The second, “small boys” signifies a deviation from the social expectations of what it means to be a boy. The two typologies emerged dominant in the narratives of the participants and served as the basis for appraising personalised experiences while growing up. Both typologies are like a continuum, which implies that a small boy can become a real boy and vice versa. With this consciousness, male adolescents through their narratives express their conformity and willingness to comply or deviate within time and space.

In conformity with the social expectations of being a “real boy”, includes assuming unduly role and become responsible by shouldering responsibilities of others. Being a “real boy” is not only the gendered dimension as it also connotes ability to live an independent life and avoid becoming a nuisance in the community. The quotes from the participants’ narra-
tives also provide a situating context in interpreting the typology and social construction of a “real boy”.

... A real boy is someone that is seriously minded and focused; not someone that just roams the street without a direction (IDI Participant, 16yrs old, Barbing Apprentice)

... Real boys are those that are focused and can define their lives; but others are those that are fashion crazy and like parading themselves about and later regret (IDI Participant, 18yrs old, Commercial phone call operator)

... Is when a boy is hard working, can fend for himself or household- not necessarily married but should be less dependent on his parents; not about parading oneself in the street sagging trousers...(18yrs old, Male Adolescent, Okada rider)

Individual consciousness and conformity to the social expectations of being a boy were the only parameters that separate the two typologies. This creates the possibility of placing the responsibilities and consequences of failure on individuals and less emphasis on environmental constraints in defining the real from the small boys. In the same vein, being a small boy could also imply conforming to societal expectations without any personal achievement or focus in life. For instance, substance use, armed robbery, hooliganism and other social vices were narrated as common practices among a number of male adolescents in the community. However, the participants were quick in explaining the influence of other factors like religious beliefs and cultural worldviews as possible constraints in rationalising their preference and support for social expectations attached to being a “real boy”. These factors produce a form of succour in coping with frustrations and yet staying within the socially approved means of survival.

The crave for independence as hallmark of boyhood

The experiences of living and growing up in a post-conflict community is challenging especially for the boy child. Such experience stimulates the crave for freedom and independent living. The rush in entering into a life of independence also require sacrificing or giving up of opportunities for capacity building that are almost invincible within their community. The loss of one of both parents has psychosocial effects and limited access to resources. Against this backdrop, participants often rely on limited options that could satisfy their immediate desire for income. Interestingly, this desire also aims at providing a level of support for a living parent, relative or siblings as a social, cultural responsibility.

... I have no choice than to work hard and earn a living, take care of a sibling, an aged grandmother and myself (17yrs, Male Adolescent, Sales Clerk)

In a different context, unfavourable and life threatening actions from relatives and others could also provide a motivation for independence. Based on cultural practices, parents are expected to work and leave an inheritance for their children. Unfortunately, relatives and neighbours could take over such inheritance especially in post-conflict situations as a number of families and communities including evidences might have been destroyed. This puts children including the adolescents in this study in vulnerable positions as they are minors and lack the courage, power and means of reclaiming such inheritance. Access to a worthwhile inheritance could make a whole lot of difference and fast track the survival of adolescents in post-conflict situations. From the narratives of one of the participants, denial of access and illegal acquisition of his father’s wealth by relatives caused his hell and motivated him towards freedom and financial independence:

... Nevertheless, I just had to be brave and move on. My mother told how influential and wealthy my father was, but his relatives took all his wealth. Now I fend for myself and support my mother (17yr old, Male Adolescent, Apprentice)

Survival and aspirations

Surviving post-conflict challenges especially in the absence of an enabling environment and support requires resilience backed with actions. From the participants’ narratives, the adoption of different strategies within their environment was widely reported as a way of redefining their situations and the need to forge ahead. As earlier stated, the willingness to adopt socially approved means in selecting a choice...
of the survival strategy was common as participants took to apprenticeship, menial jobs and subsistence trading. Through these activities, a minimal source of income is guaranteed thereby providing an opportunity for participants to aspire unto a better future. It also provided an opportunity to exercise their social identity of being a boy.

...I work and fend for myself not that am begging from anyone and the little I get; I render help to those in needs...that defines me...(18yrs old Male Adolescent, Filling Station Attendant)

...I live with my maternal grandmother...she is the only one taking care of me and my siblings....so I work as an okada rider and remit fund to the bike owner at the end of the day...I started riding about a year ago....some say I am too young...how will we eat If I don't.....now I help grandma to pay my younger sister school fee....she has to start working soon when she's 14...I cannot do it alone...we still have another little brother to care for...(16years old, Male Adolescent, Okada Rider).

The struggle to fend for oneself and others place some restrictions on participants’ aspirations. This is expected as environmental constraints have a great deal of influence on aspirations and career choice. Against this backdrop, participants’ aspirations revolve around steps or actions that would improve their present level of income and abilities to meet social responsibilities. However, the difference in aspirations was observed. One of the participants expressed a strong desire to acquire more education and live the community for greener pasture at the earliest time. The possibility of this was not doubted as the participant had enrolled for a general certificate of education organised by the West-African Examination Council. His desire is to study business administration and become a successful businessperson.

...I know where I am coming from and where I am going...I have to complete my secondary school education so I can further more and become successful (18yrs old, Male Adolescent, Apprentice)

... Although, some of the boys claimed that they became wayward because there is no one to cater for him. Someone like me didn't have a sponsor but chose to be responsible in life (15yrs old, Male Adolescent, Apprentice)

Discussion

This chapter focuses on the marginalisation of adolescents’ self-help initiatives and survival strategies in coping with post-conflict challenges in a Yoruba community, southwest Nigeria.

The findings revealed how the loss of a parent, or both truncated the education of many of the adolescents as they learn trades that could develop them to contribute productively to their households and community. Communities with history of communal crisis are prone to high level of insecurity and little or none economic opportunities. The limited education and poor social capital leaves many of the male adolescents with very few job opportunities for sustainability. This supports earlier findings on the challenges of living in post-conflict communities (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2000). However, not in all occasions do adolescents engage in positive practices for survival in such context. Some of the adolescents confirmed the indulgence of other adolescents in unscrupulous activities, thereby increasing the risks of been exploited and vulnerable to participate in future conflicts.

For some of the boys, the inability to satisfy the social expectations of a ‘real boy’ produces frustrating experiences and the possibilities of entering into alternative means of survival. While the possibility of adopting socially disapproved means and rationalised as a necessity of circumstances, the social labelling of deviant acts and the associated consequences provided a form of restrictions for this latter category participants. However, as other factors like religious beliefs may account for slight variations in the predominant dispositions ad interpretation of situational constraints and survival options among the participants. While the adolescents in this study might not be involved in criminal activities, the limited options and inadequate supports available to adolescents could make them vulnerable and become susceptible to criminal activities. It could also make them become potential machinery to ignite communal clashes and conflict or ethnic violence in the community.

The post-conflict challenges and changing cultural beliefs have effects on the mind-set and perspectives of what boy and boyhood entails. While some participants see the boyhood as the state of having
shared responsibility to oneself and family. There is a growing emphasis on independence and individuality as hallmarks for success and fulfilments. This confirms the growing shift from traditional Yoruba beliefs in communalism and collective successes to individualism and material fulfilments. In every society, materialism and greed are historically rooted, but changes in dimensions and approaches with time alongside with other developments within the larger society.

The plight of losing one or both parents to a communal struggle is enough to erode the belief in communalism. However, it becomes worse when relatives or parents that ought to provide the social capital that could easy the challenges are unsupportive or deny access to inheritance like in the experience of one of the participants. Inheritance within the Yoruba culture is ways of creating and transferring wealth. This also makes it attractive to family members and distant relatives. Traditional customs make it possible for families and relatives to inherent what belongs to a family member. This social arrangement encourages bitterness and greed in some instances. From the narratives of one of the participants, growing up in a context where access to inheritance has been taking away could make or mar future aspirations if care is not taken. With need to survive, diverse measures were taken by the participants as growing up as boy requires living up to expectations and personal fulfilments as the ‘real boy’.

While the assumption of an “uncalled for” duty and the need to fend for self and others could improve self-reliance, it could further deepen their self-esteem. Some of the adolescents felt neglected by family members and to the extent the community. As victims of circumstance, they are faced with poverty and struggles but limited attention from existing post-conflict reconstruction policies. The narratives of the participants in this study showed there is much to be done on behalf of this unheard and unseen group. Their well-being has to be promoted and sustained through many empowerment programmes and educational facilities made available and accessible within the community for the economic development of the state at the overall.

Targeting adolescents and youths for empowerment has meaningful contributions to the society.

Evidence abounds that untapped adolescents in post-reconstruction communities remain a potential source for war perpetrators to fuel crises and causes conflict (Edomwonyi, 2003; Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2000). The saying of “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop” becomes an issue to consider in post-reconstruction efforts. Unemployment, lack of economic opportunities, poverty and low self-esteem, marginalisation and to neglect the needs, and right of boys could further build up tensions and escalate into another conflict due to its cyclical nature. Therefore, to maintain peace within the community, there is the need to equip boys with knowledge that will make them become skilled and self-empowered in order to restore economic hope and their social well-being for economic growth and development.

**Conclusion**

The nature and dimensions of resilience and the survival strategies of adolescent boys as found in this study could be useful for post-conflict reconstruction efforts rather than focusing on strategies that are not rooted in their everyday life experiences. Further initiatives such as empowerment programmes must account for the differences in the challenges and experiences of adolescent boys for sustainable peace and development. A neglect of this critical aspect of reconstruction could spell doom for the society and including the quality and quantity of labour force needed with such context. Hence, this chapter calls for more attention to the particularity of contexts and lived experiences in post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. Such efforts will improve the quality and quantity of labour force as well help in healing the wounds and bitterness that goes with communal conflicts.
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Chapter 18

Blind boys don’t cry: The (in)visibility of blind masculinities in fiction and documentary film

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Abstract
This chapter explores the limited representations of blind male youths in a selection of international films and television programs, from both drama and documentary genres, and consider their absence from the literature on both disability and masculinity in film. Employing a disability studies approach, the analysis suggests that documentaries are just as likely to engage with stereotypes of blindness as are fictional programs, most frequently that of the ‘supercrip’. In these cases, recourse to such stock narratives continues to place undue emphasis on characters overcoming the barriers of their visual impairment instead of rendering visible aspects of their lives not directly related to their disability. However, the research also reveals that both genres are equally able to subvert these stereotypes in some ways. The chapter concludes by suggesting three possible risks in representing the blind male youth as extraordinary: first, ordinary blind boys can remain a mystery for non-disabled viewers that may serve to isolate them; second, accomplishment is shown to be dependent on personal aptitude and perseverance rather than changing social attitudes; and third, blind children who have only gifted or accomplished children to look up to may feel inadequate or simply disconnected from their on-screen counterparts. As such, programs such as “Blind Young Things” that represent blind youth just like sighted youth may be more helpful toward breaking down social barriers and dispelling myths.

Introduction
The [cinematic] apparatus puts him on screen, it hides him behind a screen, it uses him as a screen for its ideological agenda, and it screens out socially unacceptable and heterogeneous cultural constructions of masculinity. (Cohan & Hark, 1993, p. 3)

Popular films often rely on images and preconceived notions of disability to heighten the symbolism of a given narrative or character. Such images frequently associate disability with criminality and moral corruption on the one hand, and with extraordinary achievement on the other (Longmore, 2003, p. 133, 139). These stereotypes are what Alison Hartnett (2000) refers to as the dichotomy between the “evil avenger” and the “supercrip” (p. 21-22). In addition to this dichotomy, representations of disability can also be divided along gendered lines. One disability that shows a clear division between representations of masculinity and femininity is blindness. However, while disability scholars have begun to address how representations of blindness differ according to the gender of the protagonist, the majority of analyses centre on women, even going so far as to suggest that cinematic blindness is a feminized phenomenon (Schor, 1999; Cheu, 2009). These studies tend to overlook the wide number of films involving blind male protagonists, particularly the blind male action hero common to the science fiction and action genres. The invisibility of blind men in studies of gendered disability is also in keeping with a similar absence in feminist studies of masculinity in film, which fail to address the disabled male body despite their inclusion of such other areas of marginalization as race, class, and sexuality (Lehman, 2001; Powrie, Davies & Babington, 2004; Codell, 2007; Benshoff & Griffin, 2009). As a recent analysis of studies of disabled masculinity has shown (Shuttleworth, Wedgwood & Wilson, 2012), these studies tend to treat disability as a “generic category” that ignores the vastly different experiences of different kinds of impairment, in addition to centring on men who acquired their disabilities during adulthood. The result of this kind of analysis is that it excludes any
consideration of the experiences of children who have not already internalized hegemonic norms of gender and ablebodiedness. Within studies that do consider representations of blind males in film and television (Shakespeare, 1999; Kleege, 1999; Benshoff & Griffin, 2009), only adult men are considered; indeed, blind youths are a rare occurrence even in the media available for study. In order to begin filling this gap, it is the representation of this least visible group that the present study targets.

In this chapter, I begin by considering the current research on gendered representations of blindness in film. With this context as a backdrop, I then examine the representation of blind male youths and children in a selection of audiovisual media including the film and television dramas *The Silence* (1998), *The Colour of Paradise* (1999), and *Going to the Mat* (2004), and the documentaries “Blind Young Things” (2007), “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes” (2007), *Blindsight* (2008), and *Antoine* (2008). Given the rarity of the subject matter, the films and television programs were selected based on detailed searches of Internet databases including AllMovie.com, the Internet Movie Database, and a variety of discussion forums for media about disability. To qualify, a program needed to focus primarily on a blind male protagonist under 18 years of age, as well as be available for viewing in Canada with English or French subtitles when required. The intent was to select approximately equal numbers of documentary and fiction programs for analysis; given that only seven such media artifacts were found, all of them have been included in the present study. Although these media belong to two different genres and share little in common in terms of their distribution, it is useful to compare these genres to determine whether they convey similar ideas about blind boyhood. Using discourse analysis within a disability studies approach, I explore how these blind characters engage with stereotypes of both masculinity and blindness, as well as how they sometimes work to undermine them. Rather than assert any essentialist type of blind masculinity, given the fluidity of gender and vast spectrum of experiences of disability, I will instead consider what possibilities for character and life development are imagined for blind males of different ages across a selection of films.

**Gendering blindness**

For the most part, previous research on gender and blindness in film has centred on the representation of female characters. Naomi Schor (1999), for example, has argued that blindness is “disproportionately gendered as female,” noting the preponderance of love affairs involving blind women that follow in the narrative tradition of Beauty and the Beast (p. 102). In these instances, unseeing women signify the issue of “proper female object choice” in choosing a love interest, the idea being that the proper woman is either physically or metaphorically blind to the physical faults of her lover in order to see his true strength of character (Schor, 1999, p. 101). In this way, the blind woman is akin to the blind figure of Justice, who ignores the evidence of her eyes due to their potentially prejudicial or duplicitous nature (Rodas, 2009, p. 122). Consequently, the restoration of vision or intervention of sighted people can threaten the woman’s relationship, as it does in Charlie Chaplin’s *City Lights* (1931) and the more recent *Mask* (1985), respectively.

However, while blindness may be thought to help a woman select the right partner for marriage, it is also associated with their stereotypical vulnerability and dependence on a husband or other support figure for subsistence. The dependence aspect of blind female protagonists is taken up by Georgina Kleege (1999) and Johnson Cheu (2009), both of whom demonstrate how films construct blind women as helpless, subordinate, and at the mercy of others. A film they both analyse, *Wait Until Dark* (1967), involves a blind wife named Susy Hendrix who successfully defends herself against a terrifying home invasion; nevertheless, her capability is undercut by her inferior visual positioning in relation to other characters, as well as behind set-design pieces like bannisters that frame her as if she were in a prison (Cheu, 2009, p. 488-89). As Kleege adds, even her own acts of self-reliance are marred by her dependence on her husband’s photography tools in order to disarm her attackers: “Though [her husband] Sam is not there to protect his wife, the tools of his trade act as his surrogate. If Sam were an accountant, Susy would end up dead” (1999, p. 59).

When blindness is associated with male characters, however, the portrayal tends to involve more
traditional notions of masculinity, if often in a distorted or undermined way. In film, characteristics of hegemonic masculinity include “aggression, strength, leadership, [and] lack of emotion”, (Benshoff & Griffin, 2009, p 539), as well as athleticism, independence, self-control, and dominance over women (p. 574-76). As Tom Shakespeare (1999) notes, these qualities are incompatible with the weakness and powerlessness culturally associated with disability: “Masculine ideology rests on a negation of vulnerability, weakness, and ultimately even of the body itself. Such elements are denied, and projected onto the other, who is subsequently denigrated and rejected” (p. 59). Representations of newly blinded men can thus entail a kind of self-negation, as in the portrayal of disabled war veterans as angry and broken men struggling to adjust to their perceived loss of masculinity and virility in Scent of a Woman (1992) and Pride of the Marines (1945) (Shakespeare, 1999, p. 56-57; Kleege, 1999, p. 46-47; Benshoff & Griffin, 2009, p. 560-561). Such films encourage the idea that anger and aggression are the only appropriate responses to disability for men, rather than investigating other ways of adapting masculine norms to a disabled condition.

Blind men can be portrayed as impotent or asexual even when their blindness is constructed as congenital; indeed, Kleege argues that both blindness and blinding can be used as a metaphor for castration, given the major role that sight plays in male sexual arousal (1999, p. 24). However, male blindness can also be associated with a deviant or monstrous sexuality (Kleege, 1999, p. 48-50). Blindness (2008), based on the novel by José Saramago (1995/1997), clearly demonstrates this aspect of the imagined binary in gendered characteristics of blindness. In its highly problematic story of a world driven to chaos by the sudden onset of mass blindness, the patients being quarantined in an abandoned mental hospital quickly succumb to their worst, basest instincts. A group of armed men led by the “King of Ward Three” become dominant, hyperaggressive, and sexually violent toward the female inmates of Ward Two, who in turn have taken on the stereotypically feminine qualities of passivity, nurturing, and helplessness. Even though it is the female protagonist known only as the Doctor’s Wife who eventually takes action to stop the violence, it is critical to note that she is the only sighted character in the film at this point. Thus, even though the blind men retain their virility and dominance in this film, it is only to become sadistic monsters who are ultimately shown to be inferior to a sighted woman. Interestingly, although Blindness does feature a blind boy, he is clearly positioned with the powerlessness and vulnerability of Ward Two rather than with the violent hypermasculinity exhibited by the men of Ward Three.

A separate tradition of empowered blind male protagonists derives from the Greek myth of the blind seer, Tiresias, who received visionary powers as divine compensation for his blindness (Barasch, 2001: p. 30-33). In modern incarnations of this archetype, the blind protagonist is invariably male, and his visionary abilities are often also accompanied by superhuman strength, speed, or martial prowess. Examples of such empowered blind protagonists include Nick Parker in Blind Fury (1989), Neo in The Matrix: Revolutions (2003), and Eli in The Book of Eli (2010). Unlike the impotent blind men discussed by Kleege (1999), these men are figures of both physical power and insight: all three are masters of combat despite their disability, and undertake difficult journeys without mobility aids. In addition, two of them have some kind of connection with the divine or spirituality. Eli claims to have been guided by the voice of God to find and transport the last remaining Bible to the only printing press left in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Meanwhile, Neo’s blindness allows him to perceive the enemy Machine City as light in distinctly Christian imagery, thus enabling him to end the war between Zion and the Machines. However, it is important to note that films containing empowered blind protagonists often ultimately reign in the potential they represent by killing off these disabled heroes, a trend that Garland-Thomson (1997) observes is common in literary depictions of powerful disabled characters (p. 36).

As the example of Blindness (2008) suggests, blind boys in film are not necessarily associated with the same masculine characteristics as their adult counterparts. However, studies in both disability and masculinity have not yet addressed the construction of the blind boy in audiovisual media. Thus, to explore how blind boyhood is portrayed through film and television, the following sections will analyse specific representations of blind boys and teenagers.
Fictional encounters: Dramatizations of blind boyhood

Given that most cinematic and televised representations of blindness are fictional or highly fictionalized dramatizations of real blind persons, considering the portrayal of blind boys in this type of program is a logical place to start. Of the three programs selected for analysis in this category, Going to the Mat (2004) is a Disney Channel television movie from the United States, while both The Silence (1998) and The Colour of Paradise (1999) were created by Iranian filmmakers and filmed in Tajikistan and Iran, respectively. Each film treats blindness in its own way; however, the boys share some commonalities in terms of their extreme sound sensitivity and social isolation.

Escaping the burden of masculine responsibility: The Silence

To begin with the Iranian films, both The Silence (1998) and The Colour of Paradise (1999) present young blind boys who are coping with poverty and struggling single parents after the loss of one member of the family. In The Silence, blind, ten-year-old Khorshid has had to take on the masculine role of providing for his mother at a very young age after his father disappeared while travelling to Russia. He is treated everywhere as an adult, except perhaps by his female friend Nadereh who guides him to work and tries to keep him in check when she is not focused on her image in the mirror. Khorshid is well-intentioned but irresponsible: his sensitive ears lead him astray at the sound of a pretty voice or a talented musician so that he is consistently late for his job tuning instruments. His blindness, then, is not so much his problem as is his excellent hearing and love of music, although we are given to understand that he would not have this compensatory gift without the loss of his vision.

We see little of his home life or relationship with his mother except her daily reminder that they will be evicted if Khorshid does not make enough money to pay the rent. In an inversion, then, the mother is dependent on the son rather than the blind boy on his mother. When Khorshid continues to perform poorly at the instrument-maker’s and is fired, his mother is left to wait alone for hours after all the other students have departed. Interestingly, his isolation is thus depicted as unusual compared to the other members of his school. He is also unusual due to his exceptional hearing, with his ability to locate sounds in nature paralleling Khorshid’s ability to follow music. His blindness, then, is not so much his problem as is his excellent hearing and love of music, although we are given to understand that he would not have this compensatory gift without the loss of his vision.

The perfect son and the broken father: The Colour of Paradise

The Colour of Paradise (1999) presents a very different kind of blind boy, although one who is equally isolated by his circumstances. Mohammad is a gifted young student at Tehran’s Institute for the Blind, but one who does not engage in the happy community of the other children. When the term ends and the other students are picked up by loving parents eager to bring their children home for the summer, Mohammad is left to wait alone for hours after all the other students have departed. Interestingly, his isolation is thus depicted as unusual compared to the other members of his school. He is also unusual due to his exceptional hearing, with his ability to locate sounds in nature paralleling Khorshid’s ability to follow music. He is able to isolate the sound of birds and animals over the din of a busy market, and even performs the extraordinary feat of rescuing a fallen baby bird and climbing a tree to return it to its nest. Lastly, he is better versed in his lessons than the sighted children at his sisters’ school, being able to correct a student’s faulty recitation from memory.

Unlike Khorshid’s generally emotionless demeanour, Mohammad is animated with joy at being reunited with his loving sisters and grandmother, who are equally happy to have him home. He is also awash with grief and tears each time he experiences and sounds of the film evoke a sense of freedom and triumph. Khorshid’s flight from his mother is interspersed with images of an unbridled horse galloping free, after which he concludes the film by conducting a triumphant rendition of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 played out by the workers in a pot-making factory. Although Khorshid had previously attempted to instruct the workers in the proper rhythm, they only follow his leadership now that he has escaped his bleak reality. Whether this scene occurs purely in his imagination is left up to the viewer, as the film ostensibly sets up the environment as Khorshid sees it in his mind’s eye (one example being a market set up as a long string of pretty women holding baskets of fruit and loaves of bread). Regardless, traditional masculinity and adult responsibility are thus shown to be a sombre burden in comparison to the power of Korshid’s imagination and newfound freedom, with the film ultimately validating his escapism.
the threat of isolation: when his father arrives late to pick him up from school, when his sisters go off to school without him, and when his father abandons him with a blind carpenter so that he can pursue a love interest without the shame of a blind son. The carpenter admonishes Mohammad that “a man never cries”, but Mohammad’s sobbing description of the loneliness, social isolation and absence of God he feels due to his blindness seems to give the carpenter pause for thought. It is not Mohammad’s lack of sight or even separation from his family that unmans him, but rather his feeling of being wholly unloved due to his blindness.

By comparison, the film is much more concerned with the broken masculinity of Mohammad’s father, a selfish man who shows no respect or sense of duty toward his family and is willing to abandon his son, first to a carpenter and second to a river, in order to escape the burden the boy represents to him. In this sense, the father’s decision whether to finally accept and love his son constitutes the climax of the film: having already lost his mother and fiancée, the father watches for long, agonizing moments as his son is carried away by the river before finally jumping in to rescue him. The light that reanimates Mohammad’s hand after his near-drowning suggests that he has finally touched God, but whether his father will finally have the chance to redeem himself is left untold. In this sense, even though Mohammad’s disability is the defining feature of his character, it is not an obstacle he needs to overcome through personal endeavour so much as one his father simply needs to accept.

The overcompensating male teen: Going to the Mat
In comparison to these films, Going to the Mat (2004) presents a conventional American narrative about a teenage boy trying to fit in at a new school, with the added complication that the student is blind. Unlike Khorshid and Mohammad, who lead lives touched by blindness but centred on their experiences of sound and music, Jace Newfield’s entire life revolves around his disability, including the lack of accommodation he receives at school, the pranks played on him by other students, and his constant references to blindness stereotypes that he assumes are being applied to him. His arrogance and overconfidence do not win him any friends, and he is told that it is his attitude, not his disability, that is to blame. However, given that his behaviour is presented as overcompensating for his own self-loathing, Jace’s blindness is still the implied root cause of his social problems. As such, he embodies the figure of the “maladjusted disabled person,” which Paul Longmore (2003, p. 117) describes as treating family and friends with anger and bitterness because he has never accepted himself with his disability. Going to the Mat thus constitutes a narrative of adjustment in which Jace learns how to fit in with society.

Jace joins the wrestling team in order to prove himself to the local crowd, thus attempting to make up for his flaws through an intensely athletic, masculine sport. He gains a love interest in the process, a rarity for blind men in films, and against all odds leads the school team to victory at the local championships. In this way, he becomes a ‘supercrip’, a problematic stereotype in that it places the onus for overcoming disability and stigma on the disabled person him- or herself, rather than emphasizing the need for wider social changes to support the person’s inclusion in the community (Hartnett, 2000, p. 22). Despite Jace’s initial poor treatment at school, his ostracization is thus constructed as a personal issue to be overcome rather than as a problem on the part of school policy or the student body.

This success through physical prowess gains Jace the respect and friendship of his teammates, but in an interesting twist, his new friends deny Jace’s blindness when a reporter comes to interview the students about his performance. While the intended message seems to be that Jace has finally been accepted as just an ordinary student who doesn’t need special treatment, the language used paradoxically suggests that achieving social success involves leaving one’s disability behind. In this reading, Jace becomes a successful male teenager with a girlfriend and supportive community of friends only once he concedes to no longer being perceived as blind. Thus, his disability ultimately comes across as being incompatible with his social approval.

“Seeing” the reality: Blind male youth in documentaries
While we might expect documentaries to portray blindness in a less metaphorical or fanciful light, thus giving us clearer access to the quotidian lives
of the blind boys depicted, this is not strictly the case. As we will see regarding the documentaries “Blind Young Things” (2007), “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes” (2007), Blindsight (2008), and Antoine (2008), the influence of traditional narratives about blindness and disability can appear even with a well-intentioned director based on how a story is framed or which footage is selected for inclusion. At the same time, however, the documentaries engage less often with stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity, and provide opportunities for challenging these stereotypes when they do appear.

High school drama: “Blind Young Things”

As it follows the daily lives of three blind teenagers attending the Royal National College for the Blind in England, “Blind Young Things” (2007) engages with such gendered stereotypes of blindness as the angry, unruly, and depressed male. However, over the course of three months of filming, the two male students reveal that the roots of their issues derive from family and social circumstances rather than from any personal anger or perceived loss of masculinity resulting from their lack of vision. For example, Steve Markham is a troubled youth with bruised knuckles, one who sleeps in, refuses to attend lectures, and frequently slams doors. While this behaviour at first seems due to frustration with his disability and the social structures that are imposed on him at the school, we learn that his attitude is actually in response to his neglectful father, who put him in foster care for several years and now continues to fail at supporting his son during young adulthood. By the end of the semester, Steve decides to work on his resentment rather than let it continue to impact his life.

The other male student the documentary follows is Daniel Angus, a charming young man eager to experience all that life at the school has to offer: classes in music, independent living, partying, relationships, and sex. Through his story we see just how much blind student life is like sighted student life, with the same escape from overprotective parents and desire to fit in with a new community. His first exuberant experience with heavy drinking and being carried home by a friend is one example with which many viewers might identify. On the other hand, his first relationship with a girl named Stacey also shows how these relationships can present additional challenges for blind teens. As one of Daniel’s friends explains, students tend to cling very hard to their first partner, having had little opportunity for relationships before while being sheltered by their families. We see Daniel’s excitement, frustration, and eventual heartbreak as his first relationship turns into a clingy, controlling mess, and he decides to end it in order to preserve his friendships and his independence.

The portrayals of Daniel’s and Steve’s emotional struggles with dating and family relationships are contrasted particularly against the anger and bitterness of fellow student Selina Litt, an eighteen-year-old who is grappling with the deterioration of her vision into total blindness. Selina’s depiction is stereotypically female by comparison, as the audience is shown her worrying about her appearance and continually re-examining how little of her own face she can see in the mirror. It is worth noting that Selina herself has expressed ambivalence about how her segment of the program was pieced together from three months’ worth of footage, cautioning against putting too much faith in the truthfulness of the documentary form: “Obviously, I spent many hours filming and they only select certain parts, I’m not convinced anyone can be shown accurately when edited” (Litt, 2011). The degree of directional control over the students’ representations might appear most strongly in the decision to end the documentary with the beginning of Selina’s final surgery: even though the filmmakers knew the surgery was unsuccessful, “they didn’t want an unhappy ending…” (Litt, 2011).

Despite the involvement of stereotypes relating to both gender and disability, the documentary still provides a positive investigation of its subjects’ lives in that it portrays them as normal teenagers who happen to be blind, rather than as blind stereotypes who happen to be teenaged. By showing how their lives incorporate the risks and challenges that attend partial or complete visual impairment, it also helps to dispel the notion that an extraordinary level of skill or achievement is needed to ‘overcome’ this disability, at the same time as it demonstrates the importance of family and other social support networks to the students’ success. Lastly, it challenges the stereotypes of the bitter blind male by showing the male students to be multifaceted individuals whose lives are not obstructed or otherwise dominated by their blindness.
Stereotyped and silenced: “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes”

Although the Extraordinary People documentary series is also of British origin, the portrayal of a blind male teenager in the 2007 episode “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes” differs greatly from that of “Blind Young Things.” Whereas the previously discussed documentary followed the daily lives of its subjects in order to reveal their kinship with sighted teenagers, “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes” is hardly interested at all in the lived experiences of its subject, Ben Underwood, a fourteen-year-old African-American boy from Sacramento, California. Over the course of the episode, Ben is allowed few opportunities to speak for himself as he is submitted to a number of tests and challenges; instead, the program privileges the voices of his mother, uncle, and the experts consulted, according the strongest authority to the narrator himself. It is through the narration in particular that Ben’s masculinity is both emphasized and undermined.

The episode begins by highlighting Ben’s traditionally masculine traits: confidence, independence, strength, and courage. After losing his eyes to cancer at age three, Ben has taught himself to sense and traverse his environment using only echolocation, to an extent that no other blind person has ever achieved. His “fluidity of movement through space” is paired with an impressive level of athleticism, as we are shown Ben shooting hoops in basketball, rollerblading between parked cars, practicing karate, and riding a bicycle down the street. As the narrator explains using martial language, “Clicking has set him free, to live life to the full. There’s nothing his friends do that Ben won’t attempt, and conquer [emphasis added].” However, the program quickly begins to reframe his abilities as limitations, and his independence as self-deluded overconfidence. For example, when discussing Ben’s future career aspirations, which include being “an inventor, actor, writer, and a game designer”, the narration shifts the question of his success in these fields to that of his willingness to use a cane. To establish the point, the documentary shows Ben rollerblading carelessly into a car as the narrator points out his youthful naïveté: “To a fourteen-year-old, everything is possible, but life as an independent blind adult may not be as easy as he thinks. Ben has a lot to learn, much more than he realizes.” In another instance, even though Ben only needs help walking to school one day because he has forgotten the new route, his need for assistance is credited instead to his stubborn refusal to use a cane, which would alert passing drivers of his disability when crossing a busy road. The narrator’s patronizing tone thus reverses our perception of Ben’s previous demonstrations of skill: “By refusing to use a cane and label himself as blind, it seems Ben has made himself more dependent on others, not less, more blind than he might otherwise be.” Finally, his training with blind mobility specialist Dan Kiche is constructed as a “battle of wills” between Dan’s wisdom and Ben’s stubbornness and immaturity, one that must end with Ben’s capitulation to the norms of his disability.

In these various ways, the documentary shifts its initial portrayal of Ben as a skilled, independent young man to one of an irresponsible, inexperienced teenager. Even though the cane is clearly a useful tool that will help him navigate obstacles he is unable to echolocate, it is the way the narration frames his unassisted mobility as reckless self-endangerment that changes Ben’s extraordinary level of ability into a condition of lack. The resulting impression is thus that Ben’s strength and courage are simply the product of youthful overconfidence, which he must transcend in order to reach mature, independent adulthood. This narrative is supported by the relative absence of Ben’s own voice within the documentary as well as the program’s focus on Ben’s mobility and echolocation to the exclusion of nearly all other aspects of his life. As such, even though the documentary sets out to establish the extent of Ben’s proficiency, it finishes by privileging a characterization of Ben as an overreaching youth who must learn that his skill has not actually set him free.

Surmounting stigma through personal achievement: Blindsight

The portrayal of blind teenagers as ordinary and interested more in relationships than school in “Blind Young Things” is contrasted sharply by the portrayal of a similarly-aged group of teens in Blindsight (2008). This documentary about six blind Tibetan teens who climb one of the peaks of Mount Everest focuses on their extraordinary journey, and consequently lends little consideration to their daily experiences, friendships, or relationships. As such,
little is revealed about their differing experiences of blindness in terms of gender or sexuality. This focus is also evident from the apparent questions that the students answer during their interviews, as all concentrate on their experiences of social stigma, abuse, and isolation before coming to the school, rather than on the social and learning opportunities they have since encountered and how these might influence their futures.

The only real clues we are given regarding the students’ current lives come through discussions about and with Tashi, an older, quiet teen who quickly becomes one of the central figures of the documentary. Tashi is unique among the students in that he is a former street kid who is treated as an outsider even by the other blind children, whom we thus learn have developed into a community at the school. Having been given away by his father to an abusive couple several years prior, Tashi is physically and emotionally scarred, often withdrawn and unwilling to communicate about emotional matters. He is also the weakest of the climbers, and the one that famous blind mountain-climber Erik Weihenmayer becomes most invested in seeing succeed. Together with the extraordinariness and difficulty of the climb, which is described as being intended to prove the students’ capability to both themselves and the world, this emphasis on surmounting personal barriers through hard work situates this documentary clearly within the narrative of the ‘supercrip’ as we have previously seen in *Going to the Mat* (2004). Indeed, the emphasis on individual achievement emerges despite the attention the film directs toward the tremendous discrimination and societal abandonment that blind children face in Tibet. As the extreme conditions begin to prove too physically challenging for some students, who are devastated to be sent back down the mountain, their teacher does at least question momentarily whose interests are being served by the climb.

The documentary’s focus on the students’ childhoods rather than their current social lives perhaps intentionally serves to desexualize them even as it emphasizes the past hardships they have endured. The image of the ‘supercrip’ also requires the sanitization of the disabled person in order to remove any potentially threatening characteristics, being “portrayed as perfect: too intelligent, too sporty, and too gifted to be feared” (Hartnett, 2000, p. 22). Consequently, despite its portrayal of a real event involving blind youth, we learn less about the teens represented in this format than was made possible by “Blind Young Things.”

### The mysterious case of the blind boy detective: Antoine

Finally, a more whimsical documentary about a blind boy appears in the Canadian film *Antoine* (2008), named after the six-year-old boy it follows over a two-year period. Given that the film documents both the real and imagined lives of Antoine, this documentary sometimes draws closer to the fictional blind boys presented in *The Silence* and *The Colour of Paradise* than it does to the other documentaries. Antoine is an empowered, independent boy with a strong handle on adaptive technologies and a colourful imagination, another young blind boy who is able to move around town without assistance. In addition to being himself at school and with his friends, he also takes on the personae of a journalist and a detective named Dec who takes on the case of a mysteriously dissolved woman.

Curiously, the blind detective is one of the stereotypical blind characters that often appear in film (Longmore, 2003, p 131). Nonetheless, the film also subverts this stereotype by casting Antoine as a *sighted* detective. As Dec, we see him perform such adult (and traditionally masculine) tasks as driving a car, shot from his “sighted” perspective to allow the cinematic trick of showing him behind the wheel. This is just one of several scenes that accord Antoine a sighted gaze; others include seeing a woman swimming in the water that the camera shows but Antoine’s friends do not see, as well as the alignment of the camera with Antoine’s perspective as he performs tasks at school or converses with others (Stock & Ochsner, 2013).

Compared with these moments of extraordinary behaviour, one moment of Antoine’s normal life demonstrates his self-avowed tendency to anger, as well as his fear of loneliness. In one central scene, Antoine accidentally hits his friend Maelle in the head, then attempts to save face by telling her she is no longer his friend rather than apologize. When a teacher tells him that he will have no friends left if he continues this kind of aggressive, antisocial behaviour, Antoine
breaks down into silent tears. Although he refuses to put his emotions into words, the fear of isolation is clearly a catalyst for this response. In this instance we see Antoine not as the brave and talented Dec, but simply as a normal young boy trying to navigate his social world.

What is perhaps most interesting about Antoine’s portrayal as a blind boy rather than simply as a blind child occurs in the end credits, during which his classmates answer questions about who Antoine is. Each student begins with the statement that he is blind before trying to think up other qualities about him. One student mentions his tendency to anger easily and enter into arguments, recalling the stereotype of the angry blind male. Another student simply lists off a number of body parts that Antoine possesses (including a nose, foot, and arm) before concluding with laughter that he also has a penis. At that age, gender, it seems, is much farther down the list of Antoine’s important qualities, while his disability is at the top.

Conclusion
As we have seen, the idea that all representations of blindness adhere to a particular gender binary is controverted by both cinematic and televisual representations of blind young men and boys. While the programs presented all engage with both masculine ideals and disability stereotypes, most narratives challenge assumptions about blind masculinity in some way rather than merely upholding the irreconcilability of disability and hegemonic masculinity often represented by adult male protagonists. When their disability is associated with weakness, anger, or lack, these negative qualities are as often shown to be the product of discrimination (Blindsight, The Colour of Paradise) as they are attributed to a failure of adjustment or coping (Going to the Mat, The Silence, “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes”). Where a blind boy is shown to be compensated with extraordinary gifts, these gifts also tend to be intertwined with a strong imagination (The Silence, Antoine), so that any superhuman or divine associations are downplayed. Only Mohammad in The Colour of Paradise is linked directly to the divine, and his portrayal is still a major departure from that of blind adult action heroes. The representation of sexuality and romantic relationships obviously depends on the age of the boys depicted, but it is interesting to note that only two of the four programs concerning teenagers gave any consideration to questions of dating and relationships (Going to the Mat, “Blind Young Things”), while the other two focused exclusively on friendships and family when discussing social lives (Blindsight, “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes”). Of these, only the British programs “Blind Young Things” and “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes” give any real mention of how these youths might transition into working adults and what career opportunities might be available to them. There is thus no single image or stereotype of the blind boy. Indeed, both young boys and girls may offer an important opportunity for imagining disability outside of traditional gendered stereotypes, given that childhood presents a liminal space in which the rules for identity and behaviour have not yet solidified.

However, a danger remains when the blind boys are presented as near-perfect children who are victims of their circumstances, as such portrayals cast the children in the three disability stereotypes previously discussed: the innocent who is worthy of pity or rescue, the heroic overachiever or ‘supercrip’, and the blind as being compensated with an extrasensory gift or superhuman ability for the loss of their vision (Longmore, 2003, p. 131; Kleege, 1999, p. 45-46). Although these stereotypes may not seem inherently negative, they pose three possible risks. First, ordinary blind boys can be perceived as unusual or outsiders to non-disabled viewers, potentially serving to isolate these boys further from their peers instead of encouraging their inclusion. As Ben Underwood admits in “The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes,” his fellow students’ attitudes toward him change when they discover he is blind, suddenly assuming he is less capable of navigating on his own even though he has shown no previous need for assistance. Although the other students’ offers of help are well-intentioned, recent research has shown that such recourse to stereotypes can threaten a blind person’s sense of adequacy and personal integrity, increase stress, and thus reduce levels of challenge-seeking, well-being, and employment (Silverman & Cohen, 2014, p. 8).

Second, if their accomplishments are shown to be dependent solely on personal aptitude and perseverance rather than on supportive social structures, blindness can continue to appear as a personal challenge to be overcome rather than as a societal issue
Blind boys don’t cry: The (in)visibility of blind masculinities in fiction and documentary film

involving stigma and barriers to access (Longmore, 2003, p. 139-40). As a result, this perspective can downplay the perceived need for widespread changes to institutions and social attitudes. In this vein, Blindsight provides the strongest portrayal of discrimination and stigma regarding blind children in Tibet, showing their struggles to be the product of pervasive fear, hatred, and superstition; however, by focusing on the students’ determination, the documentary underemphasizes the key supporting role of their school in helping them overcome these obstacles.

Lastly, the third risk is that, rather than be inspired by these representations, blind people may receive the message that they must achieve something incredible in order to be fully accepted into society, that it is not sufficient to simply be who they are (Harnett, 2000, p. 22). In other words, blind children who have only extraordinary blind children for role models in film and television may feel inadequate if they cannot achieve the same goals or do not possess the same abilities. Jace Newfield in Going to the Mat provides one such example of needing to overcome a disability in order to be accepted. While climbing Mount Everest might have inspired confidence in the Tibetan youths in Blindsight, it is important to remember that their increased self-confidence and independence also developed as a result of the care, support, and education they received after being rescued from impoverished circumstances.

Consequently, programs such as “Blind Young Things” that represent blind youth as ordinary young adults may be more helpful toward breaking down social barriers and dispelling myths about blindness and disabled masculinity. Although this film selects the teenagers for their blindness in order to document their daily lives, and thus presents all of their experiences through the filter of their disability, it does leave room to see the teens as regular people with much more to their lives than just their impairment. However, I want to conclude with the suggestion that fiction films can be equally powerful tools for subverting disability stereotypes and pointing to wider social concerns. As seen in the Iranian films, even though both Khorshid and Mohammad possess the compensatory gift of exceptional hearing, we are shown that it is not hard work or a positive attitude that will rescue them from their unhappy predicaments. Instead, it is the attitudes of Khorshid’s community and Mohammad’s father that need to change in order for these boys to flourish, just as Steve in “Blind Young Things” would have benefited from the support of his father. The question that emerges from this analysis is then not how we can better represent the intersection of blindness and masculinity among disabled youth, but how we can best utilize the opportunities that film and television provide to represent blind children without recourse to stereotypes about disability or gender.
Works Cited


Chapter 19

The Hebdige’s paradigm revisited: A visual methodology for subcultural groups

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Abstract
This chapter proposes a photographic field research (offline and online) about some youth micro-groups, namely traceurs, emopunks and a crew of street artists. The chapter considers if the term «subcultural» can still be used. In particular, this issue emerges when the scholars consider the online dimension of the youth groups. I propose visual sociology as a research technique to study the identitary expressions of youth groups.

Introduction
In this study we will consider the parade of postmodern tribal groups, where the metaphor of tribe is used to illustrate the metamorphosis which occurs in social ties (Maffesoli, 1988). We will investigate contemporary society in its ordinary life and in its rituals, focusing on collective emotions and passions it raises. This paper proposes a photographic field research (offline and online) about some youth micro-groups, who are called in many and various ways according to different writers: «subcultural groups» (Hebdige, 1979; 1988), «neo-tribes» (Maffesoli, 1988), «scenes» (Bennet, 1999), «lifestyles» (Miles, 2000), «postsubcultural groups» (Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 2000), or «no one of these terms» (Hesmondalgh, 2005). The micro-groups considered in this study, whose pictures you can find in the next sections, are three different metropolitan youth groups of boys, namely traceurs, emopunks and a crew of street artists. This study is organized as follows. It starts with some theoretical considerations making reference to the literature of youth cultural studies. Then the kind of technique chosen is discussed. The next section (paragraph 2) is dedicated to the main topic of this study, namely the micro-groups. For each group there is a short description, some pictures and elements deriving from an online research useful to show how each group makes use of web platforms, such as Flickr, Myspace, Netlog, Youtube, Facebook. In this regard, concerning the use of web platforms by groups of users, McArthur (2008) talks about «digital subculture». Hesmondalgh (2005) states, and Mcarthur (2008) agrees with him, that youth cultural studies have to take into account a stylistic membership which is not necessarily based on music. As a matter of fact, it is the Interpersonal Interaction on Internet-based sites which creates the group identity, since it is even thanks to it that the group members gather (McArthur, 2008). The Interpersonal Interaction on Internet-based sites has many synonyms: Castells (1996) uses the term «CMC» (Computer-mediated communication), some use the term «Web» (Jenkins, 2006), others «Internet» (Robarts & Bennet, 2011). As for CMC, it is a concept that involves even the phenomena of media convergence and media hybridization. Thanks to the development of technology several media converge into a single platform. For instance the mobile phone becomes a platform where computer, television and radio are interconnected. In the same way the television becomes a platform where computer, radio and even mobile are integrated. As a result multiple media hybridize with each other.

In general, studies on youth subculture can not only be centered round musical preference and furthermore CMC has to be considered as a source to study membership and identity expression of subcultural groups. McArthur (2008) points out that the studies of Hebdige (1979) – even when other terms have been used, such as «tribe» – focused substantially on a relationship based on music preferences and they were in any case related to groups who had in common the same music preferences. In the socio-
logical studies the term «subculture» was previously used by the School of Chicago to mean youth deviance (Becker, 1963; Merton, 1957). The term «subculture» spreads out thanks to the work of CCCS (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) of Birmingham (Hall & Jefferson, 1976), which borrows the term «subculture» to designate the young working-class males in post–Second World War Britain. In the opinion of the CCCS post-war British youth subcultures exemplified the class-based solidarity among working-class youth. The CCCS holds that the term «youth subculture» implies the existence of a social sub-unity with a “fixed” identity that reflects itself in a specific style. In 1986 Cohen, whose article on subcultural conflict and working class community marked the beginning of the theory of «youth subculture» in 1972, criticized the direction which youth cultural studies had taken in the work of CCCS, while semiology replaced sociology. The youth question became a matter of representation, signifier and signified. The youth question disconnected itself from the young people. According to Hebdige (1979) it is creating their own style that the members of a subcultural group gain meaning. In this perspective, piercings and multicolor hair of emopunks for example – that we will see in detail in the following sections – are all elements which represent the fundamentals of their styles. Hebdige (1979) believed that the subcultural group produced a “counter-hegemony” style; it was organized according to age and social class – even if not completely established by them – and expressed itself in creating a specific style. Can they be considered as the fulfillment of the neotribal metaphor developed to study an essential contemporary paradox, namely the constant coming and going which arises between the increasing massification and the development of micro-groups, who are called tribes? Micro-groups (in their different expressions, such as punk, kiki, etc.) are as many punctuation marks in the permanent show of contemporary megalopolis. Such punctuation marks refer to a question according to which sociality is based on tribal bonds, which express themselves in a special way as a succession of ambiances, feelings and emotions. The emotional aspect prevails on all the other ones, such as class membership, style, music, namely all those elements which are usually considered crucial to the group cohesion. In this perspective street artists, traceurs and emopunks create and constitute their own ambiances (or feelings or Stimmungen): instant and fragile groups/ambiances, which at the same time are settings of deep emotional investment (Maffesoli, 1988). The notion of Stimmung is closely related to Max Weber’s category, the so-called «emotional community» (Gemeinde). The features of the «emotional community» are its ephemeral aspect, its changeable composition, place attachment, the absence of an organization and daily life (Veralltäglichung). Such a category is suitable for describing experiences of groups in which “involvement” in the experience and the sensorial emphasis with which the subject takes part to the experience represent aspects of fundamental importance. Such experiences are lived by the group as an experiential place in which it is possible to act in a polysensorial way (as it happens in discos or during concerts). Hence, contemporary society seems to acquire the tribal form and lends itself to a tribal reading. Tribe becomes the metaphor to describe the social bond; what really matters to the members of a tribe is being together, the fürmit-gegeneinander, and not the goal to reach. Micro-groups are interested neither in the aim to achieve, nor in the economic, political or social project to realize (Maffesoli, 1988). If on the one hand neo-tribalism seems to be one of the ways through which it is possible to read society, on the other hand it is quite common to hear people talking about individuality and the focus on the individual seems to be one of the main topic of our time (Lasch, 1979). According to Bennet (1999) the identities who Hebdige (1979) called «subcultural» are built, rather than simply given. They are fluid, rather than “fixed” by age or social class. Bennet (1999) avails himself of the concept of tribe theorized by Maffesoli (1988) and applies it in a study about dance music to suggest that the stylistic identity of the youth people involved in the English dance scene was a clarifying example of late modern sociality rather than a fixed subcultural group. Miles (2000) uses the term «lifestyle» to refer to youth micro-groups. The term «post-subcultural» (coined by Redhead in 1990 and later developed by Muggleton in 2000) hints at the fact that it is no more acceptable to consider the contemporary youth culture as the direct reflection of class background. Rather, youth identities are the product of individual reflective choices (Mug-
gleton, 2000). Muggleton (2000) does not take into account the conventional/subcultural divide and holds that the term «subcultural» has nothing to do with attitudes of political resistance. In this regard post-subculturalists are of the opinion that youth subcultural expressions show features which are less stable and more fluid. Hesmondalgh (2005) makes no choice among the terms «subculture», «scene» or «tribe». He criticizes the last two terms, holding in any case that coming back and using the former term, namely «subculture», was out of discussion. Furthermore, he called into question the relationship existing between youth people and music, which were the favourite topics considered by the previous writers. Hesmondalgh (2005) recalls Hodkinson (2002) who also refers to Bennet (1999) according to whom the concept of subculture overvalues the role of social class, namely it overrates the class membership. According to Hodkinson (2002) it is necessary to distinguish between ephemeral groups and groups which on the contrary have a high level of commitment, distinctiveness, continuity, namely in just one word «substance», a term which stands for lasting stability and autonomy in economic and social relations. The term «subculture» is however still widely used. Torkelson (2010) explores a particular dimension: life after having been member of a subculture. Over the last decade sociologists have discussed about the term «subculture» and its theoretical implications, pointing out that this term is falling into disuse in favor of those studies which stress that group identity is no more “fixed”, but rather fluid, dynamic and changeable. Such debate has been considered by Robarts and Bennet (2011) in relation to SNS (social network sites), such as MySpace and Facebook. First of all it is necessary to take into account that Davis (2010) goes beyond the dichotomies of online/offline, judging them strictly related to each other. Internet, rather than representing a new setting for social relations (subcultural, post-subcultural, neo-tribal, etc.), tends to reproduce what happens in the face-to-face communication (Robarts & Bennet, 2011). In case it does not exactly reproduce real communication, the two realms, namely real world and virtual world, are in any case strictly interconnected. In this regard, Kidder (2012: 229) writes as follows:

It is tempting, perhaps, to dichotomize on-screen and off-screen life. One is “real”—connected to the obdurate reality of time and space and hemmed in by biological limits and social inequalities (...). The other is “virtual”—free-floating and filled with nearly limitless potential.

In the last decade many researchers, instead of seeing a disconnection between time on-screen and time off-screen, have started to investigate the strict relation existing between “virtual” and “real” world, showing that participating in virtual communities can facilitate face-to-face communications (Kidder, 2012). Robards and Bennet (2011) deal with the post-subcultural change occurred on youth cultural studies with reference to SNS. In other words, although online identity expressions have been judged as subcultural, they stand up for a more neo-tribal reading. It was Hodkinson (2003) who got the ambivalence of Internet. If on the one hand it can promote fluidity, enabling a post-subcultural or neo-tribal reading, on the other hand it can at the same time strengthen the boundaries that separate subcultural groups. Therefore Hodkinson (2003) identifies Internet as a medium capable of both strengthening and maintaining the subcultural membership and on the contrary capable of providing platforms which enable multiple intersections among styles, tastes, lifestyles and cultural practices, getting closer to a neo-tribal model (Robarts & Bennet, 2011).

Debating the concept of ‘subcultural groups’ is useful not only to learn the difference between ‘tribes’ and ‘subcultures’ (towards the end in the discussion), but also to arguing that practice and internet postings are the two dimensions related to tribes. Relying on the literature above – mainly theoretical – it was decided to use empirical field techniques. The objective is to show some aspects of the empirical research on youth groups and to propose relatively innovative research techniques.

Among various branches of visual sociology, I availed myself of techniques which are similar to photographic field research. Photographic research presents similarities with active observation, although carrying out the task with a camera instead of a block notes. Therefore “approaching” the photo subjects and establishing a relationship of empathy with them become essential to such a research.
The photographic field research is the result of multiple steps: observation of reality to investigate; studying the related sociological concepts; taking pictures, which makes the researcher recognizable and identifiable; first comparison between pictures and related sociological concepts; production of other photographic material which has to be analyzed further. While taking pictures, it is necessary to take into account which kind of strategies can be applied to be accepted by the photographed subjects. As for any other research that implies an active observation, strategies go from using a low profile, which allows the observed subjects to get used to the camera, to shooting at once photographs to establish a clear relationship with the observed people. In the next paragraph you will find four sections, each composed of a short description and a set of pictures for each metropolitan youth group considered in this study. The first section is dedicated to street artists, then comes the second one concerning the parkours, the third section is related to the emopunks. The pictures were taken using a digital camera and the setting is Milan.

Three micro-groups

Street artists’ crew

The pictures show the process of production of a typical street artist artwork, namely posters. Sometimes these street artists produce stickers or stencils. The artwork is made with great care in a sort of studio; the inspiration comes from well-known Classic Art (La Pietà by Andrea Mantegna). The visual standard repertoire from which they are inspired is similar
to the classical – traditional one of Hip Hop. The poster is homemade using spray cans, brushes and colors. To create posters street artists use spray paints as well as tempera paints. Moreover, these works appear not only on the street corners or along the subway corridors, but also in art galleries. When the artwork is ready, the two artists together with the other participants get ready for the “night”, which is the moment the poster is affixed in the city. The other participants act like lookouts. The more hazardous the location destined to the bill-posting is, the more deserving the artwork is. When I asked if it were possible to take pictures, artists preferred the city centre, busy and watched over rather than restricted areas. Around 2:30/3:00 at night the artwork is affixed in about ten minutes, after having chosen a surface and covered it with glue. In the night bill-posting process they run the same risk of writers, namely penalties ranging from 30,000 to 50,000 euros. The artwork originates somehow from traditional writing, with a paper poster staying affixed for a variable period, until it is scraped off by the local police officer or by “collectors”. The fact that the artwork is taken by citizens is at the same time both a source of pride for the street artists, since it means that they appreciate that artwork, and a source of regret, since it is a pity that it remains affixed just a few days. Street artists, beyond the preparation of the artwork, have a highlight while expressing their performance.

In the pictures 1 and 2 you can see the street artist Mr. Di Maggio (a.k.a. The Stoned Faces, a.k.a. TsF) in his studio with some of his works. He makes posters and big faces on cardboard and then hangs them in the city. The cardboards are also painted.
Moreover, he makes even stickers and stencils. We see the works hung in the city. He works during the day without any fear. Hanging cardboards takes more time than simply gluing a poster. Mr. Di Maggio was also photographed in the afternoon while uncovering some of his works from advertising posters. Attending cultural meetings Mr. Di Maggio succeeded in joining the Italian and International art network.

Dickens (2008) refers to this kind of street art using the term «post-graffiti», while others use simply the term «street-art». He explores a newer style of inscribing the city, which is different from the traditional graffiti. He talks about the connection existing among contemporary forms of urban inscription, art and city, namely how these three elements come up in the emergent aesthetic practice of post-graffiti – using Dickens’s words – or street art. Dickens (2008) notes that «post-graffiti» and «neo-graffiti» are the most recent phrases used to describe street art and a graffiti scenery which are in flux between established ideas and new directions. The tag, meant as the key component of graffiti art, is gradually being replaced by street logos, posters, stencils, stickers. On the one hand, street artists try to reach mass audiences working directly on the street and bypassing the established institutions such as art gallery. On the other hand, it seems that they coexist better with the “established art” compared with previous years. For street artists working in the privacy of a studio or print-house adds another dimension to the common graffiti practice of inscribing outside walls and surfaces in situ. Thus, owning a private studio makes street artists both similar to the “established” artists and different from the traditional writers. This new
custom, rather than replacing the work which usually takes place on the street, completes it. The increasing use of posters, stencils, stickers and sculptural forms seems to be even their reply to the “zero tolerant” metropolis, since these devices allow the street artists to prepare the street artworks before being placed in the city. The street artist are exclusively male. Masculinity is linked to risk, courage and to the contempt of danger.

This first part of the study is the result of the following steps. Thanks to some friends in common I could come into contact with some street artists, firstly per e-mail and afterwards I could know them in person. The first times we met in their studies or in little rooms under the stairs used as studies and there I took the first pictures. Then we arranged to make some pictures at night, while affixing posters in the city.

As for their online presence, two of the street artists’ crew have got their own web site, in which they promote their own works and activities. Myspace can be meant both as a structure for the mass-individual production and as a form of “belonging medial” and “expressive medial”. The expression “belonging medial” stand for community forms supported by CMC (on-line communities, such as those of dancehall queens or of traceurs on Myspace; Facebook, etc.) while “expressive medial” stands for an ever increasing capability among consumers of medial products in producing others as well, ceaselessly creating and sharing video and audio contents (Youtube, digital music samples, like soundcloud, free tools, blogs). Myspace is used by street artists, since it is a platform dedicated to artistic activities such as music and graffiti. On Myspace street artists thematize the moment of the artistic performance. Unlike traceurs, street artists do not own their own Youtube channel. Rather they are present on programs of web televisions.

**Traceurs**

The second set of pictures concerns parkour and free running. They are street sports performed since the early Nineties above all in big cities by boys and young men aged between 13 and 30 years old. The street is the place where parkour and free running were born. There are no codified rules for these street sports. Parkour consists in knowing how to move around the urban areas on foot as quickly as possible, running, jumping, avoiding obstacles imposed by modern metropolis. The only rule is not to invade private property. Free running is similar, but instead of concentrating on speed it focuses rather on acrobatics and spectacularity of the athletic movements. The practical aim of the traceurs (a French denomination for who practices these sports, literally “creators of runs”) is to move fast and to get to a settled place of destination. The “noble aim” is to live more freely among the overwhelming and narrow urban spaces. Parkour is a discipline developed in the French suburbs in the late 1980s by David Belle, a young gymnast who started training in the streets of Lisse – a Parisian suburb – putting into practice everything he had learned in the gym. From then on parkour has become increasingly popular through word of mouth, videos on web and international conventions.
It is thanks to some television advertisements, that parkour has spread even in Italy. If you go to a town square, far from the centre, you can meet a group of young people who practice parkour together. The group of the traceurs (that usually gets together on Saturdays and Sundays), features a young expert and several beginners, following the Master’s instructions and suggestions. Each traceur I have met has a nickname, and each type of movement performed to get over an obstacle has a name, which is often hard to understand to profane ears: tic tac, wall spin, wall flip and so on. Such movements have different degrees of difficulty. They go from the simplicity of the former, which consists of using a wall as supporting base from which the traceur can prompt himself to jump, to the complexity of the latter, which consists of a run-up, a pair of steps on the opposite wall and then a somersault backwards, landing (or fall). Thus parkour and free running try to create social relationships among people: those who have more experience, not much twenty-year-old guys, are trainers for the neophytes, showing exercises and instilling the real spirit of the parkour, that is “improve yourself to overcome all the obstacles you will meet in your life”.

Parkour is practiced mostly by males. Masculinity is linked to strength, physical exercise and to the cult of the body.

In the pictures you can see traceurs on roofs or on scaffoldings. The risk is considered a value, it is subordinated to athletic preparation and physical training and it is carried out in a group session. The technique is considered crucial by the parkours. They train a lot before the athletic performance which stands for the exhibition of body. Suburban areas
meant as «non-places» (Augè, 1992) acquire new meanings. Such «non-places», which have no part either in the creation of a single identity or in the establishing of relations (differently from a house, a church, the location of a political party), lend themselves to new interpretations.

This section about traceurs is the result of the following steps: I went to the traceurs’ meeting place (a square in a suburb of Milan), where I met some guys and I took some pictures of them; the second time I went there, after having called them, I made a more accurate photographic survey focusing on traceurs’ training and practice; I had a third meeting at a national convention where I did not take any pictures. Finally, the fourth and last time I met the traceurs in Milan, I took some pictures of them. Firstly I met the traceurs off-line and after having known them, I took into account even their on-line presence. As anticipated before, each micro-group has its own favourite web platform. Flickr is used above all by traceurs and by street artists. Flickr seems to be a form of expressive medial. Thus, it can be considered as a structure for the disintermediation and the distribution of contents. An expert user and a neophyte have pages basically similar. On the contrary, on Myspace there is a great difference between expert users and neophytes.

On Flickr you can see the Album of a user, a set (like sport) of pictures, where each photo could be linked to similar groups, due to the common sport, to the same camera, etc.

Youtube, as well as Flickr, can be meant as a structure for the disintermediation and distribution of contents and therefore as a form of expressive medial.
As for Youtube, the crew of traceurs, has its own channel on it. Even Kidder (2012:242) notes that traceurs prefer the platform Youtube and moreover makes some considerations on their expressive medial:

most of the traceurs I met first found out about parkour through sensational video footage posted to YouTube. In their recollection of this first exposure, they insert themselves into the story. Which is to say, as they remember it, they were not passive observers. Instead, the videos ignited their own vision for what they could do and what they could be. These videos symbolically enter into their interactions with themselves and their friends (...). This is the very essence of Appadurai’s global ethnoscapes—ideas and images from around the world become integrated into our aspirations and self-understandings. Even if these objects are incapable of interacting with us; we interact with them. And, we bring them into our other social interactions.

The crew of traceurs (the Milan monkeys) and that of street artists are the only ones who own a web site (meant as a structure for the mass-individual production). On their sites you can find multiple sections (such as “Events and meetings”; “The parkour”; “Forum”; “Technical problems”; “Free discussions”; “Introductions”) and in the forum comes up the presence of an informal mentorship, a kind of presence which in the opinion of Jenkins (2006) is typical of participatory cultures. The forum is very advanced, as well as “discussions”, “events and meetings”. A similar thing happens with Twitter, where you can find the meetings of traceurs. Kidder (2012) talks about “On-screen Padagogy” referring to how traceurs use Internet.

Emopunks
The last set of pictures concerns emopunks. Emopunks are a group of teenagers and preteens, whose name comes from the combination of two words, namely “emotive” and “punk”, used to define music genres of 80’s to which they are variously related. As for the emopunks I have known, they gather in a central square in Milan, where they usually spend their time, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, maybe drinking a little, making some conversations, being together. Unlike the previous two groups, they do not practice any activity in particular, such as sport or dance, in a sort of non-active vitality, meant as vitality of the eternal child, a little recreational, a little anomic (Debord, 1971).

In the pictures you can see the distinctive look of emopunks, such as the long straight hair for men. In pictures 7 and 8 it is possible to see a sequence never seen before of “piercing practice” performed on the street; there are pictures which show “kissing practice” – according to emopunks’ definition – which consists in kissing each other among members of the same community; in other pictures you can see their meeting places, such as an amusement park, “taken away” from the families who live in that area. The “kissing practice” practice highlights the subtle difference between males and females (in slang, there is often a reference to “emoconfusion”). This confusion seems to be a distinctive concept for contemporaneity. Ayache (2006) once defined the times we are living in as a great con-fusion. Psychiatrists define “confusional syndrome” as a sensorial perturbation of behavior and inconsistent speech, a general alteration of psychological condition (Ayache, 2006: 24). Post-modern tribalism was attributed, according to Maffesoli’s (1988) metaphor, to the extended adolescence of the eternal child, that is to say: the archetypical actor of Post-modern neo-tribalism is the eternal child, who throughout his acts, his way of being, his music and the performance of his body reaffirms his loyalty to his own complexity. Getting to the amusement park, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, going on the swings, using baby dummies as gadgets, colors such as pink and light blue in their clothing, in the gadgets, in the color of their hair – gives to the question of the passage from adolescence to adulthood less relevance (prolonged adolescence), even if it seems rather the passage from infancy to adolescence. They appear to be eternal preteens. Instead of speaking of extended adolescence, we could talk about extended infancy. To get in touch with the emopunks I went firstly to their meeting place, namely a town square. There I met some of them and I took some pictures. The second time I went there, after having called them, I took other ones. The third time I went to a disco party for emopunks but it was forbidden to take photos inside the disco. In this case I could have used the technique of native image making, with pictures shot by emopunk themselves with their mobile phones or with little digital cameras.
Theme IV: Gender and contemporary media

Chapter 19

Fig. 7–9: emopunks on the playground (photo Uliano Conti); emopunk’s Myspace page
If we take into account their online presence, we notice that emopunks use above all Myspace, although it is usually linked to artistic activities, such as singing, dancing and writing. In using Myspace, they feel like members of a specific community. After all, as we have already said before, Myspace creates “belonging medial”, unlike Youtube, which is a mixture of undifferentiated contents. As for the aspect of conversation emopunks prefer that of Netlog, rather than that of Myspace. An example of a typical conversation could be the following: a female emopunk in the section “Survey” asks: “Should I dye my hair?”; “What piercing should I get?” and in the section “Screams” exclaims: “Please answer my survey!”. The section “Groups” can be considered in its perspective of multiple belonging to partial communities (Vegan; Hip Hop; DC Shoes). They are both specialized and diversified bonds, a “wallet” of “weak” bonds (Jenkins, 2006).

**Conclusion**

In light of these pictures, we could state that the existential paradox theorized by Maffesoli (1988), namely that the contemporary society is characterized by the constant coming and going which arises between the increasing massification – or de-individualization – and the development of micro-groups, who are called «tribes», is confirmed. The metaphor of tribe implies both the increasing massification and mass-individualization of the micro-groups. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to consider both the archaic aspects, namely the physical competition and the body in its performance, and contemporary aspects of tribalism, namely the increasing use of technology to express themselves. Such archaic and contemporary values are typical of the neo-tribal groups. Each micro-group has a privileged meeting place, both online and offline (the amusement park for emopunks, town squares and urban spaces for parkours), where the body plays a crucial role in terms of physical competition and aesthetic appearance. The “tribal” places chosen by the micro-groups are the urban settings of metropolis, where what really counts is the “body in its performance”. The physical competition and the athletic challenges of *traceurs* are linked to a competitive use of body. In this perspective, competition is one of the most powerful activators of the best human energy and physical self-discipline is meticulous since if the body is no more the place of alterity but rather of identification, then a reconciliation with it becomes necessary (Magatti 2009). As for the aesthetic appearance, all the distinctive elements which create the style of micro-groups, such as piercings and multicolor hair of emopunks, dresses and tattoos work as «cement», creating cohesion and unity among the members of the group. As a matter of fact theatricality establishes and strengthens the community. The cult of the body together with the tricks of appearance just make sense since they are part of a wide scene in which everyone is at the same time actor and spectator. In the CMC the participatory component is of considerable importance. On the one hand, online communities have definitely become part of the Media studies. On the other hand there has been the establishment of structures which enable a mass-individual production (such as blogs, Wikipedia, etc.) and structures for the disintermediation and distribution of contents (such as the platforms provided with shareware, like Youtube, Flickr, etc.). It was Jenkins (2006) who pointed out the participatory component of CMC of the so-called «online communities», which are therefore called «participatory cultures». We could ask ourselves to what extent subcultural groups are able to fulfill today the following five features of online communities: the members believe in the importance of the contents they share on web; they are grassroots cultures, namely an aggregate of individuals who join together and express themselves in a simple way; there are supports to create and share their productions with the others; there is an informal mentorship; the members are interconnected with the others in different ways. The groups considered in this study privilege mainly expressive medial and belonging medial and to a lesser extent they make use of the other two practices and expressive forms, that are collaborative problem solving and flow sharing. In the group membership it is as if CMC and practices of life intersect and confuse with one another. The virtual aspect of CMC does not seem to correspond with unreal, but rather it appears as the fullest realization of contingency. An ever increasing range of “other ways of being” in an undefined space-time dimension are offered to individuals. The ever more availability of facts, things, bodies, and “other ways of being” contributes to a constant confrontation and
auto-observation. There is an increasing contingency which engages individuals. It is necessary to take into consideration the above reflections in order to provide a redefinition of the “state of the art”, constantly changing due to the technological development:

The practices of young people on social network sites adhere more closely to the practices and conventions associated with post-subcultural forms of identification than with traditional subcultural models. That said, we also wish to argue that the distinctive ways in which the internet is used by young people, and the distinction made here between ‘networking’ (forming new social relationships) and ‘networks’ (typified by MySpace and Facebook as sites for the articulation and facilitation of existing social relationships) suggests a need for some refinement of Maffesoli’s original neo-tribe model (Robarts & Bennet, 2011: 313).

As already stated in the introduction of this study, micro-groups do not care either about the aim to achieve, or about the economic, political or social project to realize. They prefer “to join” the pleasure of being together, “to join” the intensity of the moment, “to join” the delight of this world as it is.
The Hebdige’s paradigm revisited: A visual methodology for subcultural groups

References

Chapter 20

Reflecting the male stereotype – a young boy challenging gendered identity online

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Abstract
Based on experiences and results from the research project (the.GTO.project · http://mt.sh.se/gto), this article discusses how tween (app. 10 to 14 years old) boys construct gendered identity in online environments where the publication of digital images are of core importance. The case being the Swedish social network site (SNS) Bilddagboken (BDB). At BDB up to 500,000 images were posted each day, totalling more than 250 million images. In the article I will discuss, based on a single illustrative example from a 10 year old Swedish boy, how a tween boy constructs an online gendered identity. This discussion will be framed by my previous article on tween girls construction of gendered identity in online environment in the 2012 publication "Invisible Girl "Ceci n’est pas une fille" "Resisting the subordinate woman – a young girl constructing gendered identity online" (Hernwall, 2012).

Keywords tweens, SNS, gender, multimodality, image(s)

An image
Here is an selfie of a boy. He is, as he says in the profile, 10 years old. Let us call him Robin.

There is something in this image that is, I think, familiar. The way Robin poses, the way he holds the mobile phone, and also the environment as such (a bathroom), are all seen before countless times. Here Robin almost literally produces the image of himself, to be seen by others. This kind of selfie (pose – phone – bathroom) is one of the most frequently appearing self-portraits in contemporary social media (c.f. Forsman, 2014). This attention to the self and the personal traits are not exclusive to either young people or social media. Rather, it can be argued that appearance, beauty, and the construction of oneself, is one distinguishing character of the contemporary society (Bordo, 2003; Hernwall, 2009).


In his production of the self-portrait Robin is also using the possibility of postproduction by adding kiss-lips. The kiss-lips on his left cheek can be read as a personal mark, as a personalization of the expression, putting yet another layer to the image. Even though in line with Robins’ production of a personal representation of himself, the strategies used are familiar to him as well as to us; it has been seen before.

In many respects familiar, still there is something peculiar with this image. There is something odd, something not quite right. That is not to say that Robin is peculiar, but the image. That which makes the image odd is that it should have been a girl. The gazing is, so to speak, expecting a girl. Just as we all are familiar with with girls posing, all around us, on billboards, in tv commercials, on social media, and in what is often named real life. The girl is the object to-be-looked-at, as Mulvey (1989) phrased it. Whereas the stereotypical boy is the active subject, showing his strength and giving accounts of bravery.
Reflecting the male stereotype – a young boy challenging gendered identity online

Invisible Girl “Ceci n’est pas une fille” (Frånberg, Hällgren & Dunkels, 2012) I had the opportunity to reflect upon gender and contemporary media in the chapter “Resisting the Subordinate Woman – a Young Girl Constructing Gendered Identity Online”. Based on a single illustrative example from a 12 year old Swedish girl (JeffsGiirl), that text focused on how a tween girl construct an online gendered identity and what kind of communicative competences this production of gendered identity demands. That discussion will now construct a backdrop for a close reading of how a boy (Robin) construct a gendered identity online by the production and publishing of the selfie above. The image of JeffsGiirl in the previous article was read as an conscious reproduction of gendered stereotypes encompassing a developed digital literacy. Likewise, the image of Robin will be read as a witness of the male gender stereotypes, and what gendered norms the image challenge. I will return, and re-use, arguments from that previous article with the ambition of adding to the understanding of both images. As Levi-Strauss (2001) and many others argue, meaning is constructed by a dialogue with both the present and the absent. Geertz (1973) phrase it as ”weaving a web of significance”, making significant that which we see by unravel relations, connections – and of course, disturbances. Meaning is not a fixed thing, out there to be discovered. Rather meaning and understanding are, I think, strange things floating, bound to perspectives, and so deeply dependent upon what is both present and absent. The previous reading of JeffsGiirl (Hernwall, 2012) is important in how I now interpret the selfie of Robin, an interpretation that most obviously will further the understanding of JeffsGiirl as well. On a metaphorical level, I’d like to see it as JeffsGiirl and Robin hold hands, guiding each other in the maze of gender stereotypes. Re-used text will be marked clearly.

A few terms that will show up in the text: “BDB” means bilddagboken and is the name of the Swedish web community used in the study; "the.GTO. project" was the research project in which the data was collected; "tweens" is in this context the naming of children from 10 to 14 years old.

Social networking sites

Social networking sites (SNS) are, as the phrase says, primarily social networks (c.f. Siibak & Hernwall, 2011; Tingstad, 2003). These social arenas are for many young people inseparable from and intertwined

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1. Bilddagboken was a SNS hosted by Wyatt Media Group, also the owners of i.e. Lunarstorm, another Swedish SNS. Both these communities hosted a large number of preferably Swedish speaking users. In August 2010 Lunarstorm was closed down and replaced by LSS, most likely as an effect of (a) the growing popularity of Facebook and (b) Wyatt Media Group focusing on Bilddagboken. In December 2010 there were more than 250 million images on Bilddagboken, and up to 500,000 new images on a ”good” day. The number of users was about 1.3 million, and about 220,000 of them were between 10 and 14 years old. There was of course a number of passive users, as well as there were persons having two or more user accounts. Still, as a preferably Swedish speaking SNS, the 1.3 million users would be about 14 % of the Swedish population (0.3 million). In May 2011 Bilddagboken changed named to DayViews, and all Bilddagboken members and all the content of Bilddagboken were ported to DayViews.

2. the.GTO.project (Construction of gender and normality among young people online in Estonia and Sweden) was a research project founded by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen), 2009-2013. See http://mi.sh.se/gto.

3. A more lengthy discussion on how the tweens concept is used can be found in Abiala & Hernwall (2013). But for now: "Naming young people (of say, 8-14 years old) ‘tweens’ implies a phase in between childhood and adolescence [...] During the tween years, young people’s attention to who they are and who they want to be increases. [...] Tweens are, in this perspective, in a phase of life where they claim and gain increased autonomy, but at the same time are still dependent upon adults for money, food, clothing, etc.” (ibid., p4)
with the everyday life, arenas dependent upon and supported by computers, tablets and mobile phones. Consequently SNS are not to be understood as technology use; SNS are from the user perspective social and interpersonal arenas (Livingstone, 2008).

As such, these arenas are important, accessible through the use of digital media. The appropriation of digital media in general, and SNS in special, thus breaks the boundaries of the physical world as it makes other kinds of actions and interactions possible. This online world has been phrased "the third area of living" (West, 1999:71), as it challenges and surpasses modernist dualistic constructions such as the private and the public. In this context, the mobile phone and other kinds of digital media has become, to talk with McLuhan (1964/1994), our contemporary extensions of the consciousness, always in the palm of the hand, always within arms reach, always a window to peers and the updates on the social life.

Consequently, multimodal literacy, as discussed by among others Kress (2009), thus becomes a textual skill necessary to develop to be part of this social life. The term multimodal is here to be understood as the integration of two or more distinct sign systems (such as written text, speech, sound, image, moving image) in one digital media platform.4 As we will see, the publication of an image has more similarities with the intertwining of production and presentation, than with writing in a more traditional sense of the word. This process of content production is furthermore done in a, and thus becomes part of a, social context populated by other users.

**A young girl constructed gendered identity online**

One prominent aspect of the publications on social media is the presence of gendering. As a constantly present condition, gendering is the process of making gender, predominantly according to heterosexual norms when it comes to the images by tweens themselves in social networks (c.f. Abiala & Hernwall, 2013). In line with that, the image used in the previous text (Hernwall, 2010) was a cutout from JeffsGiirl (anonymized) from December 2010:

This image, named the Yees-image, was described as (now you have to imagine the photograph in its whole, only partially reprinted here due to ethical considerations): a combination of a postproduced ("photoshoped") photograph of herself from torso and up, taken from a position slightly below her face, and written text. She is wearing a dark top. The photographed subject is bending her head forward slightly to her right, looking down. If her eyes are open or not is not possible to see, but the eyelashes are marked/highlighted, and they are in the centre of attention/image. At the lower fourth of the image is four letters forming the word "Yees"5 in a sans-serif bold typeface [...]. The letters are white with a black contour. The image as such is in the colour range brown-yellow, softened, and with the contours of the face, the long blond hair and the eyelashes marked. Below the image is written, in the default6 sans-serif typeface, "why like me when one can hate me?". In the lower left of the image, are some interior details visible but it is not possible to see what they are, except suggesting the photograph is taken indoors.

The posing of JeffsGiirl is a rather classic pose, positioning herself in a subordinate gendered position. This subordination is reflected not just in her facial expression or the positioning of the face below the lens of the gazing camera, but also by way of reducing her own existence; "why like me when one can hate me?" This question is indeed challenging.

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4 This definition only focuses on multimodal figurations supported by and with digital media. In other circumstances (i.e. Selander, 2007), multimodal is used for any communicative act including two or more sign systems (i.e. dance, theatre).

5 "Jaah" in original.

6 One condition for publish photos on Bilddagboken was that each publication should include some written text. This as there were no other restrictions (except legal) for what images to publish, to narrow the number of images published. The default setting for this text was a sans-serif typeface.

7 "varför gilla mig när man kan ha ha mig?" in original.
Clearly, JeffsGiirl uses a rich repertoire of competences in the construction of this Yees-image, such as digital literacy, critical media analysis, composition, and rhetorical skills. The Yees-image is thus an image with layers of meaning. The image is furthermore an illustration of a multilayered communicative and critical competence of JeffsGiirl. By using stereotypes JeffsGiirl both uphold a bond to her peers as well as showing a distance from the framing of women as subordinate in general and the depiction of the subordinate woman in special:

When constructing online gendered identity, tween girls do this in relation to the norms and values prevalent in the contemporary society. Consequently, in the images posted on BDB there are traces of tween girls understandings of these normative gender roles, poses, and gestures, which are adopted, appropriated but also negotiated and transformed. This producing of online (gendered) identity is an important instance of not just gender work, but also of developing a contemporary broad textual, communicative and relational competence harbouring modes such as interpretation, production, publishing, intertextuality, post-production, design, semiotic mixing (combination of semiotic modes such as image, text, colour, and so on) etc. leading to a rich communicative competence of relevance for the 21st century. A competence where the photograph holds a special place in the world of self-presentation(s) in social networking sites.

Being on a SNS can, in this reading, be a crucial arena for reflection on the self, the identity and societal norms and values. And JeffsGiirl is by no means unique among tween Swedish girls (c.f. Hernwall & Siibak, 2011).

**Boys online and male stereotypes**

What is that boys do online, and does this in any respect differ as in comparison with girls? If we look at statistics, it is clear that there are differences (Medierådet, 2013; Findahl, 2013). To sum up these statistics, girls seem to be more frequent in using social media, whereas boys are more frequent in online gaming. Even though these statistics do not change the simple fact that many girls play online games and many boys use social media, there are still gendered differences in using digital media. The differences are thus on the one hand in the numbers (what they do). But the differences are also in the qualities not captured by quantifications (how and why they do it); obviously experiences, ways of using, and perceived usefulness do differ between individuals as well as between any chosen categories of individuals. There is an undeniable bias in how (digital) technology is appropriated, inseparable from societal power structures (c.f. Berg & Lie, 1995).

A theoretical tool to be used in order to understand how use and usefulness are intertwined with societal power structures, identity markers and power differentials, can be found in intersectional theory (Lykke 2010; c.f. Abiala & Hernwall, 2013). This theory argues that human actions are inseparable from and intersected with analytical categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, dis/abilities, social class. In the discussion of the image of Robin gender, age, and sexuality are used as analytic categories in the analysis.

Boys 10 to 14 years old are conscious about what images to post online, in the strive to chose "the best" images (Hernwall & Siibak, 2011). There seems to be at least two considerations as for what image is "the best". On the one hand it has to be "cute", which is about how to portray oneself. On the other hand, there are all those considerations as for how not to portray oneself. Both these considerations are bound to history and culture, more often than not gendered (c.f. Bordo, 2003). In the studies we have done (Abiala & Hernwall, 2013; Hernwall & Siibak, 2011; Siibak & Hernwall, 2011), the most pressing principle among boys when publishing images online is avoiding those images that could be named gay-ish or fjortis by the peers. The primary gendered norm among boys is to be in activity, of showing courage or belonging to a group of peers (i.e. cycling, running, jumping, or posing together preferably with accessories symbolizing activity).

In this respect Robin shows courage; it is an image that could be named both fjortis and gay-ish. He is posing in front of the mirror, he shows that he is concerned about his clothes, and his hairstyle is taken care of. And he is airy showing that. He is not in any kind of activity, except from posing. It seems as he is just trying to be cute. Adding to that, he uses such female (girlish) traits as the kissing-lips on the

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8 "Fjortis" is a patronising term originally used for referring to age (fourteen). Mainly used to describe a specific way of looking, dressing and behaving of a person who is considered to be childish and a wannabe at the same time. "Fjortis" is not something to named.
cheek. Obviously he is not alone among tween boys in doing this; but such images are more rare, and in that respect they challenge gendered norms about the young active and conscious male as he is constructed in social media among tweens.

The construction of the boy in the image

Robin, the boy in the image, can be understood as gazing at himself. Through the mirror, at the screen of the mobile camera, Robin positions himself, posing. The image then becomes a reflection of the simple fact that:

the online photograph – however private the motif might be – is part of a public media space. And this is [a] crucial dimension of the photograph in the online presentation: the qualities of the image, motif, figuration, and so on, are negotiated in a public space, giving important feedback to the rethor as for how to interpret her/himself. This means, in the words of Bordo (2003), that the private is presented in a public space, and that this public media space give important feedback as to how to construct the personal self.

Robins shows his awareness of the gazing other in an invitation to comment on the published picture in this third area of living. The traditionally private situation of dressing in the bathroom has become an opportunity in the lifeworld of Robin to not just present himself, but also to be in dialogue with friends and other users of BDB. The perhaps "narcissistic" gazing on himself, and his confidence in himself, is underscored by the written comment below the image:

When JeffsGiirl put on a crude and self-critical position in her comment "why love me when one can hate me?", Robin is more straight-forward in his written comment. His "comment ;) you do not leave until you commented ;** ... <3" can be read as a more explicit invitation to give a comment. The selfie photograph and the adjacent friendly exhortation "comment ;) you do not leave until you commented ;** ... <3" create a communicative whole, where Robin clearly invites other users to be part of a dialogic relationship in producing the meaning of the publication. It is pretty straight-forward that he likes the photograph and the way he is portrayed. Still, he is not equally explicit in what to comment upon, whereas JeffsGiirl asks a question.

In the analysis of JeffsGiirls Yees-image (Hernwall, 2012) the position of the active subject was emphasised:

the use of the phrase "Yees" in the image could be seen as a confirmation of herself, stating her presence and her right to her feelings - Yees, here I am! [...] Being courageous confirming herself, JeffsGiirl do make her voice heard as she is proudly presenting this construction of herself as visible in the Yees-image.

This reading was a deliberate counter-reading, in opposition with a prevalent objectification of women in general and girls in particular. Making JeffsGiirl a conscious user of social media is an equally possible interpretation, given the "Yees"-publication. Such a counter-reading makes the image into something else (and JeffsGiirl becomes less invisible). This reading suggests that JeffsGiirl is conscious about gendered power structures and has the competence to use them in her communicative ambitions.

In comparison with both JeffsGiirl as well as with other (and older) boys, Robin seems somewhat less conscious of gendered norms and of how to present him(!)self.

Boys mirror gender

In a study based on interviews with tweens about their experiences on online communication, when asking two 14-year old boys why they take photos of themselves posing in front of the mirror, they answered (Hernwall & Siibak, 2011:371):

Boy 1: I don’t know, it was a long time since ...
Boy 2: But you know, it was when he was a bit “fjortis”

Even though Boy 1 admits to having published selfie mirror-photos, he emphasizes that it was a long time ago, and therefore has to be forgiven. Boy 2 clarifies
that it was not just an age thing, but also in a naïve and more childish phase; being "fjortis". Again, the image of Robin would most likely qualify as "fjortis", given the posing, the hairstyle, and the facial expression.

As said, most boys are posing "behind" actions, not showing feelings or emotions (c.f. Hernwall, 2009). What they do show is their bravery, and their comradeship with their friends. And they literary show accessories that qualify as masculine (skateboards, bicycles, etc.) (c.f. Abiala & Hernwall, 2013). Consequently, following this line of reasoning, boys are in their SNS images often invisible, as they are portraying themselves in the mask of the masculine. They are hiding behind actions, not showing feelings or emotions. Robin is doing the opposite, he is showing himself vulnerable, asking for feedback on his appearance. Probably not aware of the risk of being named gay or fjortis (and hopefully still ignorant on this).

**Final remark**

Social media are, without a doubt, utterly important in the lifeworld of tweens. As such they are mirrors of the contemporary, giving us access to the constructions of gender, but also to our own prejudices. In this context the boy tend to be invisible, as he is judged by his actions and his way of showing masculinity (in this instance the intersection of gender, sexuality and age). What is seen is, in other words, not the subject, but the actions.

Every interpretation of an text, being it image, photograph or written text (or any combination of different modalities), is done from a position. Creating a critical awareness of what that position is and what consequences it has, is an important starting point in every interpretation that has any resemblance with hermeneutics.

Robin is pointing his camera to the centre of our gaze. This implies that we need to understand a photograph in social media as a readerly, fluid and intertextual text. This is something else than the traditional photograph, understood as an instance in time, as an eye-witness telling a story from a frozen moment in time. The online photograph has another character, as it is part of the dialogue, part of something in becoming. This becoming of meanings and understandings are in parallel with the negotiating of the self and the personal identity, as these are understood in current theories (Prout, 2005). The fluid, non-stable and nomadic identity (Braidotti, 1994, Kennedy 2006) is a fragmented (Turkle, 1995) as well as incomplete and partial (Haraway, 1991) identity project. This implies that the identity is a multidimensional relational phenomena (Holm Sørensen, 2001). Robin is, in this sense, becoming part of social community with a certain set of values. Here he finds inspiration from, as it seems, what he finds beautiful and inspiring on a personal level.
References


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Alankaar Sharma is a social worker by education and training and is a doctoral candidate at the School of Social Work, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, USA. His academic interests lie at the various points of intersection between childhoods, genders, sexualities, and violence. Much of his research and teaching scholarship is focused on child sexual abuse, gender-based violence, gender and sexuality rights, and social justice. He is particularly interested in men and masculinities from a pro-feminist standpoint. In the past he has taught as adjunct faculty at School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, USA, and full-time visiting instructor at School of Social Work, University of Iowa, USA. Originally from India, he has also worked there as social worker on issues of gender-based violence and child sexual abuse. He enjoys photography and often daydreams of traveling to Iceland someday.

Andreas Dannelöv

I started studying to become a kindergarten teacher in 2009, right after high school. I've since high school been very interested in gender roles and that interest peaked during my time at the university. I think just about every course I took included gender studies, which gave me a lot of opportunities to immerse myself in what consequences stereotypical gender roles have for men and women. These courses were often focused on how women and girls were affected by narrow gender roles. This made me reflect upon my own childhood and how I was negatively affected in various ways for behaving outside the norm, there was certain expectations on me because of my gender. These expectations set us back and they prevent us from being who we are. As I planned for my thesis i wanted to research how gender affects men and boys, which led to this study.

Ayşegül Taşıtman

Ayşegül Taşıtman has been involved in feminist movement in İzmir during her university education. When she moved to İstanbul in 2009, she became a member of Amargi Women Academy where she later on worked as project coordinator in 2011 and 2012. During her work in Amargi, she followed daily feminist agenda, national & international woman organizations and took part in a group organizing and editing Amargi Feminist Discussions for 2 years. She has taken part in different women’s platforms such as abortion bans, female homicides, local women forums. She received her MA in General Sociology and Methodology at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Turkey and wrote her thesis on male circumcision and masculinity. In 2013, her project on abortion in Turkey was awarded with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute Human Rights Research Grant Scholarship. For the last 3 years, she has been volunteering for Istanbul Feminist Collective that is the ground for feminist policy-making in İstanbul. She currently works in Sabanci University Education Reform Initiative as research assistant focusing on gender and education issues in Turkey.

Beccy Watson and Ian Rodley

Dr Beccy Watson is a Reader in the School of Sport, Carnegie Faculty, Leeds Metropolitan University, U.K. Beccy's research focuses on interrelationships between gender, 'race' and class and informs work on identities, leisure, changing cities and intersectional approaches in the critical, social analysis of leisure and sport. She is currently one of the Managing Editors of the Routledge journal Leisure Studies. She teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate modules focusing on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.
Ian Rodley is the Artistic Director of Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL). He started as a DAZL participant and following completion of his degree has gone on to have overall responsibility for all of DAZL’s activities and strategic planning. Ian is the Founder and advisor of the International Championship winning Cheer Dance Squad DAZL Diamonds. He is also responsible for developing the DAZL Boys Strand which is the only strand of work in Europe which engages boys of all ages into cheerdance/ Hip-Hop.

Camilla Hällgren

Camilla Hällgren works as a senior lecturer and researcher at Umeå University in Sweden. She also works as an artist (http://www.littleswedenart.com). She uses her artwork in a critical normative way to comment and challenge conditions in contemporary society. Several public institutions, such as museums and The National Public Art Council in Sweden, have acquired her artwork. In 2006 she received her PhD for her thesis Researching and Developing Swedenkid: A Swedish Case Study at the Intersection of the Web, Racism and Education. Her research interests includes identity, gender, learning and online visual cultures. One of her most recent work was as editor (with Elza Dunkels and Gun-Marie Frånberg) and author in the anthology Invisible Girl. Forthcoming academic work is the follow-up volume: The Invisible Boy. Recent artistic work: Jury reviewed exhibitions in Västerbottens Museum in Umeå and the Art Hall in Skellefteå, Sweden. Forthcoming exhibition; at Sliperiet Art Hall in Borgvik, Sweden, May – September 2015.

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Elza Dunkels

Elza Dunkels is a Reader at the Department of Applied Educational Science, Umeå University, Sweden. Her research mainly deals with two facets of young people’s net cultures: contemporary learning models and young people’s own perceptions of online dangers. She is currently involved in projects concerning gender and age in online settings, personal internet related safety, and sexual exploitation of young people online. She has written several books and book chapters, among them the anthology Invisible Girl (with Camilla Hällgren and Gun-Marie Frånberg). She runs several popular educational projects, such as the Q&A website Net Nanny http://netnanny.wordpress.com/ english and her popular science blog Net Cultures http://www.kulturer.net/in-english

Grim Dunkels

Grim Dunkels is a musician who writes and records all his songs. He is the leader and artistic driving force of two bands in Umeå, Sweden: Hjärtat https://soundcloud.com/hjartatpop and Pangaea https://soundcloud.com/pangaeasounds

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Gun-Marie Frånberg is Professor in Educational Work at Umeå University, Sweden. Frånberg received her PhD in 1996 for her thesis East of Arcadia and she has carried out research into questions on fundamental values with focus on democracy, bullying and gender equality. Frånberg is currently researching early childhood education with a special focus on how to equalize life opportunities for all children through improved quality in preschool. One of her most recent work was as editor (with Elza Dunkels and Camilla Hällgren) and author in the anthology Invisible Girl.

Harry Lunabba

Harry Lunabba is currently working as a senior lecturer at the Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki, within the field of social work. He has a professional background in child protection social work. Harry Lunabba defended his doctoral thesis Når vuxna möter pojkar i skolan – insyn, inflytande och sociala relationer (When adults encounter boys in school – insight, influence and social relations) in September 2013. Ongoing research projects focus on analysing how a relationship perspective can be implemented in welfare work.

Jenn S. Garnett

Jenn Garnett is a graduate of the University of Auckland, New Zealand, where she received her Masters in Criminology and is currently working on a Masters of Legal Studies. Though she is diverse in her academic interests within criminology, her focus has predominately been on penology and punishment
as well as the implications of human rights in this area. She worked as an academic within the Sociology Department of the University of Auckland prior to moving into more direct work with the criminal justice system through facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

Josip Horvat

Josip Horvat was born in Celje (Slovenia) 1987. His field of work are performance, video, installation and theory. He holds a BA in Art Education and MA in Animation and New Media from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb (University in Zagreb). In 2008, he won a CEEPUS scholarship for the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana (Department of Visual Communication-Design), in 2009, he received a Commendation from the Dean of the Academy for successful work during his BA studies. He is very active in the art scene in Zagreb (Croatia) and participates in many projects, he participated in around 30 group exhibitions and had so far 2 solo exhibitions and curated festivals like TEST!-International Festival of Student Theatre and Multimedia Art.

Kumud Rana

Kumud Rana is a social science researcher from Nepal. She is interested in post-colonial feminist and critical development studies. She has an MA in Development Studies with a specialization in Women, Gender and Development from the International Institute of Social Studies, the Hague.

Mary Oluwafunke Obiyan

Mary Oluwafunke Obiyan is a lecturer in the Department of Demography and Social Statistics, Obafemi Awolowo University. Mary teaches courses on Labour Force, Sources and Nature of Social and Economic Statistics. Recently, Mary received the prestigious PhD Fellowship from The Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA). With the PhD Fellowship, Mary is successfully completed her PhD studies in Demography and Social Statistics at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Her PhD thesis is entitled Wealth Status as a Determinant of Fertility Behaviour in Nigeria. Her areas of research include Fertility behaviour, Reproductive health, Sexual health and Labour force. She has publications in reputable local and international journals.

Mia Fernau

Since Mia Fernau graduated from Konstfack, Stockholm, in 2014, she has been working as an illustrator and visual artist. With felt-tip pens and markers she draws figurative images in a borderland between drawing and painting. She is interested in what pictures can convey, express, and how they can be read in different ways by different people, cultures and throughout history. Mia Fernau always works with a feminist approach in which gender and identity are recurring themes in her drawings. More of her art can be found at her webpage: www.miafernau.com

Ojo Melvin Agunbiade

Ojo Melvin Agunbiade is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University. Melvin teaches courses on sociological theory, social research methods, and sociology of health, healing, and Illness. He is undergoing his PhD in Health Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. His ongoing PhD thesis is tentatively entitled: Socio-cultural Constructions of Sexuality and Help-Seeking Behaviour among Elderly Yoruba People in Urban Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria. His areas of research include sexual health, aging, youth, gender and society, traditional medicine and development. He has published in reputable local and international journals.

Patrik Hernwall

Patrik Hernwall, PhD in Educology, associate professor in Educology and in Media Technology. Lecturer at Department of Computer and Systems Sciences, Stockholm University. Research interest are children and their conditions in a rapidly changing media society, with special attention to i.e. ICT and learning, digital competence, gender and power structures.

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Switzerland. Focus of Activity: Research in Penal Systems, Value Orientations and Deviant Behavior.

Smriti Mehra

Smriti Mehra is a video artist who lives and works in Bangalore, India. She completed her MFA in Media Art from NSCAD University in Canada with a scholarship from the AAUW Educational Foundation. She is presently an artist-in-residence at the Centre for Experimental Media Art and she also teaches at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology where she studied as an undergraduate. Smriti’s more recent pre-occupation has been with flowers and tracing their journeys. In doing so she uncovers the economic, aesthetic, emotional and transcendental spaces they occupy. The trail also acquaints us with the plethora of people, whose hands they pass through and their rituals of labour. Her video works have played at many festivals including ‘Voices from the Waters’ in Bangalore, ‘The Images Festival’ and ‘Monitor’ in Toronto, the ‘Made in Video’ festival in Denmark and ‘Images De l Inde’ at the Centre Pompidou in France.

Tess Jewell

Tess Jewell is a SSHRC Doctoral Fellow in the Joint Graduate Programme in Communication and Culture hosted by York and Ryerson Universities. Her dissertation research explores the relationship between blindness and technology in cyberpunk films, drawing on the fields of visual culture, critical disability studies, and media theory. She has been published in Mosaic’s 2013 special issue on blindness, in which she examined visual and metaphorical representations of blindness in Julien Schnabel’s The Diving Bell and the Butterfly. In 2014, her essay on gender and disability in video games won the award for best student paper presented at the annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association of Canada.

Uliano Conti

I’m a PhD candidate at La Sapienza, University of Rome (Department of Social Sciences). I’ve been working for years with visual sociology techniques. My research topics are: youth groups between online and offline dimensions; new forms of youth aggregation; the techniques of visual sociology. My PhD thesis deals with the visual dimension of the craftsman’s knowledge. In particular, I study photo-albums and photo-boxes of artisan entrepreneurs. In this perspective, with reference to the de-industrialized areas, I also investigate the “living together” of two archetypal figures: the metal-worker and the craftsman.
What does it mean to become a boy today? How does boyhood manifest itself in different contexts? How can we describe fathers and sons in contemporary society? And can we make the invisible boy visible in ways alternative to those of media?

This publication is the outcome of an international, multidisciplinary exploration of how boys become boys and how boys form identities today. 24 artists and academics from Sweden, USA, Turkey, UK, Finland, New Zealand, Croatia, Nigeria, Switzerland, India, Canada and Italy have contributed to the Invisible Boy. The publication with its 20 chapters includes academic papers, video, drawings, digital images, photography and music.

The contributions are organised in four themes: Negotiating Identity, Bodily Existence, Boyhood Interrupted, and Gender and Contemporary Media.

The book is also freely available at invisibleboy.org